ABSTRACT

Cicero Among the Stars: Natural Philosophy and Astral Culture at Rome
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This dissertation examines Cicero’s contribution to the rise of astronomy and astrology in the literary and cultural milieu of the late Republic and early Empire. Chapter One, “Rome’s Star Poet,” examines how Cicero conceives of world building through words to connect Rome to the stars with the Latin language. Through a close study of the Aratea, I consider how Cicero’s pioneering of Latin astronomical language influenced other writers, especially his contemporaries Lucretius and Catullus. In Chapter Two, “The Stars and the Statesman,” I examine Cicero’s attitudes towards politics. By analyzing Scipio’s Dream and astronomy in De re publica, I show how Cicero uses cosmic models to yoke Rome to the stars. To understand the astral dimensions of Cicero’s philosophy, in Chapter Three, “Signs and Stars, Words and Worlds,” I provide a close reading of Cicero’s poetic quotations in context in the De natura deorum and De divinatione to show how Cicero puts the Aratean cosmos to the test in Academic fashion. Ultimately, I argue that Cicero profoundly shaped the Roman view of the stars and cemented the link between cosmos and empire.
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INTRODUCTION

pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus

Although other animals gaze downwards at the earth,
he gave to humankind a sublime visage and ordered
them to lift their faces aloft to the stars.¹

Ov. Met. 1.84–6

People have always looked to the sky for inspiration, imagining a world that is above our own. Looking at the stars reminds us that the world is more marvelous, more ordered yet more mysterious than we often recognize in the bustle of day-to-day life, even as its operation of days and nights rely on the stars above as the cosmic markers of our own daily rhythms. Yet the omnipresence of hand-held devices and digital clocks has made us forgetful of this reality, and thanks to the effects of the light of electric cities (as well as environmental pollution), most of us have very little sense of what the night sky must have looked like to people before such inventions of the industrial and digital revolution. Yet for the ancients, the sky’s sweeping expanse held a more definitive and immediate role. The structure of the cosmos represented stability and order. By the time of Aristotle (4th c. BCE), a two-sphere model of the universe was dominant,² in which the earth lies at the center of the cosmos (the first sphere) and a second hollow celestial shell, inscribed with the constellations (the second sphere) encloses the entire

¹ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

² While other theories were posited of a rotating earth (Heraclides of Pontus, 4th c. BCE) and a heliocentric model (Aristarchus of Samos, 3rd c. BCE), the two-sphere model prevailed. See Kuhn (1957) 83–99, Evans (1998) 35–6, and Volk (2009) 25 n. 25.
The outer shell revolves around the earth, completing approximately one revolution in the course of a day, and in its regularity signifies the stability and predictability of the universe. In between the sphere of the earth and the fixed outer sphere lies a series of concentric spheres, along which each of the seven planets (which includes the sun and moon, as well as Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) travel along their prescribed orbits, which are conceived of as circular spheres (see figure 1). Although the planets, on a geocentric model of the cosmos, appear to move erratically, forwards and then backwards, the overall portrait of the universe.

Different celestial models have the planets in different orders. In Plato’s Timaeus, for example, Timaeus says that the earth is at the center, with the moon next, followed by the sun, followed by Venus and Mercury, which move at the same speed as the sun but with a contrary motion, thus producing the appearance of retrograde motion. Timaeus then passes over the rest of the planets, which are notoriously difficult to describe with precision (Pl. Ti. 38d–e).

Explaining planetary motion, or “saving the phenomena,” is extremely difficult on a geocentric model of the cosmos. On this planetary problem, see Gee (2013) 7–12.
conveys ideals of beauty and design: the predictable risings and settings of the constellations, at fixed times of year, provide a sense of immutability and stability. This model of the cosmos prevailed at Rome.\footnote{See Soubiran (1979) 172–7 and Bowen (2013) 299–327.}

To better understand how the ancients (and the people of the Middle Ages, who subscribed to the same cosmic model) viewed the cosmos, C. S. Lewis offers the following thought experiment:

What it really was I can, here and now, only suggest. The thing really needs to be learned not from a lecture but (you are scientists) by an experiment; an experiment on one’s imagination. It is a simple one. Go out on any starry night and walk alone for half an hour, resolutely assuming that the pre-Copernican astronomy is true. Look up at the sky with that assumption in your mind. The real difference between living in that universe and living in ours will then, I predict, begin to dawn on you (Lewis (1966) 47).

Seeing the stars in all of their vibrancy with their nighttime celestial fire is in and of itself a philosophical act, inviting reflection on our place in the world, the existence (or not) of the gods, and our destinies. Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that the earliest philosophers began with cosmology.\footnote{Homer’s cosmology indicates that in the 8th c. BCE, the world was imagined to be a disc (Il. 18.483–9), and Mimnermus (7th c. BCE) portrays Hephaestus using a boat to travel from West to East (fr. 12.5–9 West), while Steischorus has Helios ride in a golden cup (fr. S17=185 PMGF). The early Greek philosophers offered their own cosmic models. Anaximander (6th c. BCE) conceives of the cosmos as akin to a stone column and the stars as a wheel of fire, like an aulos with holes through which the stars appear (Hippol. Ref. 1.6.1–7), and that the earth remains in place because of its equal relationship to all extremities (Arist. Cael. 2.13 295b11–6; Diog. Laert. 2.1). Anaximenes imagined the world to be flat, around which the heavenly bodies turn, like a felt cap on a head (Hippol. Ref. 1.7.4–6). On ancient cosmology, see Zhmud (2006) 23; Gregory (2007) 7–11; and Algra (1999) 45–65.} In addition to these philosophical promptings, the stars also represent the markers of time, and thus also have an extremely important practical role as keepers of time and markers of seasons. Indeed, it was not until the reform of Caesar’s calendar in 46 BCE that the months were standardized in such a way as to actually keep pace with the movements of the heavens, such that
the seasonal reality and the calendar synchronize: Julius Caesar’s move to reform the calendar was just one sign that the nascent empire was exerting its control over nature itself. Plutarch records in his Life of Caesar (735):

The adjustment of the calendar, however, and the correction of the irregularity in the computation of time, were not only studied scientifically by him, but also brought to completion, and proved to be of the highest utility. For not only in very ancient times was the relation of the lunar to the solar year in great confusion among the Romans, so that the sacrificial feasts and festivals, diverging gradually, at last fell in opposite seasons of the year, but also at this time people generally had no way of computing the actual solar year; the priests alone knew the proper time, and would suddenly and to everybody’s surprise insert the intercalary month called Mercedonius. Numa the king is said to have been the first to intercalate this month, thus devising a slight and short-lived remedy for the error in regard to the sidereal and solar cycles, as I have said in his Life. But Caesar laid the problem before the best philosophers and mathematicians, and out of the methods of correction which were already at hand compounded one of his own which was more accurate than any. This the Romans use down to the present time, and are thought to be less in error than other peoples as regards the inequality between the lunar and solar years. However, even this furnished occasion for blame to those who envied Caesar and disliked his power. At any rate, Cicero the orator, we are told, when some one remarked that Lyra would rise on the morrow, said: “Yes, by decree,” implying that men were compelled to accept even this dispensation.9

Caesar’s standardization of the calendar was seen as political and imperial overreach, extending control even to the celestial realm, by some such as Cicero, who complained of the constellations rising at a dictator’s decree, as recorded in the passage above. And indeed, as Ovid would say, the boundaries of urbs and orbis had become unified into a single outline,10 eliding the realms of nature and city, of cosmos and imperium. Rome was not the first to concretize the analogy between city and sky: it is, perhaps, in the very nature of cities to look to the stars to fashion themselves as coterminous with the celestial realm. Yet in Rome, whose roots were more rustic

8 See Feeney (2007); Hannah (2005); Michels (1967); Brind-Armour (1983); and Schmid (2005).

9 Translation is Loeb (Perrin (1919)).

10 Romanæ spatium est urbis et orbis idem, Fast. 2.684.
and traditional, grounded in the soil and the hearty Latin language, the conflation of the cosmic and political realms was something rather new. To be sure, there were intimations of it before: Romulus, the founder of Rome, after all, ascended into heaven after a portentous eclipse, and the foundations of the city were laid not only with fraternal blood but also an augural dispute.

For the Romans, the stars as a sign of state identity and purpose arrived rather late. Astrologers (along with philosophers and other groups) were expelled from Rome in 139 BCE, and apart from a few passing remarks that indicate some astral influence at play—namely Cato forbidding the consultation of diviners, Ennius’ mention of astrologers and their prophecies, and a speaking monologue of the star Arcturus in a play of Plautus—little evidence points to the stars shaping Roman imagination and cultural identity in a significant way before the first century (although our evidence is of course limited). Yet by the time of Julius Caesar, who famously became a star, as Ovid unforgettably captured at the end of his Metamorphoses, those in power were promoting (or at least encouraging) the idea of Rome as the

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11 Valerius Maximus, writing during the reign of Tiberius, refers to the expulsion of astrologers and devotees of Zeus Sabazios by the praetor peregrinus Cornelius Hispalus from Rome in 139 BCE (1.3). Ripat (2011) investigates why astrologers were expelled from Rome eight (and perhaps as many as eleven) times between 139 BCE and 175 CE. Ripat points out that we have no information about the practicalities of how such expulsions were conducted, and questions whether astrologers held such a dominant role as scholars often assume (cf. Cramer (1954)). She also rightly points out that the division between expert and “lay” astrologers was not precise, and similarly, that astrology is not neatly divided from other forms of divination, which would make expulsions of astrologers as such difficult. Rather, Ripat (2011) suggests that the impetus behind such expulsions was to rid Roman societies of practices perceived as un-Roman. And, as Barton (1994) 33 points out, “the story of astrology at Rome is part of the story of how Greek learning was adopted by the Romans.”

12 Cato the Elder (3rd–2nd c. BCE) exhorts the farmer not to consult diviners, including Chaldeans (Agr. 1.5.4). Ennius’ Iphigenia contains the first instance of the word astrologi in Latin (fr. 82 Manuwald). In Rud. 1–29 Arcturus opens the play with a monologue, in which the star appears as humanity’s guardian. There are a few other indications of the importance of astrology in the Republic: Athenio, in the 2nd c. BCE Sicilian slave revolt, used astrology to predict the success of the revolt, and to say that he would be king. Octavius, a supporter of Sulla, was found dead with an astrological diagram affixed to his body (Plut. Mar. 42.4–5).

13 See Bouché-Leclercq (1963); Riess (1933); Boyancé (1975); Barton (1994) 27–71; and Volk (2009) 127–37.
cosmic center of the world. The poetry of the Augustan poets, perhaps most notably Vergil and Ovid, as well as their successors, Lucan and Seneca, captured this new stellar reality of Rome, although perhaps in different ways: while Vergil and Ovid reinforced the connection between cosmos and empire (although not in a straight-forward or simplistic way), Seneca and Lucan showcased the connection through the sort of sympathy the cosmos felt when the seams of the city and the lives of her people came apart under the Neronian regime.

In addition to these works of literature, at the same time, the spatial landscape of Rome was changing, in large part thanks to the building projects of Augustus, who, Suetonius famously records, found Rome a city of brick and left it a place of marble. Recent studies have shown that the spaces we inhabit have a profound impact on the way that we view the world, and indeed, shape the very way our cognitive processes inform our ways of seeing. The power of spaces, then, allowed Augustus to turn the Roman city into a cosmos in miniature, which seems to correspond to the way the city was laid out. Among Augustus’ numerous building projects was the so-called Horologium, which was erected to serve as a sort of solar marker. Although the scholarship around this monument is vexed (Was it actually a sundial? Or just a solar meridian?  

14 On the comet and the propaganda (or lack thereof) surrounding it, see Pandey (2013). Pandey argues that Augustus did not manipulate public perception by using the comet as propaganda, but rather, that Ovid retrojected the symbol into the early days of Augustus’ principate. For a different view, see Ramsey and Licht (1997); Gurval (1997); and Syme (1939).

15 Approaches to reading Augustan-era poets as “pro-” or “anti-Augustan” has largely given way to a scholarly consensus that these authors are engaged in a complex imperial framework that is not so simplistically divided. Kennedy (1992) and (1993) provided a watershed moment in the debate.


17 Urbem neque pro maiestate imperii ornatum et inundationibus incendiisque obnoxiam excoluit adeo, ut iure sit gloriatus marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset, Suet. Aug. 28.

18 See Lefebvre (1974); Harvey (1996); and Mitchell (1994).
To what extent was it integrated into the rest of the Campus Martius?\(^\text{19}\)—its overall message was clear: the city of Rome is the center of the world, in control of time and its keepers, the stars themselves.

Where does Cicero fit into this picture? In this dissertation, I hope to show how Cicero played a pivotal role in Rome’s development into a cosmic state. When we think of Cicero, an extremely skilled orator and stylist and rather self-centered politician generally comes to mind. Cicero is often the first prose author beginning Latin students encounter, and as a classic schoolroom text, certain stereotypes naturally attach to him for both students and their teachers. In the following chapters, I offer an alternative portrait of Cicero, demonstrating how throughout his life and across genres Cicero maintained a persistent and unique interest in the stars and the cosmos, and moreover, their relationship to life on the ground, in particular, political life. From his earliest poetry to the outpouring of philosophy at the end of his life, Cicero appealed to the natural order, I will argue, as an analogue to the state and a benefit to it. At the same time, as a committed Skeptic, Cicero couched these views in poetry and dialogues, and, in several cases, embedded the former in the latter, thus making the picture of his views even more complex.

An obvious yet extremely important methodological limitation in my approach must be addressed: we possess more writings of Cicero than any other author in antiquity. Thus, any attempt to understand the \textit{milieu} of the 1st. c. BCE will largely be dependent upon him. Put differently, how can we be sure that Cicero was as influential in shaping the idea of Rome-quacosmos, as I suggest? On the one hand, we could take a highly agnostic view, resigning ourselves to the fact that, barring more papyrological and archaeological discoveries, we simply cannot

\(^{19}\) For different views, see Buchner (1982), Schmid (2005), and Heslin (2007).
know how influential Cicero was. On the other, we might propose that we make the best of the
evidence that we do have, and since much of that evidence is filtered through Cicero’s viewpoint,
we might as well look at the past through our Cicero-colored-lens and learn as much as we can.

I believe that we can find a middle way between the extremes of these two approaches.
Ingo Gildenhard, in his monograph *A Creative Eloquence*, faces a similar problem in assessing
Cicero’s originality and influence. Aside from arguments about Cicero’s wide-sweeping
creativity and survival into modernity, Gildenhard considers how Cicero both influences and
departs from the standards of the “Roman field of power” (Gildenhard 2010: 13–4).

The key benchmark for assessing the profile of Cicero's ideas is the logic of Roman
practice—in other words, the shared convictions that informed interactions in the Roman
field of power. Over the last three decades, our understanding of this body of cultural
knowledge has made a quantum leap forward, and we now have a much better sense than
before of (for instance) the factors that defined the public identity of members of the
ruling elite, the cluster of norms and values by which the senate and people lived, and
Rome's civic religion. And very often the ideas that Cicero endorses and advocates can be
shown to vary from, indeed be at variance with, the ‘mainstream’ assumptions that
sustained the political culture of late republican Rome. There are, then, good reasons to
believe that his was more of a one–off voice than most, even though it is quite possible,
indeed likely, that in each individual instance I have either overstressed or underestimated
the extent to which his rhetorical choices deviated from shared norms and expectations.
But ultimately, the precise calibration of the degree of Cicero's originality in any one
specific instance is, arguably, of less interest and import than conveying an overall sense
of the rhetorical construction of reality that is on display in his oratory.

While my concern is not Cicero’s oratory, but rather his cosmology, I nevertheless adopt a
similar approach to Gildenhard (2010) in evaluating Cicero’s originality and his relationship to
constructing a new Roman reality through his words.

My method is also heavily influenced by Yelena Baraz’ monograph *A Written Republic*
(2012), which argues that Cicero’s late philosophical writings not only served as a substitute for
political engagement, but moreover, became an alternative way of engaging in Roman politics
altogether. The idea that Cicero’s philosophy is in some sense synonymous with Roman civic engagement suggests that words have the power to enact “real-world” effects—in this case, politically. Although the realms of *otium* and *negotium*, the pursuits of the active and contemplative life, traditionally remain distinct, Cicero, with his world-building through words, bridges the divide. Even more strikingly, he uses cosmology—the quintessential “useless” pursuit—in service of strengthening Rome and serving her.

The issue of Cicero’s philosophical allegiances and the status of Roman philosophy is equally important for my approach. In his 2015 monograph, *Cicero: The Philosophy of a Roman Skeptic*, Raphael Woolf argues that Cicero’s skeptical approach to philosophy allows him to test one idea against another in dialogic format, inviting the readers to engage in a philosophical exercise themselves. Rather than espousing a single viewpoint, Cicero puts ideas in conversation with one another and allows us readers to determine what we think for ourselves. I follow Woolf (2015) closely in my readings of Cicero’s dialogues. I here also offer a brief word on Roman Philosophy. Although for many years the notion of Roman philosophy was something of an oxymoron, in recent decades, it has been understood as a unique contribution to the philosophical tradition. Cicero is on the frontlines for his substantial contribution to Roman philosophy; however, most studies have focused on his ethics, largely passing by his contribution to natural philosophy. Thus, another aim of my dissertation is to enlarge our understanding of Cicero-qua-philosopher by underscoring his interest in cosmology and the stars.

My dissertation falls into three chapters, which are organized around his poetry, politics, and philosophy, although these categories are rather porous. For one thing, Cicero self-quotes his

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20 See Griffin and Barnes (1989) and (1997). See also Williams and Volk (2016).
own poetry in his dialogues, which means I treat his *Aratea* and *De consulatu suo* in the first and third chapters, though for different purposes. I also proceed chronologically with Cicero’s writings, through his early, middle, and late periods.

Chapter One, “Rome’s Star Poet,” considers the contribution of Cicero’s poetry, specifically the *Aratea*, to developing astral culture and literature at Rome. The *Aratea*, a translation of the 3rd c. Hellenistic poem by Aratus, describes the constellations of the night sky in the fixed sphere. I begin the chapter by considering the proliferation of Latin translations of Aratus’ poem, of which Cicero’s was the first. I next turn to Cicero’s *Aratea* itself, arguing that the *Aratea* is, for Cicero, a demiurgic text, in which he pioneers a new astral language in Latin in order to create a new world made out of words, thereby attaching Rome to the stars. I then examine features of the poem itself, especially its highly visual nature, as well as its propensity to word play, before turning to the second section of the chapter, in which I consider the *Aratea’s* influence on contemporary poetry, specifically Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*. Following the cue of Emma Gee (2013) and James Zetzel (1998), I show how Cicero and Lucretius engage in a literary and philosophical exchange, in which Lucretius utilizes the Aratean language pioneered by Cicero in service of his Epicurean worldview.

In Chapter Two, “The Stars and the Statesman,” I come to the most important dialogue of the 50s, Cicero’s *De re publica*, arguing that the astronomy of the dialogue should be read as an integral part of the text itself. I establish my reading of the *De re publica* as a true dialogue in which no single voice has the final say. Following Woolf (2015) and Atkins (2013), I suggest that

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21 The *Aratea* is complemented by *De signis*, a translation of the second half of Aratus’ poem, which treats meteorological signs. I turn to *De signis* in Chapter Three, but for the purposes of Chapter One I focus primarily on the *Aratea*. The *De consulatu suo* is also treated in Chapter Three.
we should allow the tensions in the text to inform our reading, rather than locating Cicero’s true voice in Scipio or Laelius. Using a framework that I call the “Horizontal” and the “Vertical,” I show how the dialogue carefully navigates between life on the ground and the promise of life amongst the stars, ultimately arguing that the stars and the state are inextricably linked. To demonstrate this, I look at the major instances of astral and cosmological material in the dialogue, including: the appearance of the portent of the double suns; the two celestial models, one static and one with moving parts; the invocation of Aratus; and most famously, the beautiful cosmic ending of the dialogue—Scipio’s Dream.

The third and final chapter, “Signs and Stars, Words and Worlds,” falls into two main parts, with the first providing a close reading of the Aratea in context of De natura deorum, and the second offering an analysis of De signis and De consulatu suo in De divinatione. Both dating from the late period of Cicero’s philosophical output, the De natura deorum and De divinatione concern the involvement of the gods (or lack thereof) in the creation and government of the cosmos. In a sense, the two dialogues seem to reach opposing conclusions. The De natura deorum ends with the persona of Cicero admitting that he finds the Stoic arguments of Balbus closer to the appearance of truth, thus leaving us readers with the suggestion that Cicero is persuaded that the gods are involved in the beneficent design and maintained order of the universe. In De divinatione, however, the persona of Cicero (now older), arguing fiercely against the Stoic arguments of his brother Quintus, rejects divination, the notion that the gods communicate with human beings through natural signs and other means, such as dreams. Divination and a divinely ordered cosmos would seem to go hand-in-hand: if the gods have designed the world and imbued it with meaning, then it would stand to reason that the gods also
use the natural order to communicate with humankind. How do we resolve this seeming paradox? On my reading, we should allow the tension to draw us into philosophical engagement with the two dialogues, reading them on their own and against one another. I suggest that Cicero puts the Aratean (by which I mean divinely designed and ordered) cosmos to the test, and invites his readers to engage in a similar philosophical exercise. Nevertheless, I maintain that in both dialogues Cicero plays with a parallel between the order of the written word and the order of the cosmos. Words, after all, are a form of “signs.” This sort of semiotic approach accords with Cicero’s fundamental Skeptical approach but still permits him hope that the stars promise a transcendent order, a hope which must have been all the more urgent after suffering the loss of his daughter and the collapse of the Republic he had known and loved.
CHAPTER ONE: ROME'S STAR POET

…sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

…I shall strike the stars with the top of my head.

Hor. C. 1.1.36

1.1 Introduction

The year is 43 BCE, one year after the assassination of Julius Caesar at the feet of Pompey’s statue. Caesar’s adopted son, Octavian who would become Augustus, has reconciled with his rival Mark Antony and passed a proscription against his adoptive father’s enemies. On December 7, 43 BCE, two men intercept Cicero in his litter, kill him, and cut off his head and hands, leaving behind a stump of a body, just as had happened to Pompey five years before.22

43 is also the birth year of Publius Ovidius Naso, who a little more than fifty years later would also suffer at Augustus’ hands, being exiled for a carmen et error.23 If Cicero’s death portends the end of the Republic, Ovid’s birth heralds the beginning of a new age of Rome. Born in the first year of Augustus’ regime, Ovid is the first truly Augustan poet.

Like his poetic predecessors Horace and Vergil, Ovid wrote a lot about Rome, the cosmos, and her position in it. Augustan poetry is replete with cosmic and astral imagery: Vergil’s Eclogues anticipate the return of the golden age and the promised child (Ecl. 4), and the Aeneid shows the cosmic vistas of Rome’s future in the underworld (Aen. 6). Horace’s Odes promise a world free from civil war and discord, a world in which a poet can brush against the stars (Carm. 1.1). Writing in the fullness of the Augustan principate, Ovid begins his

22 See Plut. Cic. 48.

23 Ov. Tr. 207.
Metamorphoses with cosmology and ends with Caesar’s catasterism, poetically exploring the realization of a regime characterized by astral and cosmic control.

What do we make of such cosmically inflected poetry? The Romans were crazy about the stars. All ancient societies were, at least to a certain extent. In our post-industrial age, it is easy to forget how much they depended on the stars for navigation and to mark the seasons. But even by ancient standards, the Romans were especially interested in the stars. One example of this cultural phenomenon is the popularity of Aratus at Rome.

Aratus wrote a 1,154 line didactic poem in dactylic hexameter on the constellations and meteorological phenomena, which became one of the most celebrated pieces of literature in antiquity and a benchmark of the Hellenistic style. In the late 4th c. BCE, he was born in Cilicia (modern-day Turkey) and later, according to tradition, studied in Athens under Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school. Aratus became so famous for his poetic skill that the Macedonian king Antigonus Gonatas summoned him to his court, where, as the story goes, he was charged with a seemingly impossible task: rendering Eudoxus’ prose treatise on the constellations into stunning verse.

Aratus rose to the occasion. He set to work crafting a poem that reveals that the universe is ordered and intelligible, full of Zeus and charged with meaning. The stars are not mere flashes of light, but signs that speak, connecting the realms of the human and the divine through astral semiotics. True, the Golden Age has passed, but in its place we enjoy a world in which we can

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25 For an overview of Aratus’ life, see Kidd (1997) 3–5 and Fantuzzi (2006). We have five Vitae of Aratus, which are contradictory at some points but agree on essential points, including Aratus’ origin in Cilicia, his relationship to Zeno, and his presence at Antigonus Gonatas’ court in Pella, the capital of Macedon and birthplace of Alexander the Great.
look at the stars and enter their divinely-inspired cosmic story. This is not a Hesiodic violent cosmos, but one of hope. We are, after all, Zeus’ offspring. Moreover, Aratus embedded his own “signs” into his poem, crafting verbal designs that mirror the stellar pictures of the sky. This caught the attention of Aratus’ contemporaries, including Callimachus, who praised the poem for being *leptos*, a word that is all-but impossible to translate but basically means “light,” a stylistic term that came to be associated with Aratus’ poetic style and Alexandrian aesthetics.

