



Disclosure and Discretion in Roman Astrology: Manilius and his Augustan Contemporaries

Steven J. Green

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In light of modern scepticism towards the practice, it is easy to overlook just how important a role astrology played in the career of Rome's first Emperor, Augustus. Augustus' enthusiasm for employing astrological predictions and symbols to cement his own position of power was matched by an equally forceful desire to restrict their use by his political rivals. Astrology in Rome was, then, to use Tacitus' neat formulation, both "forbidden and maintained" (Tacitus, *Histories*, 1.22).

This volume is the first to take seriously this imperial complex as a key to understanding the diverse ways in which contemporary commentators handle the volatile topic of astrology in their writings. It shows how Roman writers engage in elaborate discourses of discretion as they simultaneously celebrate the power of astrology and shy away from the sort of astrological revelations that might offend imperial sensibilities. With a particular focus on the key astrological poem of Manilius, this study provides a new conceptual framework in which to appreciate the complex treatments of astrology during the period of Octavian/Augustus.

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