Over time, Aratus became coterminous with the night sky itself. Two and a half centuries after his death, Ovid wrote “Aratus will always exist, along with the moon and the sun,” (*cum sole et luna semper Aratus erit, Am. 15.16*), suggesting that Aratus achieved immortality along with his stellar poem. As long as we look up at the sky, we will see it with Aratus’ eyes. In fact, Ovid himself translated the *Phaenomena* into Latin, though his version has regrettably been all but lost. But Ovid was not the first to translate Aratus. That honor belongs to Cicero.

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26 *Phaen. 5.*


28 Scholars used to think that λεπτός was a Callimachean buzzword, but Cameron and Volk have demonstrated that the word is actually Aratean, and that it becomes a trait of the Alexandrian ideal because of the ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic. See Cameron (1995) 321–8; Volk (2009) 205–8; and Volk (2015) 254–5. The word λεπτός first occurs in Aratus, whereas the “slender muse” opening Callimachus’ *Aetia* is λεπταλέην.

29 On Aratus and his importance for the Roman imagination, see Gee (2013) and Lewis (1992).

30 Five lines survive; see fr. 1 and 2 in Courtney (2003).
As a young man, Cicero inaugurated a long-standing tradition of translating the *Phaenomena* into Latin verse. It seems the poem was a success: Plutarch records that Cicero (at least in his day) was Rome’s leading poet. Cicero’s *Aratea carmina* shows a careful attention to the commentary and scholiast traditions, and while the extant fragments are relatively faithful translations of the original, Cicero makes some striking expansions and departures from the Greek, demonstrating that the project was more than a rote schoolboy exercise. Furthermore, Cicero returned to the poem throughout his life, as we see in his letters and dialogues, suggesting that it held special significance for him.

What do we make of this? Aratus was at the center of Rome’s star craze, and Cicero, the evidence suggests, played a crucial role in bringing the *Phaenomena* to Rome. If this were all we knew, it would be enough to seriously consider Cicero’s role in shaping the cosmic imagination of his age and Augustus’, all the more so given Plutarch’s *testimonial* that Cicero was a top-notch poet. But I think we can actually say more. In this chapter, I argue that Cicero’s poetic project of pioneering technical astronomical Latin helped create a new Roman astral culture.

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31 Cicero penned the *Aratea* as a youth, based on evidence from the *De natura deorum* (45/44 BCE), in which his character Balbus says that he “translated [the Aratean verses] as a youth” (*quae a te admodum adulescentulo conversa*, Nat. D. 2.104). There is some debate about whether Cicero translated the entire poem at that time, or only the section on the constellations. In a letter to Atticus in 60 BCE, Cicero writes, “Await my *Prognostica* poem along with some little orations shortly” (*Prognostica mea cum oratiunculis propediem exspecta*, Att. 2.1.11). The question is, did Cicero translate the weather signs section (i.e. *Prognostica*) in 60 BCE for the first time, or was he simply sending Atticus a copy of that section from the entire poem which he had initially translated? And if the latter hypothesis is correct, was it the original translation or a revised version? On the issue of dating the poem, see Pellacani (2015) 8–15 and Soubiran (1972) 10.


33 Approximately half of Cicero’s *Aratea* survives. 480 consecutive lines of the poem are directly transmitted in the manuscript tradition (fr. 34 Pellacani), and another 110 lines are preserved as quotations, many quoted by Cicero himself. In the *De natura deorum*, the Stoic character Balbus quotes approximately 90 lines (Nat. D. 2.104–14). Cicero also quotes his *Aratea* in Rep. 1.56; Leg. 2.7; Orat. 152; and Acad. 2.66. He also quotes the *Prognostica* portion in Div. 1.13–5. The continuous *Aratea* manuscripts consist of two main families (see Pellacani (2015) 30–8).

34 Cicero first translated (part of?) the poem as a youth then revisited it in 60 (as evinced by *At*. 2.1.11), and mentioned it in his philosophical works of the 50s and quoted it at length in his philosophical works of the 40s.
This chapter falls into two parts. In the first, I consider how Cicero portrays his *Aratea*. translation as a cosmogonic act that creates a new cosmic order: Rome. I look at the popularity of Aratus at Rome, Cicero’s poetic reputation over time, and Cicero’s role in the art of translation from Greek to Latin, and the vividness of the *Aratea* itself. The second explores how Cicero fit into the poetic milieu of his day by analyzing his influence on his famous contemporary, Lucretius.

A word of caution: I do not mean to say that Cicero was the only source of the cosmic and astral material in Latin poetry. For one thing, the interplay of literary, cultural, and imaginative influence are more like a web than a line. Furthermore, Cicero constitutes so much of our evidence for that period that it is difficult to study it without looking through his eyes, which unavoidably colors our view. As everybody knows, Cicero thought a lot of himself, and so it is easy for our lens to be distorted.

These limitations aside, in this chapter it is my aim to show that Cicero was a more important poet at Rome than is generally realized, and furthermore, that while we can never completely understand the way poets interacted with one another, we can see some patterns of influence and engagement. As I hope to show, Cicero was at the heart of the creation of the cosmic imagination at Rome, and he started this with his *Aratea*. In the course of this chapter, we will begin to see why it is that astral themes are so important in Cicero’s life-long intellectual development and how they both contribute to and respond to the rise of astral culture at Rome.

1.2 Aratus at Rome
We get a glimpse of just how widespread Aratus was in the book of Acts. Walking around Athens and seeing many idols, Paul engages in debates in the synagogues and in the Agora, preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After some Stoics and Epicureans probe him further, Paul stands on the Areopagus and delivers a speech about the nature of God, his role in the cosmos, and his relationship to humankind (17:28). Paul calls into question the Athenians’ impulse to create an altar to an unknown god by quoting the beginning of Aratus’ Phaenomena, in which Aratus tells us that Zeus (= God) is not “unspoken” (ἄρρητον, Phaen. 2). Why, then, would he require a nameless altar? If, as Paul and Aratus say, “we are his offspring” (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσµέν, 17:28 = τοῦ γὰρ γένος εἰµέν, Phaen. 5), then God/Zeus can be known. Paul invokes Aratus to argue that there is a fundamental relationship between the human and the divine: the whole order of the cosmos, the seasons, the stars, and the boundaries of the natural order, “speak” the name of god.

The assumption that the interlocutors on the Areopagus (as well as the readers of the text) would recognize the quotation demonstrates the sort of cultural currency that Aratus’ Phaenomena had in the Roman Empire. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Paul draws upon Aratus to enter into a dialogue with the Stoics and Epicureans in particular. It is attractive to think that Aratus and the worldview that he communicates participated in wider philosophical debates about the intelligibility of the universe and the fundamental relationship between the divine and the human: Can god(s) be known? Is the cosmos truly kosmos (as the Stoics think), or is the natural world a random yet marvelous accident (as the Epicureans hold)?

The popularity of Aratus at Rome specifically is attested to by a proliferation of translations. St. Jerome (347–420 CE), the great translator of the Bible into Latin, remarks in a
discussion of Acts 17:28 that Aratus has been translated into Latin “by many that it would take
too long to list” (et multi, quos enumerare perlongum est, In Tit. 1, 12 = PL 26, 607 Migne). Of
course, such translation was not strictly necessary since the educated could read Greek.
Nevertheless, beside Cicero, we know of or have record of several translations: Varro of Atax
(mid-1st c. BCE), Ovid (1st c. BCE/1st c. CE), Germanicus (early 1st c. CE), Avienus (mid-4th
c. CE), and the prose translation Aratus Latinus (7/8 c. CE), as well as the adaptation of
Vergil in the Georgics (1.351–415).³⁵

The proliferation of Aratea translations speaks to deeper cultural currents. Bringing Greek
literature into Latin lies at the heart of the Roman literary project, but we do not have other
examples of another single text being translated so frequently. Why, then, did translating Aratus
in particular become such a commonplace? I will not attempt to answer this question fully, as
there have been good recent studies on the topic,³⁶ but I would like to suggest two reasons why
the Phaenomena became such a phenomenon itself in the Roman world: (i) its cosmic worldview
and (ii) its aesthetic appeal.

The Cosmic Worldview

As we see in Acts, Aratus stands for a world that has meaning and is intelligible. The poem
begins from Zeus (Ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα, Phaen. 1) in the model of Hesiod’s “Let us begin to sing
from the Muses of Helicon” (Μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώµεθ᾽ ἀείδειν, Th. 1),³⁷ but the Zeus

³⁵ See Zehnacker (1989) and Taub (2010).
³⁷ Cf. Hes. Th. 36 Μουσάων ἀρχώµεθα. For other parallels of this formulaic opening phrase, see Kidd (1997) 162–3.
that appears in Aratus is a very different type of god from Hesiod’s. Aratus presents a Zeus who is “kind” (ἤπιος, *Phaen.* 5), making himself known (albeit indirectly) through visible signs. He is a father to humans in more than just title, for he reveals his concern for his offspring by communicating with them. Aratus’ communicative Zeus stands in contrast to Hesiod’s Zeus, who despite being “the father of men and gods” (πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, *Op.* 59), hides good things from humans, forcing them to toil (*Op.* 47–9):

άλλα Ζεὺς ἔκρυψε χολωσάμενος φρεσὶν ἤσιν,
δτι μν ἔξαπάτησε Προμηθεὺς ἄγκυλομήτης.
τούνεκ’ ἄρ’ ἄνθρώποις ἐμήσατο κήδεα λυγρά·

But Zeus hid it, enraged in his heart because crooked-counseled Prometheus deceived him, wherefore he contrived grievous troubles for humankind.

Hesiod’s Zeus is associated with anger (χολωσάμενος, *Op.* 47) and misery (κήδεα λυγρά, *Op.* 49). He operates by secrecy, concealing things (ἐκρυψε, *Op.* 47) that are useful for humans (such as fire) and making baneful things seem beneficial (such as Pandora). Aratus, on the other hand, offers a Zeus who works for the benefit of mankind and makes good things known to all humans through nature itself, especially astronomical and environmental signs. Rather than confounding divine-mortal communication, Aratus’ Zeus benevolently promotes the transmission of information.38 Richard Hunter (1995) puts it well:

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38 Granted, Aratus elsewhere depicts a barrier in communication between Zeus and humankind “For not yet do we mortals know all from Zeus, but much still remains hidden, whereof, what he will, even hereafter will he reveal; for openly he aids the race of men, manifesting himself on every side and showing signs on every hand” (πάντα γὰρ οὔπω/ ἐκ Διὸς ἄνθρωποι γινώσκομεν, ἄλλα ἐτι πολλά/ κέκρυπτα, τόν θέλη καὶ ἐσαυτίκα δώσει/ Ζεύς· ὁ γὰρ σάν γενεθήν ἄνδρον ἀναφανδὸν ὄφέλλει· πάντοθεν εἰδόμενος, πᾶντη δ’ ὑπὲρ σήματα φαίνον, *Phaen.* 768–772). This gap in communication, however, is not permanent, as emphasized by the adverb “not yet” (οὔπω, *Phaen.* 768), suggesting that at some point “all things from Zeus” (πάντα…ἐκ Διὸς, *Phaen.* 768–9) could be known by mankind. Furthermore, Zeus does not actively hide information, and for this reason I think the passive verb “is hidden” (κέκρυπτα, 770) is salient. After all, it is in the nature of Zeus to help humans openly (ἀναφανδὸν ὄφέλλει, *Phaen.* 771). Even when there is a misinterpretation of a divine sign, humans can rest assured that the natural semiotics are reliable and that communication between the human and the divine can occur, albeit at times imperfectly.
The *Works and Days* presents us with an all-powerful and all-seeing Zeus (cf., e.g., 267–9) who is concerned with justice, but whose mind (νόος) is changeable and hard-to-know (483–4), and who has hidden from men the means of a life free from toil (42 κρύψαντες...). The themes of concealment and hiddenness are, of course, most prominent in the myths of Pandora and the Five Ages. The Zeus of the *Phainomena*, however, while also being all-seeing and concerned with justice, openly assists mankind through the omnipresence of ‘signs’ (*Phain*. 10–13).

Beyond an anthropomorphized god, Aratus’ Zeus is more of a force or divine mind that orders the cosmos for the benefit of humankind in all spheres of life, from the harbors to the marketplaces (*Phaen*. 2–4).

This cosmic Zeus has led many scholars to identify the *Phaenomena* as a Stoic poem.39 The omnipresence of Zeus in the different ambits of the cosmic order (earth, sea, sky) evokes the Stoic concept of *pneuma* and also suggests an underlying rational order to all things, which fits nicely with Stoic doctrine. The impulse to read the *Phaenomena* as a Stoic poem is made all the greater by the tradition that Aratus was himself a student of early Stoicism. Allegedly, Aratus studied under Zeno (*Vita* 3), the founder of the Stoa, which, if true, suggests that Aratus may have incorporated some of his Stoic education into his poem. Furthermore, the Hymn to Zeus by Cleanthes (330–230 BCE), Zeno’s successor and Aratus’ contemporary, shares many of the themes in the *Phaenomena*, including the benevolence of Zeus and his connection to humankind.

The direction of influence, however, is not clear, and the Stoicism of Cleanthes does not necessitate Aratus’. For my part, I view the *Phaenomena* as part of an emerging philosophical discourse which included Stoicism; however, given that Stoicism was still in its infancy, it seems likely to me that Aratus was shaping that conversation even as he was being shaped by it. It is

important to note that nothing in the *Phaenomena* is explicitly Stoic, and given the cultural exchanges that were happening in the Hellenistic world at the time, it is possible that other religious and philosophical influences were at play in the *Phaenomena*’s conception. Whatever the case may be, the *Phaenomena* conveys a world view of physical unity, including a divine reason governing the cosmos and stars.

What importance did Aratus’ benevolent Zeus and his signifying cosmos hold for Rome in particular? It is worth noting that the poem came into Latin by Cicero’s pen during an important period in the history of Rome’s relationship to Greece. The conquest of the East had imported many Greek ideas to Rome, including the tenets of various philosophical schools. After Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix sacked Athens, many Greek cultural riches came to Rome, including the library of Apellicon, which (according to Plutarch) contained volumes of Aristotle and Theophrastus. It was during this same period that Cicero translated the *Aratea*, which as we have seen, conveyed a philosophical worldview about the order of the cosmos and the relationship between human and the divine.

The cosmos of the *Phaenomena* probably held a certain allure for a people who had been racked by the turmoil of the Social Wars and the dictatorship of Sulla. The unease of life on the ground prompted the people to look to the stars for some semblance of stability. To put it simply, Aratus’ world represented the order and harmony they wanted for Rome. Furthermore,

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42 For the transmission of Greek literary culture to Rome, see Feeney (2016).
43 Plut. *Sulla* 26, although Aristotle was surely known in Rome before 86 BCE, on which see Barnes (1997), esp. 64–66.
44 *Nat. D.* 2.104.
astronomy is a prestigious pursuit, not only because of its “high” subject matter, but also because of its associations with power and knowledge. Given Rome’s expansion in this period and eagerness to be Greece’s cultural equal, harnessing the stars would have also appealed to imperialist sensibilities. After all, Aratus’ poem was a prestige object that allows you to hold the entire cosmos in your hands, as it were. And Cicero placed it in Rome’s open palms.

The Aesthetic Appeal

In addition to its philosophical appeal, the Phaenomena also embodied a highpoint of Alexandrian aesthetics. The poem is replete with literary learning and word plays, hallmarks of the Hellenistic style. Two of the most famous of these plays are the pun on Aratus’ name at the beginning of the poem (Phaen. 2) and the LEΠTH acrostic (Phaen. 783–7), and as we will see, they both became part of the literary reception of Aratus. The Phaenomena famously begins thus (1–2):

Ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώµεσθα, τὸν οὐδέποτ᾿ ἄνδρες ἐῶµεν ἀνήρ

Let us begin from Zeus, whom we humans never leave unnamed.

The poem heralds Zeus as the one whom humans speak of, and as the poem unfolds, we see that the entire universe declares his name, especially the stars. Speech, star and weather signs, and written words are all part and parcel of Aratus’ cosmic semiotics. Thus, after reading the poem and undergoing its education in signs, we realize that the ability of humans to interpret and express ourselves in words is a key way through which we participate in the divine. Thus, it is
not only Zeus’ (= the divine’s) name that the universe speaks, it is also the human’s, insofar as the divine and the human are both sign-givers. Aratus adumbrates this connection between Zeus and himself as well as the broader categories of divine and the human by embedding his name in the second line of the poem. Aside from serving as a sort of sphragis, the pun also points to the parallel between Zeus and the poet: as we do not leave Zeus unmentioned, so also we do not leave Aratus “unmentioned” (ἄρρητον, Phaen. 2).45

Apparently, Aratus’ poetic signature at the beginning of the poem was admired by his contemporaries. Callimachus, the much-praised Alexandrian poet and the author of the Aetia (fl. 268 BCE), wrote an epigram about Aratus’ poem, lauding its sweet verse (Callim. Epigr. 27 Pf. = 56 GP):

Ἡσιόδου τὸ ἂεισµα καὶ ὁ τρόπος· οὐ τὸν ἀοιδῶν ἔχατον ἀλλ᾽ ὑκνέω μὴ τὸ μελιχρότατον τὸν ἑπέων ὁ Σολεὺς ἀπεµάξατο. χαίρετε λεπταί ῥήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύµβολον ἀγρυπνίης.

Hesiod’s is the song and Hesiod’s the style— not Hesiod’s verse to the last. But I don’t shrink from saying that the poet of Soli skimmed off the sweetest of his epic lines. Hail, slender words, sign of Aratus’ vigil.

The epigram is both complimentary and imitative of Aratus’ poem. Callimachus offers his own learned allusion by picking up on the name pun in Phaenomena 2, for in the epigram’s Αρήτου we hear an echo of ἄρρητον,46 which is suggested by the spelling of Aratus’ name with an eta instead of an alpha, as well as the assonance between the adjacent words ῥήσιες and Αρήτου.

These careful literary games show the attentive reader that Callimachus has spotted Aratus’ pun,

45 Bing (1990) is the first modern scholar to notice the pun. See also Bing (1993). Hanses (2014) 609 n. 1 draws attention to other potential plays on Aratus’ name in salient passages, such as the first astronomers’ division of the stars into constellations (ἐναρηρότες, Phaen. 383) and Athena’s fashioning of the universe as an armillary sphere (συναρηρότα, Phaen. 532). See Katz (2008) on Vergil’s Aratean pun at the opening of the Georgics.
which he signals by employing an Aratean technique of sweetness even as he praises that very
technique.

Leonidas of Tarentum (fl. 3rd c. BCE) also writes an epigram in response to Aratus and
like Callimachus, picks up on Aratus’ name pun (Leon. 101, 1 GP):

Γράµµα τόδ᾽ Ἄρητοιο δαήµονος, ὃς ποτε λεπτῆ
Φροντίδι δηναιοὺς ἀστέρας ἐφράσατο,
Ἀπλανέας τ᾽ ἀμφο καὶ ἄληµονας, οἶσιν ἐναργής
Τιλλόµενος κύκλοις οὐρανὸς ἐνδέδεται.
Αἰνείσθω δὲ καµὼν ἐργὸν µέγα, καὶ Διὸς εἶναι
Δεύτερος, ὅστις ἔθηκ᾽ ἄστρα φαεινότερα.

This is the writing of the experienced Aratus, who with subtle attention declared the
everlasting stars, both the non-wanderers and the rovers, in which the bright turning
firmament is set. Let us praise him for the great task at which he toiled, second to Zeus,
who rendered the stars more brilliant.

Leonidas uses the alternate spelling of Aratus’ name (Ἀρήτοιο), thereby signaling that he (like
Callimachus) has picked up on the pun on Aratus’ name in Phaenomena 2.47 Furthermore,
Leonidas emphasizes the link between Zeus and Aratus, whom he calls second to Zeus (Διὸς
εἶναι/Δεύτερος). The epigram blurs the distinction between Zeus and Aratus with ὅστις, which
could refer grammatically either to Zeus or to Aratus and therefore simultaneously points to both,
positing a connection between Zeus, the creator of the cosmos, and Aratus, the creator of the
poem.48


48 “With the statement that Aratus comes next after Zeus, Leonidas spells out what is implicit in the placement of the
pun on that poet’s name at Phainomena 2” (Bing (1993) 107). On Leonidas’ epigrams, see also Dawson (1950), esp.
276–7.
Callimachus and Leonidas’ epigrams both also include the word LEΠΤΟΣ, which alludes to Aratus’ famous acrostic in a passage that describes the moon and spells out LEΙΠΘ (Phaen. 783–7):

ΛΕΠΤΗ μὲν καθαρή τε περὶ τρίτον ἡμαρ ἐούσα
εὐδίος κ’ ἐγη· ΛΕΠΤΗ δὲ καὶ ἐν μύλ’ ἐρευθής
πνευματή· παχίων δὲ καὶ ἁμβλείησι κεραίας
τέτρατον ἐκ θριτάτοι φῶς ἀμενηνὸν ἔχουσα
ἡ νότῳ ἁμβλυνται ἡ ὕδατος ἐγγὺς ἔοντος.

If slender and clear about the third day, she will bode fair weather; if slender and very red, wind; if the crescent is thickish, with blunted horns, having a feeble fourth-day light after the third day, either it is blurred by a southerly or because rain is in the offing.49

Here, LEΠΘ creates a gamma-style acrostic, with the word beginning the initial line of the acrostic (783) and comprising the first letter of the first word of each of the next four lines, generating the word LEΠΘ in a vertical column (see the bolded letters above).50 Furthermore, the acrostic runs diagonally, as Mathias Hanses (2014) has observed (as shown in the bolded underlined letters above).51 Acrostics were one example of the Hellenistic predilection for word games and patterns, which were especially appealing to the bookish culture of Alexandria since they are only possible in written form.52

Aratus’ LEΠΘ acrostic was likely admired by Callimachus and Leonidas because it stylistically performs the very meaning of the word λεπτός which, thanks to Aratus, comes to

50 Jacques (1960) was the first modern scholar to notice the LEPTH acrostic. For other possible acrostics, see Levitan (1979) 55–68. For further discussion of the LEPTH acrostic and its reception, see Haslam (1992) 199–204 and Bing (1993) 99–109. For other possible acrostics in Hellenistic literature, see Danielewicz (2005) 321–34.
51 See also Danielewicz (2015), who argues for a hidden fifth λεπτή at Phaen. 783–4.
define the refined aesthetics of Alexandrian poetry. Callimachus and Leonidas both reference the acrostic in their epigrams, deploying the word to compliment Aratus’ style. Callimachus praises the “slender verses of Aratus” (λεπταί/ ῥήσιες Αρήτου), remarkably alluding to both the name pun and the acrostic in the space of three mere words. Leonidas also cleverly refers to the LEΠTH acrostic by remarking on Aratus’ “subtle mind” (λεπτῇ/ Φροντίδι). Alluding to Aratus’ name pun and LEPTH acrostic thus became part of the epigram convention of praising the *Phaenomena*.

In this vein, complimenting Aratus with epigrams continues in the Latin tradition. The neoteric poet C. Helvius Cinna (?–44 BCE) pens an epigram for an unnamed addressee, sending it along with a copy of Aratus (fr. 11 Courtney, Blänsdorf = 13 Hollis):

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haec tibi Arateis multum vigilata lucernis
carmina, quis ignis novimus aerios,
levis in aridulo malvae descripta libello
Prusiaca vexi munera navicula.
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These poems, much watched over by Aratean lights, by which we known the heavenly fires, I have conveyed as gifts on a Bithynian skiff, copied on a rather meager little book of smooth mallow.

Like Callimachus and Leonidas, Cinna also alludes to the *Phaenomena*’s name pun and the LEPTH acrostic. *Arateis* points to *arrheton*, and one variant of the text substitutes *e* for *a*, which would nicely Latinize the name play in the Greek. Cinna may also allude to the LEITH acrostic with the word *levis*, one possible Latin translation of the Greek *leptos*. As *leptos* came to be a buzzword for Hellenistic aesthetics in the Greek, so also *levis* could represent the refined style.

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53 I agree with Cameron (1995) 21–28 that λεπτός becomes a hallmark of refined style thanks to Aratus rather than Callimachus, on which see Volk (2015) 262–5.

54 See Volk (2015) 263 n. 28.
“smooth” Hellenistic style in the Latin. In any case, the proliferation of diminutives (aridulo, libello, navicula) point to the “subtlety” of the Hellenistic style. By using these allusive poeticisms, Cinna inserts himself into the Aratean tradition, which is both Hellenistic and astronomical, as well as the learned line of epigrammatists who praise Aratus. Cinna thus manages to be both Aratean and Callimachean.

Cinna is participating in the poetic topos of writing at night, known as ἀγρυπνίη in Greek and vigilare or lucubratio in Latin, which ever since Callimachus’ epigram (if not before), “is fixed with the new poetic significance” (Thomas (1979) 200). The “Aratean lamps” (Arateis ... lucernis) evoke the candlelight Aratus works by while writing his poetry at night, but a clear double entendre is present in this line: the Aratean lamps, of course, are also the stars. The mention of “heavenly fires” (ignis...aerios) is also fitting, given that these “fires” could refer to the flames of the lamp but also the twinklings of the night sky. Aratus, then, is present in the poet’s nighttime work as well as the night sky itself.

Cinna’s excellent epigram is another piece of evidence for the popularity of Aratus in first-century Rome. As the Romans began to pick up “the discourse of (popular) astronomy, they received it in its established Aratean format, that is, in the shape of the Phaenomena and its

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55 Cf. Volk (2015) 263: “Cinna’s Aratus, then, is both a champion of the new poetics and an unquestioned authority on the night sky.”

56 The ἀγρυπνίη of Callimachus and the vigilata carmina of Cinna are both examples of lucubratio. Although lucubratio can have sinister associations, “sleeplessness” pre-Augustus tends to be a positive activity. Thanks to Callimachus’ well-known epigram, the metaphor of writing poetry at night becomes associated with literary excellence, at least up until Vergil. Indeed, the night time “vigil” of burning the midnight oil is associated with writing poetry and/or pining for a lover. Ker thoroughly treats the tradition of lucubratio in the Imperial period (2004) 209–42. He does not, however, mention these epigrams and the tradition of “sleeplessness” as a metaphor for writing poetry (astronomical or otherwise) or being in love.

pedagogical paraphernalia” (Volk (2015) 264). Cinna, who ran in the poetic circles shared by Calvus and Catullus, was a contemporary of Cicero. Although we do not know the year in which this epigram was written, it seems probable that it was written after the publication of Cicero’s *Aratea.* By virtue of writing in Latin about Aratus, Cinna participates in the Aratean tradition that is brought into Rome by Cicero himself. Cinna emphasizes his own contribution to this poetic translation with the boat from Bithynia, birthplace of Hipparchus and Theodosius, two great astronomers. By writing this epigram, Cinna has “conveyed” (*vehi*) Aratus’ poem on an Alexandrian boat, a metapoetic description of his own contribution to the translation of Greece to Rome. At Cinna’s pen, Aratus becomes a hallmark of the emerging Latin aesthetics, just as he did of the Alexandrian aesthetic in the Greek. And whereas Cicero takes an entire poem to achieve this, Cinna manages it in the space of a single epigram, thus beating Cicero in a Hellenistic game.

1.3 Translation as Creation

In his 2016 monograph *Beyond Greek,* Denis Feeney points out that the birth of Latin literature is something of a unprecedented phenomenon in human history, in which Roman authors, although bilingual, translated and reworked Greek texts into Latin, the vernacular language of Rome. As Feeney puts it, “The Latin project of systematically translating literary texts is not a natural or inevitable thing to happen, and analogies for it in the ancient world turn out to be hard to find.”

58 Aside from its literary merits, the *Phaenomena* was also a handbook of sorts on astronomy. The *Phaenomena* generated a number of scholia and commentaries, including a commentary by the great astronomer Hipparchus (2nd c. BCE). On the scholia and commentaries, see Dickey (2007) 56–60.

59 On the dating of the epigram, see Hollis (2007) 19. Cinna may have accompanied Memmius in Bithynia in 57–6 BCE, in which case it would be reasonable to assume that the epigram is dated to that general time.

60 Feeney (2016) 16.
Latin literature as such was born as a translation in 240 BCE at the *Ludi Romani* with a Latin play rendered from the Greek. Translation itself, far from a rote exercise, is itself a creative act, as Feeney shows. But Feeney’s study overlooks a very significant cultural phenomenon: Aratus and his poetry. Feeney rightly observes that “what the Romans translate from Greek is precisely what we call ‘literature,’ and what they leave untranslated is precisely what we call ‘science,’ together with mathematics, divination, and music.” Although Aratus is poetic, he is not unscientific, and the boundaries of “science” and “literature” are not as neat as Feeney here suggests. Aratus’ poem embodies the scientific learning of its day through its literariness, and perhaps, is better able to achieve a scientific and poetic goals. Thus, Feeney’s light treatment of Aratus does not adequately portray the cultural impact of Aratus at Rome and Cicero’s Latin translation of it.

Despite its popularity, Aratus’ *Phaenomena* was not met with universal acclaim at Rome. Over a hundred years after Cicero’s *Aratea*, the great rhetorician and admirer of Cicero, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (35–100 CE), gives a scathing critique of Aratus in his *Institutio oratoria* (10.1.55):

> Arati materia motu caret, ut in qua nulla varietas, nullus adfectus, nulla persona, nulla cuiusquam sit oratio; sufficit tamen operi cui se parem credidit.

The material of Aratus lacks motion, being such that there is no variety, no emotion, no character, no speech; nevertheless he is sufficient for the task to which he believed himself suited.

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61 Feeney (2016) 16.
A rather harsh judge of Aratus, Quintilian underappreciates the merits of his astronomical poem, especially its imaginative appeal and literary refinement. But if there is any merit to his complaint, it is rectified in Cicero’s translation of the poem; in the Latin Cicero breathes new life into the verse, animating it with characters and expanding and compressing the narrative as he sees fit. Cicero makes the sky come alive with a cosmic drama, creating a uniquely Roman, living cosmos.

A I O V E

Let’s start at the beginning, which as Julie Andrews teaches us, is a very good place to start. When you read you begin with ABC, and apparently Cicero thought the alphabet was a good way to start a poem:

A Iove Musarum primordia

A translation of Aratus’,

Ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα, τὸν οὐδέποτ’ ἄνδρες ἐῶμεν
ἀρρητὸν

The full line of Cicero’s Latin has been lost, but we can see poetic genius in these four remaining words. As Joshua Katz has pointed out, Cicero’s opening consists of all of the vowels of the

62 Cf. Inst. 1.4.4, where Quintilian mentions the importance of understanding astronomy for reading poetry.

63 Green (2014) emphasizes Cicero’s predilection “to exploit the descriptive and anthropomorphic potential of the subject matter to create a more ‘tactile’ and dramatic cosmos” (134). Volk (2015) also points out the heightened drama of Cicero’s Aratea and the subsequent Latin translators: “In the Latin Aratea, the constellations come alive, are endowed with character and emotions, and act out plots” (269).

64 Katz (2009) 84 also compares Cicero and Julie Andrews in the Sound of Music. I believe that Katz and I came to this comparison separately, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the possibility that I had read Katz’ chapter and forgotten it, surfacing his comparison from my subconscious when I sat down to write my own thoughts on Cicero’s Aratea.
alphabet in the most compact and comprehensible makeup: A I O V E.\textsuperscript{65} Although when voiced, the I and the V are consonontal, when read, their vowel-ness is emphasized by virtue of their proximity to the A, O, and E. Later Latin translations do not follow Cicero, but eliminate the vowel effect by inserting a “b” after the “a,” changing \textit{a} to \textit{ab}.

For example, Vergil: \textbf{ab love} principium Musae: Iovis omnia plena; ille colit terras, illi mea carminia curae. (Ecl. 3)

Or, Ovid: \textbf{ab love}, Musa parens, (cedunt Iovis omnia regno,) carminia nostra move! (Met. 10.148–9)

Or Germanicus: \textbf{Ab love} principium magno deduxit Aratus, carminis at nobis, genitor, tu maximus auctor, te veneror, tibi sacra fero doctique laboris primitias. (German. Arat. 1–4).

Cicero, the first translator of the \textit{Aratea}, has chosen \textit{a} while his successors chose \textit{ab}, a decision that places all of the Latin vowels together at the very beginning of the poem. Why does this matter? Joshua Katz, in his article “Gods and Vowels” considers the sonority of the cosmos and the importance of vowels in particular for that sound. In many ancient traditions, song and speech are linked to the creation of the world. For example, in the Pentateuch, God creates the world by speaking it into being (Gen. LXX 1.3):

\begin{quote}
καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.
\end{quote}

And God said, Let there be light. And there was light.

In the Jewish tradition, the creation of the universe is directly tied to God’s speech. Later, in the Christian tradition, the writer of the Gospel of John writes that Christ is the “word” (\textit{Λόγος}, John

1:1) that was present at the beginning (Ἐν ἀρχῇ, John 1:1). Vowels may not be something you think about much in your day-to-day life, but as the mom of a seven year old who is learning to spell, I think about them quite a lot. As I tell him, every syllable must have a vowel. In fact, it is impossible to articulate a word without a vowel. They are the fundamental power of words that are bounded and articulated by their consonantal brethren. As Katz explains, vowels “are in effect the free air that defines a language’s syllabic structure. They are primary, uttered with an open vocal tract, whereas consonants (Greek ἄφωνα, i.e. “un-sounds”) involve the full or partial constriction of the tract and are literally con-sonantes, things ‘sounding with’ other things, namely of course the primary, ‘phonated,’ syllable-building vowels.”

Vowels are the fundamental matter of language.

I use the word “matter” very deliberately, because there is an analogy between the building blocks of words and the building blocks of physical matter. In fact, Cicero’s poetic successor Lucretius makes the analogy between verbal and physical elementa explicit (Lucr. 2.688–99):

Quin etiam passim nostris in versibus ipsis
multa elementa vides multis communia verbis,
cum tamen inter se versus ac verba necesse est
confiteare alia ex alii constare elementis;
non quo multa parum communis littera currat
aut nulla inter se duo sint ex omnibus isdem,
sed quia non volgo paria omnibus omnia constant.
sic aliis in rebus item, communia multa
multarum rerum cum sint primordia, verum
dissimili tamen inter se consistere summa
possunt; ut merito ex alii constare feratur

66 Granted, some languages do not have vowels, but even languages that lack vowels as such still require the vocalization of vocalic sounds.

humanum genus et fruges arbustaque laeta.

Moreover, throughout my own verses you see different words contain the same elements. many elements common to many words, although you must confess that both verses and words are different and consist of different elements; I do not say that there are very few common letters running through all, or that no two words, if compared, are made up of elements all the same, but that commonly they are not all like all. So in other things also, although many first-beginnings are common to many things, yet taken one with another they can make up a whole quite unlike; so that different elements may rightly be held to compose the human race and corn and luxuriant trees.68

The elementa of the alphabet are like the elementa that make up the nature of the universe, which Lucretius calls primordia (Lucr. 2.696),69 the same word that Cicero uses at the beginning of his Aratea (1). In the Aratea, too, we see some clever play between the fundamentals of the universe and the fundamentals of language. Some of this is speculative because of the fragmentary nature of the poem’s opening, but Lucretius may be drawing on Cicero at this point. After all, as Emma Gee has convincingly shown, Lucretius is engaged in a poetic polemic with Cicero’s Aratea throughout the entire poem.70 Cicero and Lucretius imply that the poetic and physical analogy is more than accidental, a fundamental aspect of the cosmic song, expressed in the creation of worlds and the crafting of words. The world was made by words, but the converse also holds: words make worlds.

Cicero, in the first five letters of his poem, not only ingeniously draws attention to the connection between words and the cosmos, but I suggest, makes an even more daring poetic move. By pioneering the first Latin translation of Aratus, Cicero, assumes for himself a

68 Translation is Loeb.
69 On Lucretius’ wordplay and his connection between verbal and material elements, see Snyder (1980), esp. 31–51.
Demiurgic poetic role as the creator of the world of cosmic Latin literature. The poem, then, represents more than just a mere rote translation exercise from Greek to Latin, but itself is the poetic big bang of Latin star poetry. Cicero’s poetic “Genesis” project elevates the Latin tongue itself to the speech of Zeus, God himself. Cicero’s *Aratea*, then, represents the creative power of the Latin language and Cicero’s role in making a new Roman world.

**Lepus Constellation**

Let us now turn to Aratus’ version of the Lepus constellation (*Phaen.* 338–40):

\[ \text{ποσσὶν δ’ Ὡρίωνος ὑπ’ ἀµφοτέροισι Λαγωός} \\
\text{ἐµµενὲς ἤµατα πάντα διώκεται· αὐτὰρ ὃ γ’ αἰεὶ} \\
\text{Σείριος ἐξόπιθεν φέρεται µετιόντι ἐοικώς.} \]

Under both feet of Orion the Hare is always being pursued through all days; for Sirius is always carried along behind it, like a pursuer

Aratus’ description of these constellations is rather straightforward, accurately explaining the patterns of the constellations and the apparent pursuit of Sirius on the heels of the Hare. Whereas Aratus suppresses the dynamism of a dog (i.e. Sirius the Dog Star) chasing a rabbit (i.e. the Hare), Cicero paints a vivid picture of the hunt in the reader’s mind (Cic. *Arat.* 33.120–4):

\[ \text{Hunc propter supterque pedes quos diximus ante} \\
\text{Orioni’ iacet levipes Lepus. Hic fugit, ictus} \\
\text{horribicos metuens rostri tremebundus acuti:} \\
\text{nam Canis infesto sequitur vestigia cursu,} \\
\text{praecipitantem agitans.} \]

Next to it (i.e. the Dog) and under the feet of Orion, which I mentioned before, lies the light-footed Hare. Filled with terror, it flees, fearing the horrifying bites of its sharp snout; for the Dog follows its tracks with its hostile course, hunting it as it runs headlong
Cicero expands the passage by two hexameters, affording him the space to create a more dramatic scene. The Hare, instead of just being the object of pursuit, in the Latin becomes “light-footed” (levipes, *Arat.* 121), a word first attested here which in context picks up on the “feet” (pedes, *Arat.* 120) of Orion in the line above as well as the swiftness of the Hare itself. In *levipes* may be some clever verbal play; *pes* most immediately refers to the Hare’s fleet foot, but it could also allude to the “light” (*levis*) “foot” (*pes*) of the hexameter line, playfully enacting the “lightness” and “pleasantness” of its poetic charm. This reading may be confirmed by the juxtaposition of *levipes* and *Lepus* (*Arat.* 121). *Lepus* is a translation of the Greek Λαγώς (cf. Λαγωός, *Phaen.* 338) but according to Varro citing Aelius Stilo’s etymology, *lepus* is derived from *levipes*.71 By placing the two words side by side, Cicero signals that he knows this learned etymology. After all, Cicero also studied with Stilo. Furthermore, we may detect a pun on *lepus*, a homonym with *lepos*, pointing to *lepidus*: “pleasant” and “witty.” Thus, Cicero cleverly shows off the merits of the Latin language and his learned verse in a simple hare.

While Aratus is largely concerned with the perpetuity of the chase (ἐµµενὲς, *Phaen.* 339; ἡµατα πάντα, 339; αἰεί, 339), Cicero, by contrast, highlights the heightened emotion of the scene: the fierce maw (*rostri…acuti, Arat.* 122) frightens the hare, “full of terror” (*tremibundus, Arat.* 122) because of the dog’s “hostile course” (*infesto…cursu, Arat.* 123) and “horrible bites” (*ictus…horrificos, Arat.* 121–2). Furthermore, whereas in Aratus the Dog is only “like a pursuer” (µετιόντι ἐοικώς, *Phaen.* 340), in Cicero the chase is made real. Thus, the

71 Cf. Varro Rust. 3.12: *L. Aelius putabat ab eo dictum leporem a celeritudine, quod levipes esset. Ego arbitror a Graeco vocabulo antico, quod eum Aeolis λέποριν appellabant. See also Varro Ling. 5.101: Lepus, quod Siculi, ut Aeolis quidam Graeci, dicunt λέποριν: a Roma quod orti Siculi, ut annales veteres nostri dicunt, fortasse hinc illuc tulerunt et hic reliquerunt id nomen.*
“movement” (*motus*, Inst. 10.1.55) and “emotion” (*adfectus*, Inst. 10.1.55) that Quintilian had criticized Aratus for lacking is rectified in Cicero’s version.\(^72\)

Reading the passage with an attentive eye is invited by the motif of hunting, which can have metapoetic associations. Cicero, I suggest, beckons us readers to trace the literary path (*vestigia*, Arat. 123), keeping a sharp eye out for literary traces and sharpening our senses to pick up on examples of poetic play.

**Orion episode**

We encounter another example of the vividness of Cicero’s *Aratea* with his story of Orion the Hunter. According to mythological sources, Orion was very similar to Herakles, and like his mythological counterpart, is both civilizer and maniac.\(^73\) Let us turn to the passage in both Aratus and Cicero.

The tale of the aetiology of the Orion and Scorpio constellation is in the section on the simultaneous rising and settings of the constellations with the Zodiac. Scorpio forever rises as Orion sets, and the doctus poeta explains why (Arat. *Phaen.* 634–646):

\[
\text{Καµπαὶ δ᾿ ἀν Ποταµοῖο καὶ αὐτίκ’ ἐπερχοµένοι}
\text{Σκορπίου ἐµπίπτοιεν ἐὕρρου ὄκεανοῖο·}
\text{δς καὶ ἐπερχόµενος φοβεί Μéγαν Ὡρίωνα.}
\text{Ἀρτεµις ἱλήκοι· προτέρων λόγος, οἳ µιν ἔφαντο}
\text{έλκησαι πέπλοιο, Χίῳ ὅτε θηρία πάντα}
\text{καρτερὸς Ὡρίων στἰβαρῆ ἐπέκοπτε κορύνη,}
\text{θήρης ἄρνυµενος κείνῳ χάριν Οἰνοπίωνι.}
\text{ἡ δὲ οἱ ἐξαυτῆς ἐπετείλατο θηρίον άλλο,}
\text{νῆσου ἀναρρήξασα µέσας ἑκάτερθε κολώνας,}
\]

\(^72\) On the heightened drama of this scene, see Volk (2015) 269–70.

\(^73\) On the Orion myth, see Kidd (1997) 396, who notes that the story may be Eastern in origin. For a sustained study of the myth, see Fontenrose (1981).
The windings of the River will plunge into the fair stream of ocean as soon as the Scorpion arrives, which also puts great Orion to flight at its coming. May Artemis be gracious! It is a tale of the ancients, who said that stalwart Orion seized her by her robe, when in Chios he was smiting all the wild creatures with his stout club, striving to secure a hunting gift for Oenopion there. But she immediately summoned up against him another creature, breaking open the centre of the island’s hills to left and to right, a scorpion that stung and killed him for all his size, emerging even more massive, because he had outraged Artemis herself. That is why they say that when the Scorpion comes over the horizon, Orion flees round the earth’s boundary.\textsuperscript{74}

Let us compare the Greek with the corresponding Latin passage (\textit{Aratea} 34.417–35):

\textit{Cum uero uis est uehemens exorta Nepai,}
late fusa, volans per terras fama vagatur
et Orion quondam manibus uiolasse Dianam
dicitur, excelsis errans in collibus amens
quos tenet Aegaeo defixa in gurgite Chius,
Bacchica quam uiridi conuestit tegmine uitis.
ille feras uaecors amenti corde necabat,
Oenopionis auens epulas ornare nitentis.
At uero pedibus subito percussa Dianae,
insula discessit, disiectaque saxa reuellens
perculit, et caecas lustrauit luce lacunas,
e quibus ingenti existit cui corpori’ prae se
scorpios infesta praeportans flebile acumen.
hic valido cupide uenantem perculit ictu,
mortiferum in uenas fingens per uulnera uirus:
ille graui moriens constrauit corpore terram.
Quare cum magnis sese Nepa lucibus effert,
Orion fugiens commendat corpora terris.\textsuperscript{75}

But when the mighty force of the Scorpion arose, spread widely, a rumor flies through the lands and is spread about that once Orion violated Diana with his hands while out of his mind, wandering in the high hills which Chios holds, fixed in the Aegean pool, which the

\textsuperscript{74} Text and trans. is Kidd (1997).

\textsuperscript{75} I have followed the text of Pellacani (2015).
Bacchic vine dresses with a green covering. Orion, insane, was harming the wild beasts with a wild heart, longing to decorate the glittering feasts of Oenopion. But suddenly struck by the feet of Diana, the island fell apart, and throwing up the rocks tore them apart and lit up the dark crevices with light. Out of these the Scorpion with its huge body stood out, carrying before itself its tear-inducing point. It struck the hunter eagerly with its strong force, pouring its death-bringing poison into the veins through the wounds: that one while dying covered the ground with his heavy body. For this reason, when Nepa (= the Scorpion) carries itself forth with great lights, Orion in flight entrusts his body to the earth.

David Kubiak (1981) discusses the passage at length, pointing out its influence on later Latin literature (which we will turn to in due course). For the present purposes, I would like to draw attention to the way in which Cicero expands the original narrative in Aratus. Depending on where you consider the starting and ending points of the passage to be in the Greek and the Latin, the Latin is at least three lines longer than its Greek counterpart. Like in the Lepus passage, we see Cicero here infusing the narrative with more emotion and drama.

Orion’s emotional state is emphasized in the Latin, whereas in the Greek it is never mentioned. In Cicero’s version, we learn that he is a crazed: “out of his mind” (amens, Arat. 34.421), “mad” (vecors, Arat. 34.424), and “with an insane heart” (amenti corde, Arat. 34.424). We also get a glimpse into the emotional state of Orion who is “desirous” (avens, Arat. 34.425) as he hunts. Aratus’ version is for the most part a summary of the “old story” (προτέρων λόγος, Phaen. 637), but Cicero unfolds the drama before our eyes, fleshing out the details of Orion’s hunting, Diana’s escape, and the Scorpion’s attack. With Cicero, we hear the earth pounding beneath the footsteps of the goddess, which is captured in pedibus and percussae and the proliferation of labials (pedibus subito percussa, Arat. 34.426) and dentals (Dianae/insula

The breaking open of the ground is made more vivid, as the island does not merely “crack” (*discessit, Arat. 34.427*) but actively plucks and throws rocks that have been dashed to pieces (*disiectaque saxa reuellens, Arat. 34.427*) and strikes (*perculit, Arat. 34.428*). Cicero also takes the opportunity to imbue the passage with some astronomical valences; in the context of the story, *caecas lustrauit luce lacunas* (*Arat. 34.428*) refers to the dark places of the earth breaking open to see the light of day, but given the astronomical nature of the poem, the passage is also charged with stellar meaning. *Lustro* is a word that Cicero elsewhere uses of heavenly bodies, and when juxtaposed with *luce*, alerts the reader to the astral significance this event is about to have. It is almost as if the astronomical patterns are already predestined in the events of the story.

One last point of difference between the Greek and the Latin: in Cicero’s version we may detect a more erotic undertone to the passage, which would be fitting given the poetic sensibilities of Hellenistic poetry in general and Latin poetry in particular. Aratus mentions Orion grabbing Diana by the cloak (*ἔλκησα πέπλοιο, Phaen. 638*), but does not otherwise bring to the fore the chase as a sexual pursuit. Cicero, by contrast, makes the story an especially erotic one; the *topos* of wandering out of one’s mind is a poetic trope for being lovesick. Of course, such amorous desires should never be directed towards Diana, the virgin goddess. It is fitting then that the Scorpion she sends as punishment is depicted in sexual terms. The Scorpion hits Orion “desirously” (*cupide, Arat. 34.431*), a word which is charged with amatory associations, and by

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77 On the poetry imitating the sound of the island’s shaking and cracking, see Pellacani (2015) 138 *ad loc.*

78 Cf. *Arat. 34.332.*
extension may give “strong thrust” \emph{(valido\ldots ictu, Arat. 34.431)} erotic shadings.\footnote{On \textit{ictus} as a sexual word, see Adams (1982) 148–9, who notes that \textit{ictus} is used by Lucretius to refer to ejaculation (Lucr. 4.1245; 4.1273).} “Wound” can also have sexual associations, and can refer to the deflowering of a virgin (Adams (1990) 152). The filling of veins with fluid can also be a sexual reference (Adams (1990) 35). The fluid which flows from the Scorpion’s tail is most obviously poison, but also has sexual associations. Not only is the tail itself a rather phallic appendage,\footnote{On the association of penis with tail, see Adams (1982) 35–7.} it also emits \textit{virus}, a word which means “secretion” and is later attested as semen \emph{(OLD s.v. 3a)}. The parallelism of love and death is also an established poetic trope, and “dying” can refer to death or metaphorically to physical exhaustion after intercourse.\footnote{See Adams (1982) 159.}

In the Lepus and Scorpion constellations, Cicero creates a cosmos in Latin that is filled with movement and drama, and I have shown how he expands and elaborates upon his Greek model, showcasing his literary excellence and the capacity of Latin to capture the stars and perhaps even outstrip the Greek. Far from providing a stolid translation, Cicero turns Aratus’ poem into a living cosmos.

\textbf{Cicero’s Zodiac}

In section 1.2, I discussed the influence of Aratus on the epigram tradition, especially with the LEPTH acrostic \emph{(Phaen. 783–7)}. Cicero also includes an acrostic, transforming it to suit his distinctly Latin project \emph{(Arat. 34.317–40)}:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Zodiacum} hunc Graeci vocitant, nostri Latini orbem \textbf{signiferum} perhibebunt nomine vero:
\end{quote}
nam gerit hic volens bis sex ardentia **signa**.
Aestifer est pandens ferventia sidera Cancer;
hunc subter fulgens cedit vis torva Leonis,
quem rutilo sequitur conlucens corpore Virgo;
exin proiectae claro cum lumine Chelae,
ispaque consequitur lucens vis magna Nepai;
inde Sagittipotens dextra flexum tenet arcum;
post hunc ore fero Capricornus vadere pergit;
umidus unde loci conlucet Aquarius orbem;
exim squamiferi serpentes ludere Pisces;
quis comes est Aries, obscuro lumine labens,
inflexoque genu, proiecto corpore, Taurus,
et Gemini clarum iactantes lucibus ignem.
Haec sol aeterno convestit lumine lustrans,
annua conficiens vertentia tempora cursu.
Hic quantus terris consectus pellitur orbis,
Tantundem pandens supera mortalibus edit:
sex omni semper cedunt labentia nocte,
tot caelum rursus fugientia **signa** revisunt.
Hoc spatium tranans caecis nox conficit umbris,
quod supera terras prima unde nocte relictum est
**signifero** ex orbi, sex **signorum** ordine fultum.

The Greeks call it “Zodiac,” we Latins will call it the sign-bearing circle by its true name; for it is willing to carry the twelve flashing signs. There is heat-bearing Cancer, revealing the flaming stars; under it gleaming comes the fierce force of Leo, whom Virgo follows, shining brightly with her golden-red body; next come Scorpio’s claws (= Libra), jutting out with bright light, and the great shining force of itself follows, from there Sagittarius (the one powerful with his arrows) holds the flexed bow in his right hand, after this one Capricorn proceeds to go with a wild face, there wet Aquarius lights up the circle, after that the scaly serpentine Pisces play; Aries is their companion, gliding with a hidden light. On a bent knee, with his body leaning forward, is Taurus, and Gemini hurling bright fire with their stars. The sun in its movement dresses these with an eternal light, completing the space of a year with its turning course. As much of this circle of the Zodiac is cut off from the earth while it is driven on, by that same amount spreading itself on high shows itself to mortals. For six slipping signs recede always every night, and as many fleeing signs see the sky again. Night passing on with its blind shades completes the distance that remained of the Zodiac from above the earth at the beginning of the night, upheld by the order of the six signs.
Let us first establish that ZONA is indeed an intentional acrostic. Cristoano Castelletti provides useful criteria for determining the validity of an acrostic: “a) the relation between the acrostics and the context of the passage in which they appear; b) various signposting techniques devised by the author; and c) intertextual references that embed the acrostics within the literary tradition.” Let us take each of Castelletti’s criteria in order.

A. The acrostic accords with the meaning of the passage, which is about the twelve constellations that form the Zodiac. Florian Hurka (2006) argues that the ZONA acrostic it is not a meaningless coincidence, pointing out its suitability to its immediate context. ZONA is a gloss on the first word Zodiacum, which in effect forms a type of gamma style acrostic. Zona refers to the imaginary bands that encircle the outer sphere of the two-sphere universe model, which fits nicely with the section on celestial circles (Arat. 34.237–340 = Phaen. 462–558). Furthermore, the end of the passage is marked by signifero (Arat. 34.340), a word which is also present in the second line of the zodiac passage (Arat. 34.318) and is itself a gloss on the word “Zodiac” (Zodiacum, Arat. 34.317).

B. The passage surrounding the ZONA acrostic may signal the reader to look for signs of verbal play (Arat. 34.308–16):

Quattuor hi motu cuncti voluuntur eodem;
sed tantum supera terras semper tenet ille
curriculum, oblique inflexus tribus orbibus unus,
quanto est divisus Cancer spatio a Capricorno;

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82 See Hurka (2006), Bishop (2016), and most recently, Rick (2019).
et subter terras spatium par esse necesse est.

All these four circles turn in the same motion, but that one always holds as much of its course above the earth, obliquely embracing the three others (=equator and tropics), as Cancer is divided in space from Capricorn. And it is necessary for an equal measure of the band to pass under the earth.

Here Cicero, following Aratus, describes the layout of the celestial bands, of which the Zodiac is one, but he may also subtly cue the reader to keep an eye out for signa. The four circles \((quattuor hi motu cuncti, \ Arat. \ 34.308)\) could evoke the four letters forming the ZONA acrostic, which all turn on the same spot \((voluuntur eodem, \ Arat. \ 34.308)\), i.e. the Z that is the fulcrum of Γ shape that holds the three other letters/bands. Furthermore, the Zodiac band intersects the others, embracing them obliquely \((oblique inflexus tribus orbibus unus, \ Arat. \ 34.310)\), which could subtly allude to the single Z holding the three other letters of the acrostic which extend “askance” from the “single” \((unos, \ Arat. \ 34.310)\) letter that holds it. Moreover, the acrostic lies at the center of the Zodiac passage \((\ \ Arat. \ 34.317–20)\), with 20 lines above and 19 lines below it, thus visually mirroring in the text the Zodiac band “girdling” the other celestial circles. The Zodiac belt, which is a Zona, is circled by the middle, and in this way performs its very meaning by encircling the middle of the purple passage as the Zodiac itself does.

C. The ZONA acrostic participates in the “acrostic conversation”\(^ {84} \) from Aratus’ LEPTH acrostic which includes the epigrammatists discussed in 1.2 above. Although the ZONA acrostic does not replicate the LEPTH acrostic precisely, it serves a

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\(^{84}\) A helpful term coined by Hejduk (2018).
similar purpose. Aratus crafts his poem to be a mirror of the natural world, and conversely, the patterns of the natural world are figured in the poem. In this way, word plays like the LEPTH acrostic serve as a textual analogy for the meaningful patterns we encounter in the heavens (i.e. constellations). In other words, the LEPTH acrostic is a “sign,” like the stars above. Cicero follows Aratus’ verbal signification by embedding an acrostic in a passage that particularly emphasizes the constellations of the Zodiac as star signs in particular.

Although the ZONA acrostic does not precisely duplicate the LEPTH acrostic, it elegantly captures Aratus’ poetic spirit transformed into Roman form. As the LEPTH acrostic performs the poetic agenda that the cosmos is full of signs, so also Cicero’s ZONA attests to the inherent meaning of words and constellations and the fundamental connection between the two. Notably, Cicero locates this acrostic in a passage which emphasizes astral semiotics in particular. Cicero portrays the Zodiac as a “sign-bearing circle” (orbem signiferum, Arat. 34.318).

Cicero significantly expands his passage of the Zodiac. Aratus succinctly describes the Zodiac in a straightforward manner in order to show how it is an element of the design of the celestial circles. Consider how Aratus lays out the Zodiac (Phaen. 544–9):

\begin{verbatim}
Ζωϊδίων δὲ ἑ κύκλον ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν.
Τῷ ἔνι Καρκίνος ἐστί, Λέων ἐπὶ τῷ, μετὰ δ’ αὐτόν
Παρθένος· αἱ δ’ ἐπὶ οἱ Χηλαι καὶ Σκορπίος αὐτὸς
Τοξευτής τε καὶ Αἰγόκερως, ἐπὶ δ’ Ἀιγόκερηθί
Ὑδροχόος· δύο δ’ αὐτῷ ἔπ’ Ἰχθύες ἀστερόεντες,
\end{verbatim}

85 Volk (2012) points out how Aratus’ poem is a microcosm of another heavenly text: the night sky.
86 Henkel (2011) 183 n. 9 passes over the ZONA acrostic, wondering if Cicero might have rendered Aratus’ LEPTH with TENUI vel sim.
τοὺς δὲ μέτα Κριός, Ταῦρος δ’ ἐπὶ τῷ Δίδυμοί τε.

Men call it by name the circle of the Zodiac. On it is the Crab, and next the Lion, and under that the Maiden, after her the Claws and the Scorpion itself, the Archer and Capricorn, and after Capricorn the Water-pourer; after him the two Fishes are starred, after them the Ram, the Bull after that and the Twins.87

Aratus calls the band Ζωϊδίων, the diminutive of ζῷον, animal or living creature. Aratus emphasizes the visual aspect of the Zodiac, choosing a nomenclature which draws attention to the Zodiac as a series of pictures of creatures that we see in the sky. Notably, Aratus does not use the word “sign” in his portrayal of the Zodiac at all. Instead, he succinctly informs the reader what the constellations of the Zodiac are.

Cicero, by contrast, expands the passage and emphasizes how the Zodiac is made up, not of pictures of creatures, but of star signs. Cicero uses signum (or a compound of it) several times in his depiction of the Zodiac: twice in the opening lines of the ZONA acrostic (signiferum, Arat. 34.318; signa, Arat. 34.319); once in the line preceding the acrostic (signa, Arat. 34.316); and three times in the closing lines of the section (signa, Arat. 34.337; signifero, Arat. 34.340; signorum, Arat. 34.340). The passage departs from its Greek model to make the point that the Zodiac is a system of signs.

It is fitting, then, that Cicero takes the opportunity to correct the Greek (Arat. 34.317–9):

Zodiacum hunc Graeci vocitant, nostri Latini
orbem signiferum perhibebunt nomine vero:
nam gerit hic volens bis sex ardentia signa.

The Greeks call it “Zodiac,” we Latins shall call it by its true name, the signifying circle: for this turning wheel bears the two-times-six gleaming signs.

87 Text and trans. is Kidd (1997).
The Greeks call the Zodiac band according to its association with the Greek ζῷον, living creatures. But in Latin, it is the *signifer orbis*, a name which communicates that the Zodiac is a circle of star signs communicating to mankind, connecting the heavenly and the terrestrial realms. *Signum* not only means “sign” (*OLD* s.v. 3), but can also refer to language in particular (*OLD* s.v. 1a, 3d). Like Aratus, Cicero also makes an analogy between the text (made up of words) and the heavens (made up of stars). Both, after all, are sign systems, albeit of different sorts. For this reason, Cicero declares that he is calling the Zodiac by its “true name” (*nomine vero, Arat.* 34.318), drawing attention to his coining of a new astronomical term as well as its semiotic accuracy. Cicero thus slyly showcases the equivalency—if not superiority—of the Latin tongue.88 Even great Aratus, the marker of kindly Zeus’ natural signs, failed to notice that the Zodiac is itself a sign system. By including his version of the LEPTH acrostic here, Cicero has his words poetically mirror the signs the Zodiac gives to humankind, offering his own sign at a point in the text that (re)defines the Zodiac as a circle of signs. Crucially, the semiotic nature of the Zodiac comes through in Cicero’s Latin more clearly than it does in the Greek.

The semiotic importance of the ZONA acrostic is signaled by the immediately preceding passage on the craftsman simile, which draws a parallel between a work of art and the universe, highlighting the artistry of god as well as the divinity of the artist. This, of course, has huge implications for the poet at hand: Cicero. Like the maker of the armillary spheres, he too is creating an ordered work of art with the poem (*Arat.* 34.311–6):

\[
\text{ut nemo, cui sancta manu doctissima Pallas}
\text{ sollement ipsa dedit fabricae rationibus artem,}
\text{tam tornare cate contortos possiet orbis}
\text{ quam sunt in caelo diuino numine flexi,}
\]

terram cingentes, ornantes lumine mundum,
culmine transuerso retinentes sidera fulta.

So that not even one to whom most learned sacred Pallas herself gave with her hand an art skilled in the ways of workmanship, could turn so cleverly the interlocked circles as they are flexed in the heavens by divine will, girding the earth, embellishing the world with light holding the stars fixed on a transverse column.89

Emma Gee has pointed out that the layout of the celestial circles in Aratus serves as the crowning argument for intelligent design (2013b, 192). The acrostic also works as an indication of artistry on a smaller scale by replicating the divine craftsmanship of the cosmos. It is fitting, then, in a passage that showcases the divine order of the cosmos, to include an acrostic to make that point. The correspondence of universe/text works nicely, since words are made up of individual letters, much as stars make up individual constellations. Furthermore, Cicero elsewhere associates acrostics with careful handiwork and planning on the part of an intelligent mind (De div. 2.112).90

It is interesting to consider that Cicero might be importing the beginnings of an astrology here. The Zodiac obviously plays an extremely important role in astrology, which came to be more fully developed with Manilius in the Augustan generation of poets. But the fact that Cicero develops more of a robust astrological (potentially) dimension to the Zodiac is worthy of note.91

The Zodiac is much more fleshed out than it is in Aratus, which essentially does no more than list the signs of the Zodiac in the space of a couple lines. Cicero, however, expands the section and emphasizes the way in which the Zodiac is sign-filled, having significance for mankind and

89 Trans. is Gee (2001) 529 with my modifications.

90 Atque in Sibyllinis ex primo versu cuiusque sententiae primis litteris illius sententiae carmen omne praetexitur. Hoc scriptoris est, non furentis, adhibentis diligentiam, non insani. See also Gore and Kersahw (2008) 394.

bringing various states: such as “heat-bearing Cancer” \( (aestifer\ldots Cancer, Arat. 34.320) \) and “watery Aquarius” \( (umidus\ldots Aquarius, 34.326) \). It is worth considering this passage as evidence that astrology qua astrology (and not merely astronomy) was on the rise, and that Cicero helped make astrology more of a mainstay at Rome.

The ZONA acrostic in many ways performs the role of the LEPTH acrostic but signals Cicero’s own priorities. In a passage that is concerned with the significance of the Zodiac and the ordering of the celestial spheres and bands—a manifestation of the supreme cosmic order—we encounter the acrostic that is also a sign of another intelligent mind, that of the poet. Cicero thus subtly shows the connection between the divine and the human artist. It is fitting then that the Zodiac, \( orbis signifer \), sign-bearer, is a giver of signs, and so it is fitting that in that very passage he himself should give a sign. In this way, Cicero out-Aratuses Aratus and shows his merits not only as a translator, but as a poet in his own right.

1.4 Lucretius and the Epicurean \textit{Aratea} 

In February of 54 BCE Cicero writes a letter to his brother Quintus \( (Q. fr. 2.10.3) \):

Lucreti poemata, ut scribis, ita sunt, multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis. Sed cum veneris. Virum te putabo si Sallusti Empedoclea legeris, hominem non putabo.

The verses of Lucretius are just as you write: with many flashes of genius \( (ingenium) \) and yet of much craft \( (ars) \). But more when you come. I will think you are a man if you have read Sallustius’ \textit{Empedoclea}, but I won’t think you are human!

Cicero’s mention of Lucretius’ poem is the only contemporary assessment we have of the \textit{De rerum natura} \( (DRN) \). The quip has gained much attention in scholarship and much could be said about it, but for the present I would like to consider the letter as a piece of evidence attesting to
the fact that Cicero read Lucretius’ poem and gave it a positive appraisal. This letter shows that Cicero was reading and thinking about Lucretius in the mid-fifties, the same period when he was writing the *De re publica*, which has been seen as a response to Lucretius’ *DRN*. Admittedly, Cicero’s statement is not easy to interpret; *ingenium* and *ars* are loaded descriptors. *Ingenium* can mean inborn talent or genius. *Ars* is a technical term that refers to rhetorical excellence but also more generally careful craftsmanship (τέχνη). The combination of *ingenium* and *ars* is high praise; the *DRN* has many flashes of ingenuity, but at the same time, it is written with skill, that is, with the technique suitable to Roman poetry.

In this section, I show how Cicero’s poetry, specifically the *Aratea* and *De consulatu suo*, influenced Lucretius’ *DRN*, initiating a literary polemic between Cicero and Lucretius. Recently, Emma Gee (2013) has demonstrated how Lucretius used Cicero’s *Aratea* for his own Epicurean ends, drawing upon his very language to show that the universe is not the product of an intelligent mind, but rather configurations of atoms and void. As she points out, “Lucretius recomposes Cicero’s poem in opposition to itself, and in so doing places himself within a philosophical debate in which the *Aratea* plays an essential part” (2013, 67). I would add that the *De consulatu suo* is also ammunition for Lucretius, who uses Cicero’s poems to get the point across that the universe does not operate by divine laws and principles. If the stars are the

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92 For discussion of this letter, see Zetzel (1998) 230, Sedley (1998) 1–2, and Donohue (1993) 2–18. I have followed the punctuation of *SB*.

93 For Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* as a response to Lucretius’ Epicurean worldview, see Zetzel (1998) 230–47 and more recently Gatzemeier (2013) 32–42. I provide my own analysis of the astral and cosmic dimension of the *De re publica* in Chapter 2.

94 See Gatzemeier (2013) 27–32 for a detailed discussion of the meaning of *ingenium* and *ars* in Cicero’s appraisal of Lucretius.
clearest sign of transcendent order, it is fitting that Lucretius tackles astronomy in particular. In effect, by putting Cicero’s verse in service of his Epicurean arguments, Lucretius overturns Cicero poetically and philosophically in one fell swoop, thus earning the title of Rome’s leading poet, a title which Cicero, despite his best efforts, never quite recovers.

I differ from Emma Gee (2013) in one important respect. I would point out that while a sort of rational order is part of Stoic thought, it is not exclusively the purview of Stoicism. Whereas Gee sees the poetic exchange as a battle between Stoicism and Epicureanism, I would prefer to see the debate as centered on the question of “cosmic semiotics” and intelligent design (or the lack thereof). By “cosmic semiotics,” I mean that *natura ipsa* is charged with significance and interpretability that reveals its divine and eternal nature. Both Cicero and Lucretius view the universe as an intelligible system that dispels fear of death, but where Lucretius sees atoms, void, and a wondrous absence of divine craftsmanship, Cicero upholds the cosmos as the finest work of art, the handiwork of a *divina mens* that animates not only the cosmos, from the stars to the plants to the beasts, but also the very souls of human beings, which participate in the cosmic divine nature. While Gee sees the *Aratea* as a Stoic poem, I view it as a poem about cosmic significance which subtends from the stars to the very words of the poet’s pen. The world is full of signs, and thus connection between the divine and human is possible. For Lucretius, such communication is absurd. I offer three examples which showcase Lucretius’ engagement with Ciceronian verse: the concept of *lucubration*, the Zodiac, and the planets.

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93 Cf. Gee (2013) 71: “Astronomy was the node of the debate, the area in which, according to your philosophical position, you either believed divine intervention was demonstrable, or that it was not.”

It is interesting to compare Cicero’s compliment to Lucretius with Cinna’s epigram praising Aratus, which also combines light imagery and admiration. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the epigram tradition of praising Aratus linked star poetry and nighttime labor. Cicero’s letter also subtly plays into this tradition. We get a hint with the word that Cicero chooses to praise Lucretius’ poetry: *luminibus.* Much like Cinna’s epigram, Cicero’s praise is centered on light and hints at the stars. Furthermore, *veneris* may itself be a pun on Venus, the goddess whom Lucretius praises at the beginning of his poem. Such a pun nods to Aratus (*Phaen.* 2) and fits nicely with the verbal play that characterizes the Aratean epigram tradition and Hellenistic poetry more generally. The mention of Sallustius’ *Empedoclea* may also adumbrate Cicero’s *Aratea,* since both are translations (or adaptations, as the case may be) of Greek sources, which would further strengthen the Aratean theme in the end of the letter.

*Luminibus* is also reminiscent of the light imagery in the *De Rerum Natura.* Lucretius often employs the light/dark dichotomy to contrast philosophy with religion, such as when he praises Epicurus: “From such shadows, you first were able to lift up such a bright light, shedding light on the profits of life” (*o tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen/ qui primus potuisti inlustrans commoda uitae,* Lucr. 3. 1–2). As Epicurus’ bright doctrine “sheds light” on the life of men, Lucretius scatters the oppressive darkness of religion with his “bright

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97 On the concept of *lumen* in Cicero’s *De oratore,* see Fant (1972) 169–70.

98 Thanks goes to Gareth Williams for pointing out this pun to me. On the importance of puns in Lucretius, see Snyder (1980); see esp. 63–6 on Cicero’s use of paronomasia.


100 On light as a metaphor in Lucretius’ poetry to express philosophical clarity, see Marković (2008) 87–90.
poetry” (*lucida*...*carmina*, Lucr. 1.933–4). Furthermore, Lucretius’ poetry is bright because it explicates atoms, which are by their invisible nature *obscurus, occultus*, and *caecus*. Cicero’s choice of *luminibus* could refer to this motif, but it could also allude to celestial *lumen*: the stars. Cinna’s epigram also employs light imagery to praise Aratus (*Arateis*...*lucernis; ignis...aerios*), collapsing the distinction between the light of the Aratus’ genius, the light of the lamp, and the light of the stars themselves.

Lucretius also picks up on the epigram tradition in a famous passage that connects light imagery, poetics, night labor, and Aratus (Lucr. 1.140–6):

```
sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas
suavis amicitiae quemvis efferre laborem
suadet et inducit noctes vigilare serenas
quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,
res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis.
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But nevertheless your virtue and the hoped for pleasure of sweet friendship urge me to endure any labor and to suffer to stay awake through the calm nights, seeking with what words and by what song at last I can kindle lights for your mind so that with them you are able to see deeply into hidden things.

As David West says of this passage, the idea of sleepless night is suggestive of “a man who enjoyed the solitude and serenity of working at night, and who couldn’t keep away from the window” ((1969) 81). The resonances between this passage of the *De Rerum Natura* and the epigrams of Cinna, Callimachus, and Leonidas are marked. Robert D. Brown points out that...

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101 On these terms, see Volk (2002) 64–6.

102 Cf. Bailey (1947) 624 *ad loc.*: “Serenas is a picturesque epithet, which suggests the calm uninterrupted nights of study.”

“as a didactic poet following in the tradition of Aratus, Lucretius may have felt a particular affinity to [Callimachus’] epigram; one may even sense a hint of Aratus’ star-studded sky in the epithet serenas, apart from its important psychological significance” (2007, 338). The word lumina (Lucr. 1.145) is also reminiscent of the luminibus in Cicero’s letter and the lucernis in Cinna’s epigram.104 This passage of Lucretius is also an example of lucubratio: the combination of “hoped for pleasure of sweet friendship” (sperata voluptas/ suavis amicitiae, Lucr. 1.140–1) and “staying awake through the quiet nights” (noctes vigilare serenas, Lucr. 1.143) places this passage in the tradition of Callimachus Epigr. 27 and Leonidas, but with a particularly Epicurean flair of pleasurable friendship.105 To stay awake through the late nights contemplating the universe is the activity of Aratus writing the Phaenomena, but when done in Latin, of Cicero’s Aratea.

It is significant, then, that the passage contains allusions to Cicero’s Aratea. Lucretius’ noctes vigilare serenas (Lucr. 1.143) alludes to the constellation Orion appearing in the night sky (Arat. 34.102–5):

Exinde Orion obliquo corpore nitens
inferiora tenet truculenti corpora Tauri.
quem qui suspiciens in caelum nocte serena
late dispersum non viderit, haud ita vero
cetera se speret cognoscere signa potesse.

From there Orion, gleaming with his slanted body, holds the body of truculent Taurus below. If someone looking into the sky on a serene night did not see him spread out widely, scarcely should he hope that he would be able to recognize other signs.

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104 Henkel (2011) 181 sees this passage as an expression of “Lucretius’ motivation to write didactic in terms drawn not only from Callimachus, but more generally from the critical reception of Aratus, Lucretius’ most eminent Hellenistic predecessor.”

Aratus’ version is as follows (Phaen. 322–5):

λοξὸς μὲν Ταύροιο τοµῇ ὑποκέκλιται αὐτός
Ὠρίων. μὴ κεῖνον ὅτις καθαρῇ ἐνὶ νυκτὶ
ὕψοὖ πεπητήνα παρέρχεται ἄλλα πεποίθοι
οὐρανὸν εἰσανιδὼν προφερέστερα θηήσασθαι.

Crosswise from the cut off [foreleg] of the Bull lies Orion himself. Whoever on a clear night passes it by unnoticed as it is positioned on high can be sure that he will never gaze upon anything superior when looking up at the sky.

Orion appears on a “serene night” (nocte serena, Arat. 34.104), which is refracted in Lucretius’ noctes vigilare serenas (Lucr. 142). Why does Lucretius allude to the Orion passage in particular, and why does he use this phrase? To answer that question, let us first consider how Cicero’s departs from Aratus in this passage by making the constellation Orion more active and vivid. Orion does not “lie” beneath Taurus (ὑποκέκλιται, Phaen. 322), but rather “holds” him (tenet, Arat. 34.103). Cicero also brings out his brilliance, characterizing him as “shining” (nitens, Arat. 34.102), a word which is absent in Aratus’ version. The greatest difference between the Greek and Latin is the final line, which explains how a stargazer who could not make out Orion would not be able to see other “signs” (signa, Arat. 34.105). Aratus, by contrast, does not use the word “sign” here at all, but rather emphasizes the pre-eminence of Orion (προφερέστερα, Phaen. 325), which I take to refer both to the constellation’s brilliance and beauty. Cicero chooses to emphasize that Orion is an especially visible sign (signa, Arat. 34.105); someone looking up into the night sky could hardly miss it. For Cicero, Orion is the

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106 Gee (2013) 64–5 notes the verbal overlap but does not pursue it. The phrase is Ennian (Ann. 396), but given the proliferation of Aratean imagery in this passage, I take Lucretius’ deployment of noctes serenas as an allusion to Cicero. Cicero uses a similar locution in the De consulatu suo (luce serenanti, 2.24).

107 Kidd (1997) 305 ad loc. sees προφερέστερα to refer to Orion’s brightness, but προφερής can denote general excellence (LSJ s.v. 1). Cf. Pi. Ol. 1.7.
paradigmatic star sign, which in the world of the Aratea represents the connection between human and the divine. Orion is a constellation that for Cicero exemplifies cosmic semiotics.

The DRN explodes the connection between the divine and human. It is fitting, then, that he uses Cicero’s own language in service of this point. Unlike the stargazer of the Aratea who sees the handiwork of the divine in bright Orion, Lucretius instead spends the night under the stars to craft his poem that will bring the reader to Epicurean enlightenment. Whereas Cicero’s nox serena represents Zeus’ providential care and desire to communicate with humans, Lucretius’ noctes serenas bring Epicurean revelation and ataraxia. Serenus is often used as an epithet of Jupiter, evoking his joyous and propitious nature. Here, the word becomes Epicurean, turning divine providence inside out. The brightness is Epicurean revelation, not divine care. This point is also adumbrated in the convisere possis, which resonates with Cicero’s cognoscere signa potesse. Lucretius does not look to uncover Zeus’ signs, but rather seeks to shed light on hidden things (res occultas, Lucr. 1.146), using Ciceronian language to downplay cosmic semiotics.

Lucretius’ polemical engagement with Cicero’s poetry and the worldview it represents is also signaled by the passage that immediately precedes the lucubratio. Before embarking on his task of explicating the natural order, Lucretius laments the poverty of the Latin tongue for such a task (Lucr. 1.136–9):

Nec me animi fallit Graiorum obscura reperta
difficile inlustrare Latinis versibus esse,

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108 On the associations of Jupiter with serenus, see Hejduk (2009) passim. Serenus may also have Stoic undertones, on which see Simone (forth.) n. 31.

109 This passage is replete with Ciceronian language. Convisere is an Aratean word (Cic. Arat. 352), and praepandere echoes Cic. Arat. 440. See Bailey (1947) ad loc.
multa novis verbis praesertim cum sit agendum
propter egestatem linguae et rerum novitatem

Nor does it elude me that it is difficult to shed light on the dark discoveries of the Greeks with Latin verse, especially since it must be done with new words on account of the poverty of the tongue and the novelty of things.

Lucretius sets up an opposition between Greek and Latin philosophy, language, and poetry.\textsuperscript{110} Lucretius’ reflection on translating Greek knowledge into Latin is polemical, I suggest, as it undermines the philosophical work Cicero has already done in conveying a divinely designed universe in the \textit{Aratea} and \textit{De consulatu suo}. Cicero has already pioneered technical astronomical Latin, but here Lucretius rues the inadequacy of the Latin tongue, which is a thinly-veiled critique of Cicero’s own efforts. Cyril Bailey deems Lucretius’ complaint to be “well justified; in his day there was in Latin no technical philosophical or scientific phraseology. Cicero had similarly to work it out for himself (cf. \textit{De Fin.} iii. 1.3 \textit{nobis, quibus etiam verba parienda sunt imponendaque nova rebus novis nomina})” (1947, 622–3); however, Bailey does not recognize the extent to which Cicero had already developed a vocabulary for astronomy.\textsuperscript{111} In fact, \textit{inlustrare} (Lucr. 1.137) is itself a word that evokes Cicero’s \textit{Aratea} and \textit{De consulatu suo}; Cicero repeatedly uses forms of \textit{lustro} to describe heavenly bodies.\textsuperscript{112} Lucretius here deploys a Ciceronian astral coinage at the very point he criticizes the Latin tongue. Lucretius’ critique of

\textsuperscript{110} On Lucretius’ Latinizing of Greek philosophy and technical language, see Sedley (1998) 35–61.

\textsuperscript{111} Cicero, unlike Lucretius, holds that the Latin language is a suitable, even superior, vehicle for philosophy (Cic. \textit{Fin.} 1.1–12), on which see Baraz (2012) 113–127.

\textsuperscript{112} In his later writings, Cicero describes his own act of translation with \textit{inlustrare} (\textit{Acad.} 1.3 and \textit{Tusc.} 1.5), which may be Cicero’s rebuttal to Lucretius critique here. On the use of \textit{inlustrare} in Lucretius and Cicero, see Tatum (2007) 136–8.
Latin and of Latin poetry in particular (*Latinis versibus*, Lucr. 137) alludes to Cicero’s astral poems.

Furthermore, Lucretius’ turn to *lucubratio* is focused on the act of translation; Lucretius spends the night agonizing over which words to use in order to illuminate Memmius’ mind; *dictis quibus et quo carmine* (Lucr. 1.143) is a gloss on *Latinis versibus* (Lucr. 1.137). Although Cicero has already developed a Latin song about the stars, Lucretius spends his nights dissecting Cicero’s verse to rearrange it in service of his new poem on the natural world. Tellingly, Lucretius uses Ciceronian language to express his concern about the inadequacy of Latin, thus acknowledging Cicero as the pioneer of astronomical Latin and outstripping his predecessor in one fell swoop.

**Zodiac**

Lucretius continues to use Ciceronian language in the service of his Epicurean polemics. One of the most striking verbal borrowings is *signifer orbis*, a phrase that Cicero coined for the Zodiac. Lucretius likewise uses Cicero’s new word to describe the Zodiac and the celestial circles (Lucr. 5.680–95):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Crescere itemque dies licet et tabescere noxest,} \\
\text{et minui luces, cum sumant augmina noxest,} \\
\text{aut quia sol idem sub terras atque superne} \\
\text{imparibus currens anfractibus aetheris oras} \\
\text{partit e in partis non aequas dividit orbem,} \\
\text{et quod ab alterutra detraxit parte, reponit} \\
\text{eius in adversa tanto plus parte relatus,} \\
\text{donec ad id *signum* caeli pervenit, ubi anni}
\end{align*}
\]

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113 Bailey (1947) 624.
It is permitted for the days to grow longer and for the nights to likewise grow short, and the daylight decreases when the nights accept increase, either because the same sun, running under the earth and above it, divides the shores of heaven into unequal arcs, and what it has taken from one part, it gives back that much more to the other side when it comes back around, until it reaches that constellation of heaven where the knot of the year makes the darkness of night equal to day. For at the midpoint of its course, halfway between the gusts of the north and the south, the sky holds its turning-points at equal distances, on account of the position of the whole constellation bearing ambit, within which the sun confines its annual course as it slides, as the reason declares of those who marked out all the regions of the sky decorated with defined constellations.

To describe the varying lengths of days and nights, Lucretius paints an Aratean picture of the celestial circles with Cicero’s language. *Lumine lustrans* (Lucr. 5.693) is a distinctive Ciceronian phrase, and *ornata* (Lucr. 5.695) picks up on the Aratean notion of the universe as a divine artifact. Cicero uses *serpens* to describe the motions of the stars. Most importantly, Lucretius uses the Ciceronian coinage *signifer orbis* to describe the Zodiac, instead of *zona* or *zodiacus*. As we saw above in section 1.2, Cicero develops the idea of the Zodiac as a circle of

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115 Cicero uses the word *ornatus* to describe the cosmos, and later attributes the word to the celestial spheres (*Rep*. 1.22). On the significance of *ornatus* for an intelligently designed cosmos, see Gee (2001) 527–36.

116 *Arat*. fr. 15, 34.15, 34.48, 34.95, 34.126; 34.215; 34.248; 34.328.
signs, the hallmark of the Aratean universe. Cicero out-Aratures Aratus by making his cosmos especially sign filled and interactive. Thanks to Cicero’s coinage, Latin becomes a superior vehicle for conveying Aratean cosmic semiotics, and Cicero flags the superiority of the Latin term.

Lucretius deliberately uses Cicero’s coinage *signifer orbis* to emphasize that this celestial model is one of cosmic significance and divine order. The celestial bands and the shifting course of the sun under the designated sign at the designated time of year resemble a divine dance. But for Lucretius, this is a universe that cannot be. He undermines this Aratean explanation of solar motion by overturning it with alternative explanations for the variation of the lengths of days, suggesting that these seemingly ordered patterns could be due to the thickness of the air (Lucr. 5.696–700) or due to slower or quicker confluence of fires (Lucr. 5.701–4). The two alternative explanations show that the celestial bands are not the only way of explaining the length of the days. For Lucretius, it is nonsense to think “that there can be a single limiting explanation for the sun’s motion.”

Lucretius demonstrates that he can portray an Aratean cosmos in verse, only to show its inadequacy with alternative rational explanations. Lucretius also reveals the inadequacy of Cicero’s own astral language to describe the randomness of the universe; quite possibly, the sun does not weave itself along the *signifer orbis*, but follows no pattern at all. Its apparent motions may be due to airs and fires, nothing more. Cicero, Aratus, and all those “who mark out all the ordered places of the sky with certain signs” (*eorum qui loca caeli/ omnia dispositis signis ornata notarunt*, Lucr. 5.694–5) read cosmic significance into a universe that has none. The

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117 Gee (2013a) 77.
constellations have not been “distributed” (*dispositis signis*) by divine hand, but are the imaginings of those who believe the universe to be a divine artifact. By undermining this Aratean model, Lucretius also overturns Cicero’s philosophical poetry, and he uses his own words to do it.

**Planetary Polemics**

As Cicero corrects the Greek term for the Zodiac with *signifer orbis*, so also he shows the superiority of Latin in describing the planets at the opening of *De consulatu suo* Book 2:

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Principio aetherio flammatus Iuppiter igni
vertitur et totum conlustrat lumine mundum
menteque divina caelum terrasque petessit,
quae penitus sensus hominum vitasque retentat
aetheris aeterni saepta atque inclusa cavernis
Et si stellarum motus cursusque vagantis
Nosse velis quae sint signorum in sede locatae
Quae velo et falsis Graiorum vocibus errant,
Re vera certo lapsu spatioque feruntur,
Omnia iam cernes divina mente notata
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In the beginning Jupiter burning with the aetherial fire turns and illuminates the whole cosmos with his light, and seeks out the sky and the earth with a divine mind, which sustains the thoughts and lives of humans to their innermost being, embraced and embraced by the vaults of immortal aether. And if you wish to know the motions and vagrant courses of the planets, which are located in the seat of the constellations, which wander in name and in the false names of the Greeks though in truth are carried by a determined movement and distance, you will perceive that all things are marked out by a divine mind.

The heavenly Muse Urania establishes that Jove fills the universe; the cosmos is not random, but as its name suggests, a beautiful, intelligible arrangement of stars, planets, and humans. Hence, Urania-cum-Cicero points out the Greeks’ error in calling planets “planets”—they are not
wanderers but heavenly bodies that follow determined and rational routes (even if those routes are unknown to us mortals, for the problem of the motion of the planets which seem to go into a retrograde motion inexplicably was a perennial problem up to Galileo’s day)—and this rational nature of the universe derives from the very mind of Jove itself, which is wisdom.

In the *Aratea*, however, Cicero follows Aratus in passing over the planets (*Arat. fr.* 34.229–36):

> Sic malunt errare vagae per nubila caeli atque suos vario motu metirier orbes. 
> Hae faciunt magnos longinqui temporis annos, cum redeunt ad idem caeli sub tegmine signum; quarum ego nunc nequeo tortos evolvere cursus: verum haec, quae semper certo evoluuntur in orbe fixa, simul magnos edemus gentibus orbes.

Thus they prefer to wander footloose through the clouds of heaven and to measure out their orbits with a variable motion. These bring about the Great Years of long duration, when they return to the same star-sign under the canopy of heaven. I am not now able to unroll their sinuous courses; but I shall proclaim at large the great orbits of those fixed stars which roll round in a predictable course.\(^\text{118}\)

Cicero describes the fixed stars as following a “legitimate course” (*legitimo...cursu, Arat.* 34.224), evoking the idea that they follow laws set by divine providence. The “eternal motion” (*aeternum...motum, Arat.* 34.225) of the universe is also regular, predictable, and ordered, as befits an Aratean cosmos. The fixed stars are contrasted with the planets, which slip through the Zodiac signs, for it is not possible for them to be marked out by the same rational movement. But as Daniele Pellacani (2015, 124 *ad loc.*) in his commentary on this passage observes, that Cicero’s planets do not randomly wander, but wander because of their preference (*malunt, Arat.* 34.229): the planets have a personality.

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\(^{118}\) Trans. is Gee (2013b) with my modifications.
Cicero thus subtly departs from Aratus in his depiction of the planets. Although the planets follow a different path than the fixed stars and the Zodiac belt, they are not without reason: they have their own path that they prefer to take. Cicero adapts Aratus, showing that the planets are not completely erratic, but simply make their own way in the night sky. Nevertheless, Cicero does not attempt to explicate their paths, preferring to explain the fixed stars at length. But unlike Aratus, whose courage falters to explain them, Cicero says he is not able to explain their courses “now” (nunc, Arat. 34.234), leaving open the possibility of returning to them later (which he does in the De consuatu suo and in the Dream of Scipio, as we will see in the next chapter).

Nevertheless, the planets can still be exploited as a weak spot in an otherwise orderly universe. Despite Cicero’s efforts in the Aratea and De consuatu suo to show that they are not planets per se but rather idiosyncratic wanderers that follow their own paths, Lucretius exploits the weakness. Emma Gee points out how Lucretius uses the planets to promote his philosophy (2013a, 105):

Cicero’s planets are extremely useful to Lucretius as an analogy for matter. In his polemic against intelligent design, including the argument against the roundness of the earth at 1.1061, Lucretius makes use of the most irrational thing in the universe of the Aratea: the planets. The one inexplicable thing in their system is picked up by Lucretius and made to do all the work in his polemics. Matter and the word in general—is a random creation: everything in the Epicurean universe is “planetary” in this sense.

If the stars are the visible manifestation of the inner-workings of the divine cosmic mind, then if they wander, this poses a real problem for the Cicero’s cosmos of signs.

Lucretius objects to the tenet that a divina mens et ratio moves the celestial bodies. Near the beginning of book 5, he promises to expose the purely natural origin of stellar motion, “lest
by chance we think that they light up their eternal courses between heaven and earth freely of
their own will” (*ne forte haec inter caelum terramque reamur/ libera sponte sua cursus lustrare
perennis*, Lucr. 5.77–8) or “are turned by some purpose of the gods” (*neve aliqua divom volvi
ratione putemus*, Lucr. 5.81). *Lustrare, cursus,* and *volvi* are Ciceronian words used to describe
the motions of heavenly bodies. Furthermore, the “plan of the divine” (*divom...ratione*, Lucr.
5.81) echoes the *divina mens* at the beginning of Urania’s speech (*DCS* 2.3, 2.10). Lucretius uses
Cicero’s language to show that all of the universe is driven by the same sort of chaotic element
that the planets introduce. The only law that runs Lucretius’ universe are atoms and void.
Planetary motion for Cicero represents the ordered movement of a divine mind, that subtends
from the heavenly orbits to every stratum of the natural world. But for Lucretius, the movements
of the planets represent a sort of wondrous randomness.

**Cosmic Poetics**

Lucretius not only uses Cicero’s poetic language, he also uses his same networks of thought in
structuring the universe. He uses the same methodology—the analogue between universe, state,
and soul—but to a completely different end. Book 5 concerns the birth of the cosmos as well as
the birth of society, implicitly positing a connection between the cosmic and political, which is a
connection that Cicero himself makes, not only in the *De consulatu suo*, but also in the *De re
publica*, as we will see in the next chapter. For Lucretius, this parallel demonstrates the
spontaneous generation of the natural world, both on an ecological and a societal level. Thus, in
effect, Lucretius deploys the notion of cosmic connection (what the Stoics would call sympathy)
to show that there is no divine plan or cosmic semiotics, only atoms and void.
By writing about these matters in Latin, Lucretius is encouraging a debate that Cicero has set by deploying his language and structures of thought (i.e. the parallel between state, cosmos, soul). We also have a clue by Cicero’s response in the *De re publica* to reassert the idea of a divine mind and a divine plan.
CHAPTER 2: THE STARS AND THE STATESMAN

namque erit ille mihi semper deus
For that one will always be a god to me
Verg. Ecl. 1.7

2.1 Introduction

The sixth and final book of Cicero’s On the Commonwealth (De re publica, henceforth DRP) famously ends with P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus (henceforth Scipio) relating an incredible dream in which his adoptive grandfather, the elder Scipio Africanus (henceforth Africanus) takes him on a dazzling astral tour. Africanus shows Scipio the order of the planets, the music of these spheres, the relative smallness of the earth, and the heavenly abode in the Milky Way reserved for good statesmen, musicians, and scholars.119 Scipio’s Dream is the culmination of three days of conversation about the best form of government amongst nine Roman statesmen away from the harried life of Rome at his countryside villa.120

This idyllic setting, however, does not make them forget the turbulence caused by the Gracchan reforms. Scipio’s nephew Q. Aelius Tubero begins the conversation by asking about the appearance of two suns in the sky—a topic which Scipio engages, albeit with some hesitation, since answers to such questions cannot be attained with any real certainty, unlike

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119 For a general introduction to the Dream, see Powell (1990) 119–133, which includes an English translation and commentary. The most comprehensive study of the Dream remains Boyancé (1987), but it mostly considers the Dream apart from the rest of the dialogue. For a helpful yet brief analysis integrating the Dream with the rest of the DRP, see Coleman (1964).

120 The elder interlocutors are L. Furius Philus, G. Laelius Sapiens, M’ Manilius, Sp. Mummius; the younger are Q. Aelius Tubero, P. Rutilius Rufus, Q. Mucius Q.f. Scaevola, C. Fannius M.f. See Zetzel (1995) 11–13 and Zetzel (2017) xiv–xv for a helpful introduction to the dialogue’s members. The conversation takes place in early 129 BCE during the Feriae Latiae, though the exact date is not clear since the Feriae Latiae were not fixed and the day of Scipio’s death is unknown. See Zetzel (1995) 8 n. 20.
more pressing political affairs (Rep. 1.15). The arrival of Scipio’s two most intimate friends, L. Furius Philus and G. Laelius Sapiens, renews the debate about the topic of conversation: astronomy or politics (Rep. 1.17–8). Philus is eager to continue the astronomical conversation (Rep. 1.19). Laelius originally cedes to Philus, who tells a story about Archimedes’ two celestial spheres (Rep. 1.23–4). After this astronomical excursus, Laelius asks Scipio to ground the conversation in a more relevant, political topic (Rep. 1.33). After all, as he explains to Tubero, there is no room for idle talk about double suns when the Senate itself is all but split in two (Rep. 1.31). In comparing the two suns to the division in the senate, Laelius redirects the conversation to politics, which remains the topic of conversation (in one form or another) until Scipio’s Dream (Rep. 1.33).

Because of the fragmentary nature of the dialogue, we are not privy to every stage of their discussion. Fortunately, the surviving fragments of Books I, II, III, and VI of the DRP are substantial; for the other books we have quotations and (partial) summaries, thanks to Lactantius and Saint Augustine. The fragments’ distribution—albeit uneven—across the six books allows us to trace the trajectory of the dialogue: it begins and ends with astronomy, but the majority of it concerns politics. After indulging Philus’ astronomical talk for a while, Laelius brings the conversation back down to earth by asking Scipio to talk about the state. Scipio happily acquiesces and begins a discursive speech about the ideal commonwealth, which, unlike Plato’s imaginary Kallipolis, actually exists: Rome. We might think that astronomy has been abandoned

121 Parhelia are commonly known as sun dogs. See Pease (1920) ad Cic. De div. 1.97. For meteorological phenomena in antiquity, see also Stothers (2009), who writes with the expertise of a present-day meteorologist.

122 I do not mean to trivialize the difficulties and complexities in analyzing the DRP in its fragmentary state, a pursuit which is simultaneously “both easier and more difficult...more difficult, in that more effort is needed to recover even the basic outline of the argument; easier, in that the interpreter is relatively unhampered by evidence” (Zetzel (2001)). For a similar sentiment, see Powell (2012) 14.
altogether; however, the stars come back full force in Book 6 in the magnificent Dream. When Scipio awakes, the book (as we have it) ends, leaving the reader to puzzle over its meaning.

What is the point of framing the political discussion with astronomy? Is the beauty of the Dream a Lucretian honeyed cup to sweeten a tiresome discussion of political exigencies? By including stars and cosmic harmony in his *DRP*, could Cicero simply be following Plato, whose *Republic* also famously ends in a cosmic tale, the Myth of Er? Or perhaps Cicero, licking his wounds after his return from exile in 57 BCE, includes the cosmic vision as a sort of consolation after his fall from political influence but does not take his own cosmic escapism too seriously. After all, on one level the *DRP* suggests that philosophy (including astronomy) and politics have little to say to one another. The dialogue dramatizes the debate between philosophy and politics through the stargazing Philus and practical Laelius. In the opening preface to the *DRP*, most likely addressed to his brother Quintus, Cicero himself voices disdain for philosophers who devote themselves to the pleasures of academic leisure instead of entering the roiled waters of political service. Moreover, the majority of the dialogue focuses on the cycles of political systems, not the movements of the heavens. It might seem, then, that the *DRP*’s astronomy is subsidiary to its politics.

Certainly, the *DRP* has often been read in this way. While acknowledging that the Dream picks up on the initial conversation of the double suns, scholars usually either focus on the dialogue’s political theory or the Dream itself, but rarely make an attempt to read the two together in a systematic way. This tendency to treat the Dream separately has largely been conditioned by the accidents of textual transmission. For well over a thousand years, Scipio’s

\[123\] Atkins (2013) is a notable exception; cf. Ruch (1948), Gallagher (2001), and Coleman (1964).
Dream lived on apart from the lost DRP dialogue, thanks to Macrobius’ detailed commentary on it, and as an independent text had a huge impact on the Western scientific and literary imagination (including Dante). Two centuries ago, more of the DRP was found in a palimpsest on Saint Augustine’s Commentary on the Psalms by Angelo Mai, a discovery which vastly improved our knowledge of the text. Even so, the tradition of reading the Dream separately was already well established; even today Latin students usually encounter the Dream apart from the rest of the DRP and thus miss its literary and philosophical context.

Although the DRP seems to jettison astronomical topics in favor of political ones, I argue that the apparent shift in conversation is not straightforward. As critics have noted, Scipio’s discursive account of political constitutions is indebted to the opening astronomical conversation about Archimedes’ two spheres. Moreover, when we consider the Dream’s dramatic position in the dialogue, its powerful cosmic vision, I suggest, outshines the preceding conversation, which in retrospect asks to be reconsidered in light of the Dream’s astral grandeur. In the course of this chapter, I examine the major astronomical elements in the DRP: the portent of the double suns; Philus’ account of Archimedes’ two celestial spheres; Scipio’s invocation of Aratus; and Scipio’s Dream itself. As a dialogue concerned with the Republic’s wellbeing, the DRP explores the ideal commonwealth, which, unsurprisingly, Scipio locates in Rome. But as the dialogue unfolds, the best political system is bound up with scientific language and astronomical metaphors.

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124 The DRP was well known until at least the 5th c. CE, after which it was lost. Zetzel (2017) xvi–xx has a helpful discussion of the textual transmission of the DRP. For more on Mai’s discovery and its impact on Italy, see Zetzel (2012) 19–44.

125 The available Anglophone commentaries are Powell (1990) and Zetzel (1995). Powell’s commentary contains the Dream and no other part of the DRP; Zetzel’s commentary includes the Dream and most of the fragments but excludes some of the initial astronomical conversation, which makes the dialogue’s astronomical frame less noticeable to students.
suggesting that the parallelism between the microcosm of the state and the macrocosm of the heavens is not merely an analogy but itself a natural phenomenon, as it were, one that likewise requires interpretation. A polyphonic dialogue, in which no voice has the ultimate authority, the DRP requires the reader to attend carefully to the conversation to discern its meaning, which in turn implicates her in the ongoing activity of the dialogue in its pursuit of truth, which extends from Scipio and his friends, to Cicero and his brother, to us readers.

This quasi-narrative form is especially well suited to Cicero’s own philosophical position as an Academic Skeptic. In the world of the dialogue, Cicero is able to dramatically play out one perspective against another while entertaining multiple possibilities of truth, including a starry afterlife, which must have been attractive to him given the political turmoil of the 50s. But for Cicero, the dialogue remains open. Scipio’s Dream is not the final word. I think that Cicero is cautiously hopeful that the order of the stars implies some undergirding rational order, as the Stoics say it does. But Cicero sua voce does not forward such a view, for to do so would reify the truth into a single object, which from his perspective as a Skeptic must always remain a matter of probabile. Thus, the dialogue itself operates in a dual register—with two suns, two philosophical modes, even two Scipios—figuratively communicating the impossibility of pinpointing a definitive answer in one philosophical viewpoint. But whatever the relationship between stars, states, and human souls, Cicero’s dialogue, I believe, asks us to at least entertain the possibility that the cosmic order is relevant for human political life.
2.2 The Horizontal and the Vertical: The Old Quarrel Between the Active and Contemplative Life

Before turning to the four particular instances of astronomy mentioned above, I first consider how the *DRP* navigates the long-standing debate between the active and contemplative life, a tension that Cicero raises in the preface and returns to in the unfolding of the dialogue. These two modes are relevant to my argument about the dialogue’s fundamental relationship between states and stars since political engagement and stargazing are the consummate examples of the active and contemplative life, respectively. Furthermore, the dialogue itself invites such a comparison in juxtaposing the preface’s discussion of the active/contemplative life with the opening conversation about politics/astronomy between Scipio and Tubero.

Cicero himself had to navigate his own relationship to political engagement and the contemplative life. As consul in 63, Cicero reached the pinnacle of the active life. After his subsequent exile and return (58–57 BCE), Cicero never again achieved the same degree of political influence; it is surely no coincidence that Cicero then began his first period of writing philosophical dialogues with the *De oratore* (55 BCE) and the *DRP* shortly thereafter (54–51 BCE). His philosophical writing, the labor of *otium*, serves as a substitute for political engagement. Hence, Cicero, choosing philosophical topics that focus on theories of human conduct and action, crafts his philosophy as fundamentally connected to the *vita activa*.

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Even so, philosophy itself needs an apology. As Yelena Baraz points out, “philosophy was not an easy sell” in first-century Rome (2012: 3). Philosophy was readily accepted in certain spheres—a wealthy family might keep a house philosopher as a sign of prestige; a young man would often study philosophy as part of his early education—but overindulgence was viewed with a certain degree of wariness. Philosophy, after all, requires time and space to think. If Rome’s best and brightest were to keep their heads in the clouds, who would steer the state? Philosophy most naturally attaches to the vita contemplativa since it requires the space of leisure for thinking, writing, and reading. Philosophy in and of itself is commonly viewed as useless—acceptable if relegated to limited periods of otium, but not to be pursued for its own sake. Cicero is well aware that philosophy and writing dialogues are naturally in tension with public pursuits, as we see him wrestling with his own philosophical output in the dialogue’s preface: How much philosophy is appropriate? And, what kind of philosophy is best? 

Cicero was not the first to raise these tensions, which are questions that occupied the Greeks as well. The relationship between the vita activa and the vita contemplativa goes back at least to Aristotle, as Cicero himself recognizes (De Fin. 2.19). In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle makes the distinction between theoria and praktike (1.9). Later, the Peripatetic Dicaearchus advocated the active life, whereas Theophrastus championed theoria. The different philosophical schools of Cicero’s time advocated different degrees of public

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127 Baraz (2012) portrays first-century Rome as generally suspicious and even contemptuous of philosophy (12–3). In her analysis, Romans appropriated Greek culture in ways that could immediately benefit them (12). Zetzel (2015) points out that Cicero was able to draw on great philosophical cultural cachet that reveals the prevalence of philosophy in elite circles, showing that philosophy was in the drinking water, so to speak.

128 See Tusc. 2.1 and Cat. 3 and Baraz’ discussion of them (2012) 22–31.


130 For the Peripatetic nature of the debate between the active and contemplative life with regards to this passage, see Zetzel (1995) 98–99.
engagement. Stoicism, for example, encouraged political activity; Epicureanism, by contrast, urged a quiet retreat from public life; Platonism and Aristotelianism, in between the two, extolled the *vita contemplativa* (albeit with some considerable reservations). Yet to some extent, philosophy itself is a contemplative activity that, even in its most politically engaged forms, is attached to the theoretical, not the practical. Thus, a tension arises between the *otium* philosophy demands and the *negotium* of political engagement. On this view, of the three branches of philosophy—ethics, logic, and physics—the last might strike one of Cicero’s Roman contemporaries as the most superfluous of an already gratuitous mode of inquiry. What, then, does the *DRP*—a dialogue ostensibly focused on the commonwealth—have to do with philosophy, much less *natural* philosophy?

Whatever the implications of philosophy for public life, the Epicureans pursuing leisure for its own sake are surely wrong from Cicero’s viewpoint, as the opening of the extant preface indicates. After about seventeen missing folios, the text enters this old quarrel with Cicero’s praise of the Elder Cato, who abandoned his life of leisure in old age in order to serve the Republic (*Rep.* 1.1):

M. vero Catoni homini ignoto et novo, quo omnes qui isdem rebus studemus quasi exemplari ad industriam virtutemque ducimur, certe licuit Tusculi se in otio delectare, salubri et propinquo loco. Sed homo demens, ut isti putant, cum cogeret eum necessitas nulla, in his undis et tempestatibus ad summam senectutem maluit iactari quam in illa tranquilihitate atque otio iucundissime vivere.

But M. Cato, an unknown and “new man,” whom we who are eager for the same things all follow as an example for industry and virtue, certainly could have enjoyed himself in leisure at Tusculum, a salubrious and nearby spot. But Cato was a lunatic, as those men suppose, since when no necessity drove him to do so, he preferred to be buffeted in these
waves and storms—up to the highest age—rather than to live most pleasantly in that tranquility and leisure.

Cato is upheld as an exemplum to Roman readers for putting the Republic above all else, including the otium of a deserved retirement. By extolling Cato for entering the undis et tempestatibus (1.1) of political life instead of succumbing to pleasant leisure, Cicero implicitly critiques the Epicurean school, which posits the injunction “live unnoticed” (λάθε βιώσας) and advocates the pursuit of pleasure.\footnote{For a discussion of Cicero’s disdain for Lucretius and Epicureanism on both a literary and philosophical level, see Zetzel (1998) contra Maslowski (1974). On Epicureanism in Cicero more broadly, see Gilbert (2015) and Volk (forthcoming) 31–44. For an introduction to the Epicurean idea of λάθε βιώσας, see Roskam (2007) 1–28.} Cicero repudiates “those men” (isti, 1.1) who pooh-pooh Cato for entering political waters, an image which recalls the famous opening of Book 2 of the DRN where Lucretius remarks how pleasant it is to stand apart from life’s turbulences (Lucr. 2.1–4):

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.

It is sweet to watch from the land the great effort of another when the winds stir up the level fields of water on the great sea, not because it is a joyous pleasure that anyone be tormented, but because it is sweet to perceive that you are free from those dire situations yourself.

The man being tossed by billows refers not only to the risks of seafaring but also evokes the ship-of-state metaphor.\footnote{Cf. Rep. 1.6, where Cicero makes the ship-of-state metaphor explicit. See also Rep. 1.34.} The Epicurean does not enter such roiled political waters, but rather stands aside, increasing his pleasure by the contrast between his happy state and the buffeted
man’s. But, if by employing the hedonistic calculus (Epist. ad Men. 130), the Epicurean ever should discover that his avoiding political life will ultimately cause him more pain than engaging it, he may enter the public eye—for example, if the state is in crisis.\textsuperscript{133}

Cicero finds this particularly objectionable. State leadership requires political expertise acquired over time, a point he levels against the Epicurean proposition that the sage may enter politics in a crisis without prior experience (Rep. 1.10–11). Cicero spares no words to denigrate the Epicureans for their political withdrawal (although it is interesting that he never names them explicitly), but he does not stop with them. Indeed, Cicero rebukes all philosophers for retreating into their corners (Rep. 1.2). Even the distinguished philosopher Xenocrates says that philosophy only succeeds in making a few virtuous men, whereas the law compels many to live well, indicating that public service effects greater good and is therefore superior to philosophy (Rep. 1.3).

But it is far too simplistic to interpret Cicero championing politics above and beyond philosophy without qualification. After all, the lawmakers are able to develop their good laws because of the underlying order of nature that spurs people to create political communities in the first place (Rep. 1.3). But who is it who studies this underlying natural order and translates it to the practical “real” world, if not the philosophers? This suggests that philosophers have a certain sort of precedence over lawmakers, or perhaps, that the lawmakers are themselves philosophers of a sort. The Seven Sages, for example, are upheld as a model of philosopher-politician-lawmakers, even though, as Cicero notes, not all of them directly participated in public life (Rep.

\textsuperscript{133} On the political engagement of Epicureans, see Fish (2011).
1.12), most famously Thales, who studied natural phenomena.\textsuperscript{134} Nevertheless, for Cicero, they are exemplary in their pursuit of an \textit{active} philosophy.

Let us now turn to the opening dialogue between Scipio and Tubero, which renews the preface’s tension between the \textit{vita activa} and the \textit{vita contemplativa} and adds a new but related topic: the relationship of astronomy and politics. After Tubero arrives at his uncle’s villa, Scipio expresses some surprise that his nephew has abandoned the leisure of his studies (\textit{Rep.} 1.14–15):

\begin{quote}
Tum ille: Mihi vero omne tempus est ad meos libros vacuum; numquam enim sunt illi occupati; te autem permagnum est nancisci otiosum, hoc praeertim motu rei publicae. Tum Scipio: Atqui nactus es, sed mehercule otiosiorem opera quam animo. Et ille: At vero animum quoque relaxes oportet; sumus enim multi, ut constituimus, parati, si tuo commodo fieri potest, abuti tecum hoc otio. \{SC.\} Libente me vero, ut aliquid aliquando de doctrinae studiis admoneamur. Tum ille: Visne igitur, quoniam et me quodam modo invitas et tui spem das, hoc primum, Africane, videamus, ante quam veniunt alii, quidnam sit, de isto altero sole quod nuntiatum est in senatum?
\end{quote}

Then Tubero said: “I have all the time in the world for my books, as they’re never busy. You, however—it’s no small thing to find you at leisure, especially given this turmoil of our commonwealth.”

Scipio replied: “And indeed, you have found me more at leisure in activity than mind.”

Tubero: “But truly, it’s fitting that you relax your mind as well, for several of us are ready to spend this period of leisure with you, as we decided—if it is agreeable to you.”

Scipio: “Yes, with pleasure. That way we can at last be reminded of something worthwhile concerning our endeavors of study.”

Tubero then said: “Well then, since you all but invite me and give me hope for your interest, shall we consider this first, Africanus—before the others come—what should one make of that second sun that’s been reported in the senate?”

\textsuperscript{134}Thales famously fell into a well while studying the stars (Pl. \textit{Tht.} 174a3–b1). The anecdote supposedly illustrates the irrelevancy of astronomy (and Thales’ stargazing making him disconnected from reality), but for the argument that Thales went into the well intentionally in order to better observe the sky, see Buddensiek (2014) 1–32.
Tubero says that his books are never busy (*numquam enim sunt illi occupati*, 1.14), since they naturally are read during periods of *otium*. Scipio, however, is almost always *occupatus*, unlike Tubero’s books, which have endless leisure (*omne tempus...vacuum*, 1.14). Yet even the suggestion that the books could be *occupati* (even though they are not) opens up the imagination to think that books could be part of something other than pure leisure. The fact that Scipio is *otiosum* (1.14) when the Republic is in turmoil (*motu rei publicae*, 1.14) draws attention to the specter of political obligation that is always pressing upon the circumscribed space of *otium*. Obligation looms over leisure even in the best of political circumstances, but especially during hard political times (which is not only the case for the dramatic setting of the dialogue—the Gracchan reforms—but also for the time when Cicero was writing—the rise of Caesar). Scipio’s response also draws attention to the distinction between political engagement and *otium* even as it blurs that distinction. Scipio is *otiosus* with respect to *opera*, but not in *animo*. The life of the mind, which naturally attaches to *otium*, is occupied with public *negotium*, whereas Scipio’s leisure is defined in terms of (the lack of) *opera*. Yet by describing Scipio’s leisure in the terms of a lack of deeds—the purview of *negotium*—Cicero brings to the fore the contrast between the active life of political engagement and the philosophical conversation of *otium*.

In proposing an astronomical topic of conversation, Tubero not only foreshadows the starry ending of the Dream but also invites the readers to ask themselves what sort of *studia* it is acceptable to pursue during *otium*. Will Scipio allow astronomical talk when political life at Rome is going so poorly? Scipio begins to engage Tubero with his question of parhelia, which suggests some degree of openness to talking about natural phenomena. But Scipio quickly brings

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135 *Occupatus* is a word that evokes the *vita activa*; cf. Baraz (2012) 21.
up Panaetius, who he wishes were present among their coterie, since he is “accustomed to inquire most eagerly both about these celestial matters and other topics of interest” (*qui cum cetera, tum haec caelestia vel studiosissime solet quaerere, Rep. 1.15*). Scipio, however, immediately proceeds to criticize their Stoic friend for his over-confidence in his opinions about astral matters (and presumably other philosophical topics as well), because he “affirms those things which we are scarcely able to make conjectures about, so that it seems as if he perceives these things with his eyes or handles them openly with his own hand” (*qui, quae vix coniectura qualia sint possumus suspicari, sic adfirmat, ut oculis ea cernere videatur aut tractare plane manu, Rep. 1.15*). Panaetius merits critique for his excessive confidence in things which cannot be known for certain.

As a foil to Panaetius, Scipio turns to Socrates, who did not make assumptions about abstract topics which cannot be affirmed, like astronomy (*Rep. 1.15–16*):

> quo etiam sapientiorem Socratem solem solem iudicare, qui omnem eius modi curam deposuerit eaque, quae de natura quaerentur, aut maiora, quam hominum ratio consequi posset, aut nihil omnino ad vitam hominum adtinere dixerit.

> Wherefore I deem Socrates even wiser, who set aside all concern for this mode of inquiry and said that those things which are asked about nature either are more than human reason can follow or in no way pertain to the life of mankind.

Scipio suggests that Panaetius and Socrates pursue opposing philosophical modes: Panaetius is excessively devoted to theoretical investigations, whereas Socrates is concerned with matters closer to Earth. Hence, Scipio relates that Socrates rejects the study of natural philosophy (*quae

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136 Panaetius of Rhodes (185–109 BCE) was an orthodox Stoic, although he challenged the idea of eternal recurrence and the relevancy of astrology. For more on Panaetius and Cicero, see Gärtner (1974).
*de natura quaerentur, Rep. 1.15* in favor of ethical philosophy, which has something definitive to say about real-world human life (*ad vitam hominum adtinere, Rep. 1.15–16*). The implication is that Scipio and Tubero should also direct their conversation to more practical matters.

But what counts as politically relevant and hence practical is precisely what is in question. Tubero does not ask about parhelia out of the blue; the double suns have been brought up in the Senate, presumably because it must be determined whether or not the phenomenon is a portent that needs interpretation. The phenomenon, after all, could have political import (and indeed, Scipio’s imminent death suggests that it does)\(^{137}\). Tubero is not interested in parhelia only qua astronomical phenomenon; it is already bound up with a political context. So the question remains: are astronomical questions actually politically relevant?

Tubero continues to combine the theoretical and practical by pointing out that Socrates himself combined the two modes, and he therefore objects to his uncle’s portrayal of Socrates (*Rep. 1.16*):

\begin{quote}
Nescio, Africane, cur ita memoriae proditum sit, Socratem omnem istam disputationem reieciesse et tantum de vita et de moribus solitum esse quaerere.
\end{quote}

I do not understand, Scipio, why it has been handed down to memory in this way—that Socrates rejected wholesale this sort of inquiry and was accustomed only to ask about human life and ethics.

Tubero draws attention to competing accounts of the sort of philosopher Socrates was, which may remind us of various representations of Socrates in the Greek sources. For example,

\(^{137}\)This interpretation is supported by a later comparison linking the death of Scipio with the portentous appearance of two suns: “Then the sun doubled, which I had heard had happened when Tuditanus and Aquilius were consuls, in which year indeed Publius Africanus, that second sun, was extinquished” (*tum sole geminato, quod ut e patre audivi Tuditano et Aquilio consulibus evenerat, quo quidem anno P. Africanus sol extinctus est, Nat. D. 2.14*).
Aristophanes maligns Socrates for wasting his time staring at the sky and walking about in the clouds (Pl. *Ap.*, Ar. *Nub.*), whereas Xenophon claims that Socrates jettisoned astronomical learning altogether (*Mem.* 1). Perhaps the most definitive source on Socrates (certainly in Tubero’s view, at any rate), Plato paints a Socrates who was interested not only in ethical matters but also physical ones. Tubero reminds his uncle of this Platonic Socrates (*Rep.* 1.16):

> quem enim auctorem de illo locupletiorem Platone laudare possumus? cuius in libris multis locis ita loquitur Socrates, ut etiam, cum de moribus, de virtutibus, denique de re publica disputet, numeros tamen et geometriam et harmoniam studeat Pythagorae moreconiungere.

For what authority can we praise that is more substantial than that Plato? In his books in many places Socrates speaks in such a way that even when he argues about ways of living, excellence of character, and ultimately the state, he nevertheless is eager to connect them with mathematics, geometry, and harmony in the Pythagorean mode.

For this Socrates, the practical habits of human life—including political ones—are part and parcel of more theoretical inquiries, like mathematics. Tubero’s/Plato’s Socrates is a far cry from Scipio’s. It seems, then, that we have two different Socrates: one devoted solely to ethics and one also interested in theoretical inquiries.

Scipio does not deny that Plato portrays Socrates in such a way. Rather, he explains Plato’s Socrates’ interest in lofty subjects with Plato’s desire to attribute as much as possible to his great teacher (*Rep.* 1.16):

> Sunt ista ut dicis; sed audisse te credo, Tubero, Platonem Socrate mortuo primum in Aegyptum discendi causa, post in Italiam et in Siciliam contendisse ut Pythagorae inventa perdisceret, eumque et cum Archyta Tarentino et cum Timaeo Locro multum fuisse, et Philolai commentaries esse nactum, cunque eo tempore in his locis Pythagorae nomen vigeret, illum se et hominibus Pythagoreis et studiis illis dedisse.
Itaque cum Socratem unice dilexisset, eique omnia tribuere voluissest, leporem Socraticum subtilitatemque sermonis cum obscuritate Pythagorae et cum illa plurimarum artium gravitate contexuit.

What you say is true: but I believe that you have heard, Tubero, that after Socrates died, Plato first made his way to Egypt for the sake of learning, and afterwards to Italy and Sicily, so that he might thoroughly learn the discoveries of Pythagoras; and that he spent much time with Archytas of Tarentum and Timaeus of Locri, and that he got a hold of Philolaus’ commentaries; and that since at this time and in these places the name of Pythagoras flourished, he dedicated himself to the Pythagoreans and their studies. Therefore since he loved Socrates uniquely, he wanted to attribute to him all things, and he wove Socratic charm and subtlety of speech together with the obscurity of Pythagoras and with that gravity of his numerous forms of knowledge.

Scipio refers to the tradition that Plato went to Egypt and beyond, where he acquired Pythagorean knowledge which he was in turn eager to attribute to Socrates. But this Socrates is merely Plato’s version. The difference in the perception of the two Socrates depends on the tradition that has been “handed down to memory” (proditum memoriae, Rep. 1.16.2). This detail is important, because memory determines the present perception of past knowledge and people, such as Socrates, Plato, and even Cicero himself138.

Cicero invites us readers to think carefully about how the Socratic question applies to Cicero’s own construction of his dialogue. Tubero and Scipio’s debate draws our attention to the discrepancy between Plato’s Socrates and Socrates the historical man. Although it is common both in antiquity and today to view Socrates as Plato’s mouthpiece, Cicero foregrounds the discrepancy between the author of the dialogue and his interlocutors. By the same token, Cicero’s voice cannot be localized in Scipio or any other single character. Rather, it is the task of

138. For the idea of writing as a means of preserving memory and therefore even superior to action, see Baraz (2012) 27–8 on Sallust’s prefaces.
the reader to wrestle through the interlocutors’ various arguments to get at the truth, a process which suits Cicero’s Academic mode.\textsuperscript{139} While one might think that Scipio is a stand-in for Cicero, the text is not so straightforward. Cicero uses the genre of the dialogue to bring diverse ideas into competition and emphasizes this by reminding his readers that the Socrates encountered in the Platonic dialogues is not the “true” Socrates but only a particular version of him.

Plato was an extremely important figure for Cicero.\textsuperscript{140} Not only did he translate the famous philosopher, he also gave him the highest praise, elevating him to a nearly divine status (\textit{ille deus noster}, \textit{Att. 4.16.3}). Pliny the Elder reports that in the preface to the \textit{DRP} Cicero declared himself to be Plato’s companion (\textit{NH praef. 22}). Certainly, Cicero seems to be following Plato in his writing of the \textit{DRP},\textsuperscript{141} which formally mimics the \textit{Republic} insofar as it is a philosophical dialogue concerned with politics that ends with a cosmic myth. But Cicero’s text is a Roman version of Plato’s \textit{Republic}, or rather, “Plato’s turned inside out.”\textsuperscript{142} Plato’s \textit{Republic} only imagines what the ideal city would be while Cicero upholds Rome as a real-world example of that ideal (\textit{Rep. 2.52}):

\begin{footnotes}
\item[139] For a similar point, see Atkins (2013) 33–42. On the suitability of the dialogue for Cicero’s philosophical allegiance to Academic Skepticism, see Woolf (2015) with a discussion of the \textit{Republic} and \textit{Laws} as Cicero’s first philosophical dialogues (93–124). Thanks to a letter to his brother Quintus (\textit{Q. fr. 3.5.1–2}), we know that Cicero considered inserting himself into the dialogue. Ultimately, he decided against it; in part, I propose, because it would have undermined the philosophical benefits of his Skeptical stance. Long (1995) 41–3 points out Cicero’s imitation of Plato’s dialogue style and its suitability to his Skepticism.
\item[140] For a general introduction to Cicero as a Plato figure, see Long (1995) 37–61; Bishop (2019) 85–128; and Boyancé (1970). On Plato being particularly suited to Cicero as a Skeptic, see Fox (2007) 57–68; Schofield (2008); and Brittain (2001). Zetzel (2003) considers Cicero’s use of Plato and Greek culture, arguing that Cicero is “genuinely distrustful” of it and “believed that there were strict limitation to the proper role of Greek culture in Rome” (120–121). For a catalogue of Cicero’s uses of Plato, see Degraff (1940). See also Quint. \textit{Inst. 10.1.123}, who famously praises Cicero, calling him Plato’s equal in his philosophical endeavor (\textit{Platonis aemulus}), on which see Douglas (1962).
\end{footnotes}
Ego autem, si [quo] modo consequat potuero, rationibus eisdem, quas ille vidit, non in umbra et imagine civitatis, sed in amplissima re publica enitar, ut cuiusque et boni publici et mali causam tamquam virgula videar attingere.

But I, if I am somehow able to follow suit with those same principles of reason that [Plato] saw, I shall try—not in the shadow and likeness of the commonwealth—but in the most fleshed-out, Republic—to appear to touch the cause of each public good and ill with a pointer, as it were.

This passage’s context has been lost, but the speaker (presumably Scipio) recognizes the similarity of approach between himself and Plato while also highlighting the difference between the theoretical and the actual: Plato’s Republic is about a hypothetical city, while Cicero writes about a political regime that has actually been implemented—Rome.143

Cicero’s DRP, however, is not as practically and politically oriented as this juxtaposition might seem to suggest. For one thing, Cicero sets the DRP in the past, which already puts it at a remove from Cicero’s Rome of the 50s BCE.144 This authorial decision is especially salient since we know that Cicero considered setting the dialogue in contemporary times, although Cicero says that in the end he chose not to in order to avoid offense.145 Yet projecting the dialogue into the past grants it an imaginary, even mythic, quality. Furthermore, Cicero’s Rome is itself a fiction. For example, Scipio’s historical narrative in Book 2 is highly edited: Romulus is praised

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143 Schofield (2008) sees the DRP as an “assertion of Rome against Greece” (77). He argues that in the DRP Cicero has Scipio articulate his ideal commonwealth as a polemic against Plato: “In De Republica, for example, despite the respect for Plato that Cicero expresses here as elsewhere (in this work by the very writing of a dialogue with that title and with the main themes it pursues), a key claim is that the theory of the optimus status rei publicae he puts in the mouth of Scipio is superior to Plato’s (Rep. 2.21–2), because it is not utopian and because it reflects the historical experience of the Romans as they worked out their own compromise between monarchy, aristocracy and popular rule” (78).

144 Cf. De or., which is set in 91 BCE at the brink of the Social War, when Cicero was a youth. Putting a dialogue in the past is a technique of Plato’s (e.g. Ti., Symp.).

145 Q. fr. 3.5.2.
while Remus does not even appear, a choice that allows Cicero to suppress the fratricide and uphold Romulus alone as Rome’s admirable king and founder. Such a narrative is itself a kind of myth-making\(^{146}\).

We begin to see, then, that the division between theory and reality, contemplation and action, philosophy and politics, stargazing and statecraft, is not as stark as the dialogue initially seems to suggest. The text’s organizational structure pits intangible ideals (such stars and theoretical philosophy) against real-world concerns (such as political constitutions and statesmanship), only to show how interconnected these binaries really are. On the one hand, the interlocutors are statesmen dedicated to the \textit{vita activa} whose primary concern is practical: the best political model and its implementation at Rome. On the other hand, the dialogue itself is a philosophical treatise set in the country during a period of leisure, and the interlocutors—whatever their roles of \textit{negotium} in city life—are men with well-known intellectual interests and philosophical inclinations musing about ideal governments and the relevance of astral phenomena, which in and of itself is a theoretical enterprise. To put it plainly, the \textit{DRP} is not a how-to manual on running governments or a straightforward historical account but a highly literary piece of political (and perhaps natural) philosophy. Moreover, the \textit{DRP} ends with the magnificent \textit{Dream}, an astral myth, which seems to challenge political philosophy as such. These respective divisions initially appear divergent in their orientations, like horizontal and vertical axes. Yet we see the text drawing our attention to the intersection of these axes, not their divergence farther afield.

\[^{146}\text{See Cornell (2001) 41–56 for Scipio’s selective historical narrative.}\]
Below, I chart the apparent structuralist dualities operative in the dialogue (table 1). On the one hand, we have the Horizontal category, which Cicero seems to advocate in the preface and Scipio moves toward in the opening dialogue. This is the world of practical action. On the other, we have the Vertical category, which Tubero gestures towards in his questioning into astronomy and his portraiture of a Platonic Socrates. This is the world of contemplation.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HORIZONTAL</th>
<th>VERTICAL</th>
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<td><em>Vita activa</em></td>
<td><em>Vita contemplativa</em></td>
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<td>Politics</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td><em>Negotium</em></td>
<td><em>Otium</em></td>
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Table 1

I set forth this schema as a tool that is useful to think with in approaching the *DRP*, but I do not mean to suggest that it is absolute. For example, the appearance of an item in one category does not necessarily imply the presence of all of the others: if a character seems to advocate for star study, he may not at the same time gesture towards leisure or myth. I argue that Cicero plays these dualities against one another in order to show their fundamental connection since the dialogue blurs the opposites even as it posits them: *otium* is bound up with the political life; Tubero’s astronomical question is politically contextualized.
As Book 1 progresses, the debate between the Horizontal and Vertical passes from Scipio and Tubero to Laelius and Philus. Unlike Tubero and Scipio, who are separated by age and rank, Laelius and Philus are equals, experienced statesmen who belong to the older generation of the dialogue’s interlocutors. As readers, we may be more inclined to heed Scipio’s points over Tubero’s because of his august status. With Laelius and Philus, however, it is not obvious that one should be considered more authoritative than the other. Granted, Laelius is named Sapiens, but both are held in high esteem by Scipio. On the one hand, Scipio seems quite close to Laelius in his opinions on the stars since he challenges his nephew’s interest in star study at the beginning of the dialogue. The dialogue thus seems to set up Laelius and Scipio as pendants of one another (Rep. 1.18). Sometimes Laelius upholds Scipio as the superior, but sometimes Scipio puts Laelius in the preeminent position, granting him as it were parental authority (in loco parentis, Rep. 1.18).147

On the other hand, the text also suggests that Philus could be Scipio’s doublet. Like Laelius, Philus is a man of influence and Scipio’s intimate friend. Philus’ story about Galus’ sphere prompts Scipio to wax loftily about the cosmic viewpoint and the value of philosophy (Rep. 1.27–9), though Laelius immediately grounds him in political discussion again. To borrow Atkins’ terminology, Scipio demonstrates a “dual allegiance” to philosophy and politics and oscillates between the philosophical positions that Philus and Laelius uphold.148

147 We should note that in the De Amicitia Cicero portrays Laelius as Scipio’s most intimate friend, a role that arguably plays in the DRP as well. I simply wish to point out that he and Philus both belong to the “older generation” of interlocutors and that Scipio, ambivalent, at some points seems more persuaded by one, at other times by the other.

148 Atkins (2013) 54 points out Scipio’s ambivalent stance: “While the other characters so far have appeared to be devoted more completely either to politics or scientific inquiry, Scipio has demonstrated a dual allegiance.”
Laelius and Philus voice opposing views: Laelius is the most consistent and vociferous defender of the Horizontal, Philus of the Vertical. The stature of both men asks the reader to consider both their viewpoints seriously. Furthermore, in the course of their conversation, it seems that Philus and Laelius themselves shift in their positions as they adopt the opposing viewpoint in the re-enactment of the Carneadean debate in Book 3. Even though their adjustment in positions is contrived by the parameters of the conversation, the fact that they are able to change their philosophical viewpoints invites the reader in her engagement with the dialogue to likewise try on different philosophical viewpoints. In short, the dialogue asks the reader to engage various characters’ arguments and does not univocally advocate for one position over the others.

Let us look more closely at Laelius and Philus’ exchange in Book 1. Shortly upon his arrival at Scipio’s villa, Laelius inquires about the day’s topic of conversation. When Philus first informs him of their debate about the parhelia, Laelius marvels that they would indulge in such conversation when the commonwealth is at stake (Rep. 1.19). Laelius’ indignation is expressive of his deep commitment to the Republic. His particular allegiances preclude him from bothering about physics, not because he is not curious about parhelia per se, but because their nature is undiscoverable and (on his view) merely idle speculation (Rep. 1.32):

aut enim nullus esse potest, aut sit sane, ut visus est, modo ne sit molestus, aut scire istarum rerum nihil aut, etiamsi maxime sciemus, nec meliores ob eam scientiam nec beatioresesse possumus

For either such a thing [as double suns] cannot exist, or to be sure, let it exist, as long as it doesn’t cause trouble—we either can’t know anything about these matters, or, even if we know them well, we are not able to be better or happier on account of such knowledge.
This objection to studying astral matters recalls Scipio’s critique of Panaetius, who likewise investigated things that cannot be known for certain. Political knowledge, on the other hand, accords with real-world experience and can therefore be known and benefit mankind (Rep. 1.32). Yet, despite his rejection of further inquiry into parhelia, Laelius is the one who posits a parallel between the astral phenomenon of the two suns and the political situation. Earlier in Book 1, Laelius tells Philus that he is happy to continue their conversation of the two suns, “unless by chance Manilius thinks that some interdict should be issued for the two suns, that they should possess the heavens in the same way in which they both possessed it before” (nisi forte Manilius interdictum aliquod inter duos soles putat esse componendum, ut ita caelum possideant, ut uterque possederit, Rep. 1.20). Laelius’ legal joke about the suns posits a connection between the laws of the land and the laws of stars. Of course, this parallel is made in jest, but Laelius is the first to suggest a direct connection between the two. Later, Laelius even more explicitly connects the parhelia to the political phenomenon of two Senates (Rep. 1.31):

Quid enim mihi L. Pauli nepos, hoc avunculo, nobilissima in familia atque in hac tam clara re publica natus, quae rit, quo modo duo soles visi sint, non quae rit, cur in una re publica duo senatus et duo paene iam populi sint.

Why, I ask, does the grandson of L. Paulus, nephew of this uncle, born in the most noble family and in this renowned republic, ask why two suns have been seen in the sky, and not ask why in one republic there are two senates and almost already two peoples?

The happenings of the sky reflect the political realities, suggesting some sort of sympathy between the two: the two suns mirror the two peoples. In his rejection of astral matters, Laelius seems to highlight their political relevance; the very fact that Laelius entertains the possibility
that the double suns could be an omen suggests that there is a connection between the Horizontal and the Vertical.

Laelius’ unwitting connection of the astronomical and political picks up on the logic of Philus’ earlier point that the astral and political are inextricably linked. To convince Laelius that their astronomical investigation is worthwhile, Philus appeals to Laelius’ domestic inclinations by eliding the difference between the city and the universe, pointing out that they are one and the same (*Rep.* 1.19):

An tu ad domos nostras non censes pertinere, scire quid agatur et quid fiat domi—quae non ea est quam parietes nostri cingunt, sed mundus hic totus, quod domicilium quamque patriam di nobis communem secum dederunt—cum praesertim, si haec ignoremus, multa nobis et magna ignoranda sint?

“But do you not think that it concerns our homes to know what is being done and accomplished at home—which is not the one which our walls enclose but this whole universe, which the gods gave to us as a domicile and as a fatherland to have in common with them. Especially since, if we are ignorant of these matters, we must remain ignorant of many important things?”

Philus makes a very Stoic point by expanding the borders of “home” to the cosmos itself, thereby making the parhelia a local affair of domestic importance. On this view, we are citizens of Rome, but we are first and foremost members of the cosmic city, the *cosmopolis*. Therefore, the astronomical happenings are inherently public and relevant to human life.

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149 Diogenes the Cynic, who lived in the 5th and 4th c. BCE, coined the appellation “citizen of the universe” (*κοσµοπολίτης*), which influenced the Stoic concept of Cosmopolitanism; see Schofield (1999) 64. See Schofield (1999) for more on early Stoic political thought and its relation to Zeno’s *Republic*; Zeno’s was later abandoned in favor of Chrysippus’ idea of the cosmic city, inhabited by gods and men alike and undergirded by *λόγος*. Vogt (2008) argues that the early Stoic conception of the cosmic city is a genuine contribution to political philosophy.
2.3 Archimedes’ Celestial Spheres

Philus proceeds to tell the interlocutors about two celestial spheres—one mechanical, one solid—both designed by the great Sicilian scientist Archimedes.150 The spheres were spoils from the Second Punic War: Marcus Claudius Marcellus (268–208 BCE), comrade of Africanus at Carthage, brought them back to Rome after sacking the Greek city Syracuse in 212/211 BCE. The solid sphere—which was very beautiful—Marcellus placed in the Temple of Virtue for all to see; the mechanical orrery—which was not much to look at—he brought home for his own private use.151 Philus recounts how he was at the house of the younger Marcellus (M. Marcellus’ grandson) when Marcellus’ co-consul C. Sulpicius Galus used the orrery to explain planetary motion.152

What is the point of this story? Philus’ vignette is followed by a lacuna, but the text resumes with Scipio recollecting how Galus—like Pericles and Thales before him—explained an eclipse to frightened troops, demonstrating how technical astronomical knowledge can have tactical and political benefits. Furthermore, as Martin Gallagher has shown, the language Philus uses to describe the motions of the mechanical sphere is echoed by Scipio in his description of the revolutions of political cycles, suggesting that politics and astronomy are deeply interconnected, or at least share a common language.153

Let us now turn to Philus’ story, which I quote in full (Rep. 1.21–22):

150 For the impact of Archimedes on Roman literature and culture, see Jaeger (2008) 48–68, who has a thoughtful discussion of Archimedes’ celestial spheres.
151 For a brief history of planetaria, see Pease (1955) ad Cic. Nat D. 2.88.
152 Galus and Marcellus were consuls together in 166 BCE.
Then Philus said, “I will present nothing new to you, nothing which has been thought of or discovered by me; for I remember that C. Sulpicius Galus, a most educated man, as you know, when this same phenomenon was reported to have been seen, he was by chance at the house of M. Marcellus, who was consul with him, and he ordered for the orrery to be brought out, which M. Marcellus’ grandfather had taken from the richest and most adorned city Syracuse when it was captured, although he carried off nothing else from such great booty to his home. Although I had often heard talk of this sphere on account of Archimedes’ fame, I did not really admire its appearance. For there was a handsomer and more elegant sphere than it in common view—made by the same Archimedes—that the same Marcellus had placed in the Temple of Virtue. But after Galus most scientifically began to give an account of this work, I decided that there was more genius in that Sicilian than it seemed possible that human nature could possess. For Galus said that Marcellus’ other sphere was solid and without hollow space, an old
invention, and that it was first fashioned by Thales of Miletus. Later, however, this same solid sphere was described by Eudoxus of Cnidus—a disciple of Plato, allegedly—with stars and constellations, the ones that cling to the outer sphere of the sky. This whole order and description was taken from Eudoxus by Aratus many years afterwards. Aratus set it forth in verse, not with any astronomical knowledge, but with a certain poetic skill. This type of spherical model, however, in which were contained the motions of the sun and moon and those five stars which are called wanderers or as it were vagrants, showed what could not be depicted on that solid sphere, and the invention of Archimedes deserved admiration because he had devised a way to portray the asymmetrical and various paths in their dissimilar motions with a single turn of the device. When Galus moved this sphere, it happened that the moon followed the sun with as many turns on that bronze as it does by days in the sky itself. Therefore, that same eclipse of the sun would happen on the sphere and the moon would come into that same boundary where the shade of the earth was, when the sun from the opposite...

In this story, Philus recalls a time from his youth when double suns appeared—“the same phenomenon was reported to have been seen” (cum idem hoc visum diceretur, Rep. 1.21)—which connects the past of the vignette to the present of the dialogue. The settings share many common features: in both past and present, political men are gathered at a home (Marcellus’; Scipio’s) enjoying conversation (with some degree of leisure) and considering the appearance of a parhelia phenomenon. Philus’ story evokes a double-vision in the reader; the doubling of the suns is reflected in the overlap of the settings of past and present, suggesting a deep connection between the two events. Furthermore, in telling this story, Philus evokes the past as a model, an exemplum, for the present, which accords with Roman sensibilities about authority and tradition: what men of old (Galus; Marcellus) did in turn shapes the men of today (Laelius; Scipio; et al.). We should, therefore, pay the story heed.
Galus himself is also an exemplum: he is a man who unites political expertise with astronomical learning. As consul Galus not only had achieved the highest political office of the land, but was also extremely learned, a homo doctissimus (Rep. 1.21). According to Pliny, Galus even published his own astronomical treatise and was the first Roman to write about both solar and lunar eclipses (NH 2.9). In the story at hand, Galus’ knowledge of the mechanical orrery’s workings and the accompanying explanation which he delivers “most scientifically” (scientissime, Rep. 1.21) bespeak his remarkable astronomical and technical knowledge. Galus is an accomplished politician and scientist; thus, in telling this story, Philus might be understood as implying that Scipio, Laelius, et al. should imitate Galus’ dual allegiance to politics and astronomy, the Horizontal and the Vertical.

Furthermore, Philus' tale demonstrates that astronomical learning can actually be practical and effect change on the ground. The mechanical orrery turns out to be of great use. While the older, solid sphere is visually attractive, it has no moving parts. The orrery, by contrast, is a remarkable new invention that can mimic in miniature the motions of the planets with a single turn, thereby allowing the handler to predict specific astronomical occurrences, including eclipses. Philus is just about to tell us how Galus explained how the device could model an eclipse when the text breaks off. It resumes with Scipio telling his own story about how

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154 “And Sulpicius Galus—who was consul with M. Marcellus but who at the time was military tribune—was the first Roman to publish an account of both types of eclipses” (Et rationem quidem defectus utriusque primus Romani generis in vulgum extulit Sulpicius Galus qui consul cum M. Marcello fuit, sed tum tribunus militum, NH, 2.19). Pliny does not say whether Galus wrote his treatise in Latin or Greek, although presumably the latter given the subject matter and time frame. Cicero makes no mention of Galus’ treatise in the extant DRP text, although it is possible that he consulted it. Cicero praises him for his learning: “of all the elite men, he devoted himself to Greek studies the most” (maxime omnium nobilium Graecis litteris studuit, Brut. 78). See also Sen. 49–50.

155 See Büchner (1984) 103–4 ad loc.

156 On the astronomical precision of this passage, see Haury (1964).
he remembers Galus explaining an eclipse at the Battle of Pydna (June 21, 168 BCE). When Scipio was a youth, he went with his biological father Paullus (who was consul at the time) on a campaign in Macedonia. By chance on the eve of battle, “a clear night, suddenly the moon—full and bright—fell into darkness” (*serena nocte subito candens et plena luna defecisset*, Rep. 1.23). The troops were terrified by the phenomenon, racked by “superstition and fear” (*religione et metu*, Rep. 1.23). Eclipses were believed to portend disaster, and such an event on the eve of battle would have been an ill omen indeed. Yet thanks to his astronomical expertise, Galus was able to explain to the troops that the eclipse was nothing to fear, but a rationally explicable natural event (Rep. 1.23):

> haud dubitavit postridie palam in castris docere nullum esse prodigium, idque et tum factum esse et certis temporibus esse semper futurum, cum sol ita locatus fuisset, ut lunam suo lumine non posset attingere

> on the next day without hesitation [Galus] explained openly among the troops that [the eclipse] was not a prodigy, and that it had happened at that time and would always happen again at certain times, when the sun was positioned so that it was not able to reach the moon with its own light.

The troops, thanks to Galus’ lecture, set aside their fear and went on to win the battle, which ultimately resulted in the defeat of King Perseus. Such a victory might never have been secured if it had not been for Galus’ scientific explanation. Scipio’s story shows how useful astronomical knowledge can be.

The use of scientific knowledge to effect military success has a long tradition. Thales, traditionally considered the first scientist and father of astronomy, is said to have predicted an eclipse in 585 BCE. Although today it is doubted that Thales had the astronomical knowledge to
actually predict eclipses consistently and accurately,\textsuperscript{157} in antiquity he was credited with being the first to make such a discovery (\textit{Thaletem Milesium primum vidisse dicunt, Rep. 1.25}).\textsuperscript{158} In Herodotus’ account, Thales’ scientific knowledge is not merely theoretical, but employed for military benefit. The Lydians and the Medes, upon viewing the solar eclipse which Thales predicted for the Ionians, set down their arms and made a truce (Hdt. 1.74). Herodotus also records that Thales diverted a river for Croesus’ army (Hdt. 1.75), a narrative detail which cleverly unites Thales’ famous philosophical theory that water is the \textit{archē} of all things with practical military strategy.

After Scipio recounts his memory of Galus explaining a lunar eclipse, the text has a lacuna of two leaves, after which Scipio is speaking about Pericles (\textit{Rep. 1.25}). During a solar eclipse that occurred in the Peloponnesian War, Pericles, like Thales before him and Galus after him, also taught his troops that the solar eclipse was nothing to fear, but a normal event that “happens at a certain and necessary time” (\textit{certo illud tempore fieri et necessario, Rep. 1.25}). Scipio highlights Pericles’ exceptional qualities: “the leader of his state in terms of authority, eloquence, and judgment” (\textit{et auctoritate et eloquentia et consilio princeps civitatis suae, Rep. 1.25}). But Pericles’ excellence is not only political; he also has astronomical expertise and training in natural philosophy. He was, after all, Anaxagoras’ student: “he is said to have taught his fellow citizens that which he himself had heard from Anaxagoras, whose listener he had been” (\textit{docuisse civis suos dicitur, id quod ipse ab Anaxagora cuius auditor fuerat acceperat, Rep. 1.25}). Thanks to his training in natural philosophy, then, Pericles was able to draw upon

\textsuperscript{157} On the state of astronomical knowledge of eclipses around the time of Thales, see O’Brien (1968) and Mosshammer (1981); cf. \textit{Div. 1.112}.

\textsuperscript{158} Cf. Pliny, who says that Thales was the “first of all” (\textit{primus omnium, NH. 2.53}) who investigated eclipses.
both his political prowess and his philosophical training to allay the Athenian troops’ irrational fears about celestial phenomena. Pericles is another example of a political leader—a princeps (Rep. 1.25)—who brings together astronomical and practical expertise for a real-world military advantage.

Lurking behind these figures is the great Sicilian scientist who also used astronomical knowledge for tactical advantage. In the Second Punic War Archimedes carefully positioned mirrors to burn the Roman fleet. Although Cicero does not mention this well-known story (at least not in the text that survives), he certainly had great admiration for Archimedes.159 In fact, during his stint as quaestor in Sicily, he uncovered Archimedes’ tomb, which had been grown over with foliage and forgotten by the locals (Tusc. 5.64). He recognized the sphere and the cylinder on the column of the tomb because of reading “some lines” (quosdam senariolos, Tusc. 5.64) about Archimedes’ proof of the sphere and the cylinder,160 and so he was able to identify the small column protruding out of the bushes and find the forgotten tomb (Tusc. 5.65). From Thales to Pericles, from Archimedes to Galus, we have exempla of great men of the past—maiores—who brought together the Horizontal and the Vertical by using their astronomical and scientific/philosophical expertise for the benefit of the state.

Philus’ point about the value of astronomy is well taken by Scipio. After his discussion of eclipses and military strategy, Scipio delivers an effusive speech about the smallness of man, the grandness of the cosmos, and the importance of mathematics for distinguishing humans from other forms of animal life (Rep. 1.26–9). In many ways, this lofty speech anticipates the themes

159 As Haury (1964) 198 observes, “Cicéron paraît avoir éprouvé pour Archimède une admiration qui touchait au culte.”

of the Dream in Book 6. Scipio advocates for a cosmic viewpoint that recalibrates our human perspective; in contrast to the view from the heavens, Rome seems small (Rep. 1.26):

Quid porro aut praeclarum putet in rebus humanis, qui haec deorum regna perspexerit, aut diuturnum, qui cognoverit quid sit aeternum, aut gloriosum, qui viderit quam parva sit terra, primum universa, deinde ea pars eius, quam homines incolant, quamque nos in exigua eius parte adfixi plurimis ignotissimi gentibus speremus tamen nostrum nomen volitare et vagari latissime?

The man who has gazed upon these kingdoms of the gods, what could he any longer consider outstanding in human affairs, or everlasting, who knows what eternity is, or glorious, who has seen how small the earth is—first the whole earth, then that part of it, which humans inhabit—and on how tiny a part of it we dwell, completely unknown to most races of men, and nevertheless hope that our name will fly far and wide?

After peering down from the cosmic realm, even the greatest affairs of man seem small. Scipio deemphasizes Horizontal matters in favor of Vertical contemplation since it is by carefully watching the heavens (haec deorum regna, Rep. 1.26) that the sage is able to gain a sense of perspective and come to see man’s—and even Rome’s—relative insignificance (plurimis ignotissimi gentibus, Rep. 1.26). Therefore, Scipio next emphasizes the value of leisure (Rep. 1.27–8):

Qui denique, ut Africanum auum meum scribit Cato solitum esse dicere, possit idem de se praedicare, numquam se plus agere quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse quam cum solus esset

He at last would be able to say the same thing about himself that Cato writes that my grandfather Africanus was accustomed to say: that he never did more than when he was doing nothing, and that he was never less alone than when he was alone.

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Africanus’ adage confounds the idea that *otium* is useless and *negotium* is useful: “doing nothing” (*nihil cum ageret, Rep. 1.27*) is when he does the most (*numquam se plus agere, Rep. 1.27*). Leisure affords the sage time to consider the *regna deorum* (*Rep. 1.26*) and in turn to do more for the *regna hominum*, a point which Scipio highlights by contrasting the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius with the Sicilian scientist Archimedes (*Rep. 1.28*):

> Quis enim putare vere potest plus egisse Dionysium tum, cum omnia moliendo eripuerit civibus suis libertatem, quam eius civem Archimedem, cum istam ipsam sphaeram, nihil cum agere videretur, effecerit?

For who would be able to really think that Dionysius had done more at the time when, by doing everything he could, he deprived citizens of their freedom, than his citizen Archimedes, when he made that sphere itself, at a time when he seemed to be doing nothing?

Dionysius is a ruler, Archimedes a mere citizen. Dionysius is in a state of hectic activity (*omnia moliendo, Rep. 1.28*) whereas Archimedes seems to do nothing (*nihil cum agere videretur, Rep. 1.28*). Dionysius is a real-world man; Archimedes “idly” spends his time making seemingly useless globes and watching the stars. Yet Scipio’s point is that Archimedes makes a much greater contribution to human society than the Syracusan tyrant. Scipio’s speech extols astronomy and natural philosophy: the Vertical. At the same time, Scipio also confounds the categories of Horizontal and Vertical: stargazing is useful and politically relevant. After all, Archimedes, in crafting his spheres, was doing more for Syracuse than the Horizontally-gazing Dionysius.

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162 Cicero makes a similar comparison of Dionysius and Archimedes at *Tusc. 5.57–67.*
After Scipio’s grand speech, Philus would seem to have won his case on astronomy’s behalf quite decidedly. Laelius, however, begins to draw Scipio back down to earth by adducing another notable exemplum: Aelius Sextus, a sagacious and supremely prudent person (egregie cordatus homo, catus Aelius Sextus, Rep. 1.30)—as Ennius himself said—who did not waste his time with those things that could not be discovered but rather occupied himself with matters that could be worked out with “care and work” (et cura et negotio, Rep. 1.30), a point which echoes Scipio’s earlier critique of Panaetius (Rep. 1.15). In response to his friend Galus, Sextus (according to Laelius) always had on his lips the words of Achilles from Ennius’ now-lost Iphigenia (Rep. 1.30):

Astrologum signa in caelo quid sit observationis?
Cum Capra aut Nepa aut exoritur nomen aliquod belvarum
Quod est ante pedes nemo spectat, caeli scrutantur plagas

Why do astrologers have to look for the signs in the sky? When the Goat or the Scorpion or some other animal rises, no one looks at what is before his feet; they look at the expanse of the sky.163

By quoting the lines Sextus used to draw down his friend Galus back to the ground from his astronomical revelries, Laelius aims to do the same in the present with Scipio. Laelius’ case is made all the more persuasive by the inclusion of Ennius, Rome’s greatest poet. Ennius’ high opinion of Sextus and his anti-stargazing lines carry great weight. Laelius does not reject Greek learning altogether; he simply wants to pursue learning “which we are able to apply to the use of real life or even to the commonwealth itself” (quae vel ad usum vitae vel etiam ad ipsam rem publicam conferre possimus, Rep. 1.30). Laelius’ exemplum Sextus follows Ennius’

163 The translation is Zetzel (1995) 121. This is the first attested usage of the word astrologi.
Neoptolemus, who said “he wants to practice philosophy, but just a little; for it does not altogether please to do so completely” (*philosophari velle, sed paucis; nam omnino haud placere, Rep. 1.30*).

After Laelius’ rejection of astronomy and natural philosophy, Scipio promptly descends from his peaks of contemplation in order to talk about what he knows best: the state. The remainder of the Book 1—and indeed, the rest of the *DRP* dialogue—focuses on politics until astronomy returns full force in the *Dream*.

### 2.4 Planetary Motion and Political Cycles

Does Scipio’s quick return to the Horizontal mean that Laelius wins the debate about the relevance of astronomy? Not necessarily. For one thing, I have argued that Scipio is not simply Cicero’s mouthpiece (sec. 2.2), so his turn to politics does not necessarily require that we readers should take his trajectory as our own. But more importantly, it is not clear that Scipio abandons astronomy in favor of politics after all. Let us take a closer look at Scipio’s constitutional discourse. After discussing the three simple forms of government—democracy (*civitas popularis*), aristocracy (*optimates*), and monarchy (*rex* *(Rep. 1.42)*)—Scipio explains that each of these simple forms can easily devolve into a debased version of itself *(Rep. 1.45)*:

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\[\text{…taeterrimus, et ex hac vel optimatum vel factionis, tyrannica illa vel regia vel etiam persaepe popularis, itemque ex ea genus aliquod efflorescere ex illis quae ante dixi solet, mirique sunt orbes et quasi circumitus in rebus publicis commutationum et vicissitudinum.}\]

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\[\text{…the worst, and from it [arises a regime] either of aristocracy or faction, or monarchy or even very often mob rule, and similarly from it some type is accustomed to develop from}\]

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\[164\text{Cf. } \text{De or. 2.156 and Tusc. 2.1. See also Baraz (2012) 23–7 on Cicero’s use of Ennius as a mouthpiece for Romans’ deeply-held anxiety about excessive philosophy.}\]
those which I spoke of before, and there are marvelous cycles and, as it were, revolutions, of changes and alterations in public affairs.165

Democracy turns to mob rule; aristocracy to oligarchic faction; and kingship to tyranny. Scipio describes these changes as “cycles” (orbes, Rep. 1.45) and “revolutions” (circumitus, Rep. 1.45), expressions Cicero uses elsewhere as astronomical terms.166 In the Dream, Cicero describes how the planets complete their circular paths as they traverse their regular “cycles” or orbits (orbes, Rep. 6.15).167 Cicero also uses circuitus in the Dream: Africanus tells Scipio that when he has lived through seven times eight revolutions of the sun, he will reach the fated point of his life by the “natural revolution” (circuitu naturali, Rep. 6.12).168 In the De natura deorum, Cicero uses circumitus and orbes together to describe the motion of the sun.169

The connection between the planetary and political cycles becomes more pronounced with the mention of the wise man who foresees the revolutions of regimes (Rep. 1.45):

quos cum cognosse sapientis est, tum vero prospicer impendentes, in gubernanda re publica moderantem cursum atque in sua potestate retinentem, magni cuiusdam civis et divini paene est viri. itaque quartum quoddam genus rei publicae maxime probandum esse sentio, quod est ex his quae prima dixi moderatum et permixtum tribus.

It is the part of the wise man to know these [revolutions and cycles], and to foresee them before they occur; moderating a course in governing the state and keeping her in his own power, is the part of a certain great citizen and almost divine man. Therefore I believe

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165 See Zetzel (1995) 134–5 for the reconstruction of the passage. I follow Zetzel’s text and have adapted his translation.

166 See Gallagher (2001).

167 Sidera circulos suos orbesque conficiunt (Rep. 6.15).

168 Nam cum aetas tua septenos octiens solis anfractus reditusque converterit, duoque ii numeri, quorum uterque plenus alter altera de causa habetur circuitu naturali summam tibi fatalem confecerint (Rep. 6.12).

169 Circumitus enim solis orbium quinque et sexaginta et trecentorum quarta fere diei parte addita conversionem conficiunt annuam (Nat. D. 2.49).
that a certain fourth type of commonwealth should be approved of the most, which is a balance and mixture from these three regimes which I first spoke of.

The *sapiens* is responsible for forecasting the state’s “course” (*cursum*, Rep. 1.45), which is the same word Philus uses of planetary motion in recounting Galus’ explanation of Archimedes’ orrery (*varios cursus servaret una conversio*, Rep. 1.22). In the *Dream*, *cursus* is used of planetary orbits (Rep. 6.17, 18). In Book 2, Scipio again describes the cycles of political constitutions in astronomical language (Rep. 2.45):

> Hic ille iam *vertetur orbis*, cuius *naturalem motum* atque *circuitum* a primo discite adgnoscere. id enim est caput civilis prudentiae, in qua omnis haec nostra *versatur* oratio, videre itinera flexusque rerum publicarum, ut, cum sciatis quo quaeque res inclinet, retinere aut ante possitis occurrere.

Here that **cycle will turn**: learn to recognize from the beginning its **natural motion** and **revolution**. For this is the head of civil prudence, on which our whole discussion **turns**: to see the journeys and paths of states so that—since you know to where each state inclines—you are able to check or anticipate it.

Romulus’ beneficent monarchic constitution devolves into Tarquinius Superbus’ tyranny, but this is a revolution which the *sapiens* should foresee, since he has studied the constitutions’ “natural motion” (*naturalem motum*, Rep. 2.45) and “revolution” (*circuitum*, Rep. 2.45). Here, the astronomical terms *orbis* and *circuitus*—which appeared in Rep. 1.45—are repeated. The rotation of the political cycle (*vertetur orbis*, Rep. 2.45) echoes the “turn” (*conversio*, Rep. 1.22) of Archimedes’ orrery. *Convertitur* is also used in the *Dream* to describe the revolution of heavenly

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bodies (*Rep.* 6.17, 18, 19, 24).\(^{171}\) The *motus* of the political cycles (*motum*, *Rep.* 2.45) recalls the *motus* of the planets on the orrery (*Rep.* 1.22). In the *De consulatu suo* (henceforth *DCS*), Cicero also uses *motus* and *cursus* to describe the paths of the planets (fr. 2.6)\(^{172}\). Scipio describes the political constitutions in astronomical terms, which suggests that the “discourses on astronomy play a central role in the dialogue on the best constitution” (Gallagher 2001: 509).

Scipio, it turns out, does not leave behind astronomy for politics but rather demonstrates their fundamental connection. The constitutional cycles mirror the revolutions of the planets, and these cycles, as Scipio himself says, have been the point of their entire discourse (*in qua omnis haec nostra versatur oratio*, *Rep.* 2.45), which also may contain an astronomical pun. By studying constitutions, the *sapiens* can predict the rise and fall of political regimes, much as Galus and Pericles were able to foresee eclipses because of their astronomical learning. Just as there is no need to be alarmed when the sun becomes dark, we should also not be afraid when a tyrant appears; tyranny is a natural part of the cycle (*naturalem motum*, *Rep.* 2.45). When the *orbis* turns, another regime will rise, much as the sun returns after disappearing during an eclipse. Thus, Philus’ initial Stoic point still holds: everything that happens in the universe is pertinent to local life (*Rep.* 1.19). Political regimes are natural phenomena that we can study, like planets and stars. If the same type of motion that guides the planets also drives political cycles, then natural philosophy grants insight into political affairs and is not merely idle learning. In


\(^{172}\) *Et si stellarum motus cursusque vagantis*, fr. 2.6, on which see Kubiak (1994), who links Cicero’s political *cursus* in the *DCS* with planetary motion: “The orator’s role in public life is to follow a path of virtue divinely ordained for him, just as we shall see in the *Aratea* and the *De consulatu* the physical path of the heavenly bodies is eternally decreed in the mind of Jupiter” (53–4).
short, the mechanical orrery shows the intersection of the Horizontal and Vertical in two senses: (i) the orrery is helpful militarily and (ii) the orrery’s motions are fundamentally tied to the order of the state. Thus, the orrery serves as a demonstration of the political relevance of the stars in the DRP.

2.5 The Static Sphere and the Beauty of the Cosmos

So far, my discussion has focused on the mechanical orrery. But what of Archimedes’ second sphere? Since it is solid and static, it cannot be used to predict eclipses, nor does it convey the same sort of motions that drive constitutional cycles. What role, then, does it have? Perhaps Cicero simply includes the static sphere as a foil to its more useful and technologically advanced counterpart. Or Cicero could just be following history: Archimedes made two spheres which Marcellus brought to Rome, so Cicero includes both. Most scholars—if they pay the spheres any attention at all—have focused on the orrery. I hope to show how both spheres are essential to the dialogue, which will in turn bolster this chapter’s argument that the meeting of the Horizontal and Vertical is fundamental to the DRP.

The structure of Philus’ story invites a comparison of the two spheres. As Mary Jaeger points out, the “description alternates between them…This alternation, marked by various forms of the demonstratives hic and ille, turns readers’ attention from one sphere to the other, thus generating an image of the two side by side” (2008, 53). The narrative also emphasizes the contrast between Philus’ aural and visual experience of the two spheres. Philus seems rather

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disappointed in the orrery, but his opinion of it changes drastically when he hears an account (ratio) of how it works. Let us turn to Philus’ story of the two spheres again, but this time paying especial attention to the senses (Rep. 1.21):

Nihil novi vobis adferam, neque quod a me sit cogitatum aut inventum; nam memoria teneo C. Sulpicium Gallum, doctissimum, ut scitis, hominem, cum idem hoc visum diceretur et esset casu apud M. Marcellum, qui cum eo consul fuerat, sphaeram, quam M. Marcelli avus captis Syracusis ex urbe locupletissima atque ornatissima sustulisset, cum aliud nihil ex tanta praeda domum suam deportavisset, iussisse proferri; cuius ego sphaerae cum persaepe propter Archimedi gloriam nomen audisset, speciem ipsam non sum tanto operi admiratus; erat enim illa venustior et nobilior in volgus, quam ab eodem Archimede factam posuerat in templo Virtutis Marcellus idem. sed posteaquam coepit rationem huius operis scientissime Galus exponere, plus in illo Siculo ingenii, quam videretur natura humana ferre potuisse, iudicavi fuisse.

I will present nothing new to you, nothing which has been thought of or discovered by me; for I remember that C. Sulpicius Galus, a most educated man, as you know, when this same phenomenon was reported to have been seen, he was by chance at the house of M. Marcellus, who was consul with him, and he ordered for the orrery to be brought out, which Macus Marcellus’ grandfather had taken from the richest and most adorned city Syracuse when it was captured, although he carried off nothing else from such great booty to his home. Although I had often heard talk of this sphere on account of Archimedes’ fame, I did not really admire its appearance. For there was a handsomer and more elegant sphere than it in common view—made by the same Archimedes—that the same Marcellus had placed in the Temple of Virtue. But after Galus most scientifically began to give an account of this work, I decided that there was more genius in that Sicilian than it seemed possible that human nature could possess.

Philus’ vignette draws our attention to his sensory experience of the two spheres—markedly different in terms of form—showcasing a functional and aesthetic contrast between the two (Rep. 1.21). The orrery is surprisingly plain: Philus has often heard about the orrery (audissem), but when he first sees it with his own eyes (speciem ipsam), he is unimpressed and does not admire it
at all (non admiratus sum). He does not begin to appreciate the orrery until he hears Galus verbally explain its “logic” (ratio). Ratio is a loaded word: it most immediately pertains to Galus’ verbal explanation, but also evokes the ratio of the planets, which for Cicero are rational and predictable in their patterns of motion. We can imagine that the orrery Galus presents might be a flat circular disc with planetary models affixed to the surface, something like Freeth and Jones’ reconstruction of the Antikythera Mechanism (see Figure 2).\footnote{I do not mean to say that the Antikythera mechanism is based on Archimedes’ orrery, but only that the orrery might have looked something like Freeth and Jones’ reconstruction, especially in so far as it is a mechanical, flat, two-dimensional disc that can model planetary motion and eclipses. On the feasibility of such an orrery at this time, see Jones (2017) 151.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Figure 2\footnote{Image from Freeth and Jones (2012).}}
\end{figure}
The ordered (and predictable) movements of the planets are rational and intelligible, like the universe itself; after all, the planetary models of the orrery are just a miniature and simplified version of the heavenly bodies. And because Galus has ratio, he himself is able to give rational (verbal) account of the universe. The ratio of the planets becomes rational and hence comprehensible with a verbal explanation. The “beauty” of the orrery, as it turns out, is not for the eyes but the ears. The orrery is associated with the verbal, the logical—which has its own sort of beauty, but a beauty that is perceptible by the mind. This beauty is revealed by a learned teacher. No wonder, then, that the orrery is not publicly displayed for the masses but kept in Marcellus’ private collection (Rep. 1.21). It has only become accessible to a wider audience—that is, us readers—through the medium of Cicero’s text. But in the dramatic setting of the dialogue, its beauty has been revealed only to a select few: the notable statesmen and intellectuals of Scipio’s party.

Visual beauty, by contrast, does not require specialized knowledge since the appeal is immediate. The stars, for example, are appreciated by astronomers and laypeople alike; you do not have to know much about the heavenly bodies to admire their beauty, although a more educated eye may appreciate more. The static sphere, we can imagine, is decorated with the celestial bands and constellations,\textsuperscript{176} much like the globe atop Atlas’ back in the Farnese statue (see Figure 3).

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\textsuperscript{176} On ancient celestial globes and planetaria, see Künzl (2005), esp. 78–86 and Thiele (1898).
Like the night sky, the solid sphere is simply stunning whether you know about stars are not. Cicero's passage emphasizes the solid sphere’s charm and elegance (erat enim venustior et nobilior, Rep. 1.21), which in the common view (in volgus, Rep. 1.21) renders it superior to the orrery. Its popularity, we may presume, comes from its visual appeal. Installed in the Temple of Virtue, the static sphere is displayed for public consumption, unlike the orrery, whose beauty must be “unlocked” by a skilled teacher in a relatively private setting.

While the beauty of the static sphere may seem trivial, it is actually essential. The Greeks call the universe κόσμος, a word which can refer to both “order” and “adornment” (LSJ s.v.), “attesting to an inherent understanding that that which is orderly is also beautiful and decorative” (Volk 2009, 19). The beauty of the cosmos is not accidental but fundamental.177 In this way, the beautiful static sphere represents the universe well. Eudoxus’ description of the static sphere is called a “decoration” (ornatus, Rep. 1.22), a word which points both to its exquisite beauty and evokes the commonplace that the cosmos itself is a decorative work of art. The idea of the

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universe as a work of art accords with the notion of god as a creator who, like an artist, makes a
great work of art: the universe itself. In fact, the Latin word for sky—caelum—can acquire
this metallurgic resonance, suggesting through (an albeit false) etymological connection (as if
from caelare) that the sky is a detailed metal work with images. Put simply, the cosmos is
something beautiful to be “looked at.” So also, the static sphere is a work of art that is meant to
be seen.

Aratus’ Phaenomena, mentioned by Philus as a versification of Eudoxus’ description, is
also closely associated with the visual register. Even the title, which Douglas Kidd translates as
“Visible Signs,” points to the universe as something to be viewed. The doctus poeta repeatedly
e.Encourages his reader to “look” and “see” as he points out the constellations. This visual
language requires the reader to paint the night sky in the mind’s eye. With Aratus’ verbal
instruction, we are able to think of the stars and see them, as it were, by reading. The image of
the stars and the orderliness of the constellations come into our view because of the text itself,
which Aratus suggests is its own sort of cosmos. After all, the poem is also an ordered work of
art, made up not of stars and constellations but signs of a different sort: letters and words.

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178 On the idea of Creationism in antiquity, see Sedley (2008), esp. 205–238.
179 See Varro, Sat. Men. 420.
180 As Volk puts it, “If a work of art created by a god’s skill and craft is thus presented, in our earliest text from
classical antiquity, as a replica of the entire world, the Greeks and Romans were accustomed to think, conversely, of
the universe as resembling a supreme work of art” (Volk (2009) 18). The earliest conception of the universe that we
have in the Greek tradition is the shield of Achilles, which depicts the universe as a work of art, on which see Hardie
181 See Volk (2012), who convincingly argues that Aratus invites his readers to see the universe as a text. For similar
views (though less developed), see also Hunter (2008), Levitan (1979), and Gee (2001).
182 Quintilian seems to have missed this visual vividness, as he critiques Aratus for lacking vibrancy and life (motu,
Inst. 10.1.55).
fact, as Katharina Volk has argued, Aratus’ poem is associated with the written word: just as individual stars make up the constellations, so also do the individual letters of words make up the text in the poem, which likewise requires a divine mind to put it into an intelligible—and legible—order. Aratus adumbrates the connection between the universe and the text in his famous craftsman simile (Phaen. 529–33):

οὗ κεν Ἀθηναίης χειρῶν δεδιδαγµένος ἀνήρ
ἀλλη κολλήσαιτο κυλινδόµενα τροχάλεια
tοῖα τε καὶ τόσα πάντα περὶ σφαιρηδὸν ἐλίσσων,
ός τά γ᾿ ἐναιθέρια πλαγίῳ συναρηρότα κύκλῳ
tοῖα τε καὶ τόσα πέπολετα, διώκεται ἣματα πάντα.

In no other way would a man trained in the craftsmanship of Athene weld together revolving wheels in such a pattern and of such a size, rounding off the whole like a sphere, than the system of celestial circles, which, united by the oblique circle, speed from dawn to nightfall all the time.\textsuperscript{184}

Aratus compares the intersecting celestial circles (zodiac, equator, and tropics) to an armillary sphere. The man who has been taught in Athena’s craft is put into the same position as the god—Zeus—who has created such an orderly cosmos. Likewise, the δεδιδαγµένος ἀνήρ recalls the doctus poeta himself: Aratus.\textsuperscript{185} Thus, we see a parallel between the god, the craftsman, and the poet, as well as between their relative creations: the cosmos, the sphere, and the poem, which suggests that “the universe is itself a kind of artifact, one specifically designed by benevolent Zeus for the purpose of communicating with human beings by sending them signs” (Volk 2009, 2012, 2013).

\textsuperscript{184} Translation is Kidd (1997).

Thanks to Aratus’ widespread popularity, the notion of the universe as a work of visual art becomes all but synonymous with his poetry.

But the beauty and artistry of the static sphere is not merely suggestive of Aratus: the *DRP* makes the link between the two explicit by recounting the origin of the static sphere (*Rep.* 1.22):

> dicebat enim Galus sphaerae illius alterius solidae atque plenae vetus esse inventum, et eam a Thalete Milesio primum esse tornatam, post autem ab Eudoxo Cnidio, discipulo, ut ferebat, Platonis, eandem illam astris stellisque, quae caelo inhaerent, esse descriptam; cuius omnem ornatum et descriptionem sumptam ab Eudoxo multis annis post non astrologiae scientia, sed poëtica quadam facultate versibus Aratum extulisse.

For Galus said that Marcellus’ other sphere was solid and without hollow space, an old invention, and that it was first fashioned by Thales of Miletus. Later, however, this same solid sphere was described by Eudoxus of Cnidus—a disciple of Plato, allegedly—with stars and constellations, the ones that cling to the outer sphere of the sky. This whole order and description was taken from Eudoxus by Aratus many years afterwards. Aratus set it forth in verse, not with any astronomical knowledge, but with a certain poetic skill.

The static sphere is traced back to Thales, Eudoxus, and most importantly for my argument, Aratus. It is striking how its tradition shifts from artifact to text, suggesting a sort of seamlessness between the sphere and the written word. The static sphere is the source for Eudoxus, and Eudoxus is the source for Aratus. If the static sphere points to Aratus, conversely, the presence of Aratus evokes the static sphere. On this view, the static sphere is relevant to the *DRP*’s invocation of Aratus at the beginning of Scipio’s discussion of political constitutions.

### 2.6 The Invocation of Aratus

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186 See Lewis (1992) 94–118.
Scipio opens his discursive speech on political constitutions with an invocation to Aratus. If readers find the invocation a bit perplexing, they are not alone: Laelius also wonders what Aratus has to do with their political conversation (Rep. 1.56):

S. Imitemur ergo Aratum, qui magnis de rebus dicere exordiens a Iove incipiendum putat.
L. Quo Iove? aut quid habet illius carminis simile haec oratio?

“Scipio: “Let us therefore imitate Aratus who when setting out to speak about great subjects thought it necessary to begin from Jupiter.”
Laelius: “What has Jupiter to do with it? What does our current discourse have in common with Aratus’ poem?”

What can we make of this invocation? For one thing, the mention of Aratus promotes Cicero’s own Aratea carmina and likely is part of a polemic against Lucretius, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, coopts Cicero’s astral language as developed in the Aratea for his Epicurean purposes.

But beyond this, it is my contention that the invocation of Aratus communicates the fundamental idea that the universe is rational and intelligible because it itself is driven by a rational, divine mind: Jupiter, king of men and gods.187 Let us return to the passage at hand to consider how Scipio responds to Laelius’ incredulity about Aratus (Rep. 1.56):

S. Tantum, inquit, ut rite ab eo dicendi principia capiamus, quem unum omnium deorum et hominum regem esse omnes docti indoctique [expoliri] pariter consentiunt.

Scipio: “Only this: to fittingly begin speaking from him whom all men—learned and unlearned—agree to be the single king of both gods and men.”

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187 Volk (2015), for example, points out that the peculiar popularity of Aratus at Rome was shaped, in part, by the Zeitgeist of the age, including a rise in the interest in Stoicism and the idea that a rational, benevolent Zeus stands behind the natural order.
Scipio says that it is necessary when beginning to speak about “great things” (*magnis de rebus, Rep. 1.56*) to begin with Jupiter, after the model of Aratus who himself began with Zeus in his celebrated *Phaenomena* (1–18):

Let us begin with Zeus, whom we men never leave unspoken. Filled with Zeus are all highways and all meeting places of people, filled are the sea and the harbours; in all circumstances we are all dependent on Zeus. For we are also his children, and he benignly gives helpful signs to men, and rouses people to work, reminding them of their livelihood, tells when the soil is best for oxen and mattocks, and tells when the seasons are right both for planting trees and sowing every kind of seed. For it was Zeus himself who fixed the signs in the sky, making them into distinct constellations, and organised stars for the year to give the most clearly defined signs of the seasonal round to men, so that everything may grow without fail. That is why men always pay homage to him first and last. Hail, Father, great wonder, great boon to men, yourself and the earlier race! And
hail, Muses, all most gracious! In answer to my prayer to tell of the stars in so far as I may, guide all my singing.\textsuperscript{188}

Aratus’ poem presents the stars as the point of contact between the divine and the human. Because of his kindliness to human beings (ὅ δ᾿ ἤπιος ἀνθρώποις), Zeus has made the world a system of intelligible signs. Through the natural order—in particular the stars—Zeus communicates to us, allowing humans to look at the patterns of nature to guide their work and operations across every sphere of life, whether on land or at sea (Phaen. 2–4). Humans are able to do business in the marketplace, navigate, farm—even write—because the world in which we operate has meaning and a rational design. Thanks to Zeus and his star signs, we can actually know things about the world and respond accordingly. The universe is not random, but a cosmos in the true sense of the word: a beautiful, rational arrangement. And the reason it is intelligible is because it is the communication of an intelligent mind, that is, Zeus.

Zeus, of course, is the king. Although Aratus’ proem does not call him one, his prominence in the poem communicates his authoritative position (he looms so large, in fact, that the invocation of the Muses is delayed until the end of the proem, a poetic decision which troubled many commentators and a concern that Cicero responded to by including the Muses in the first line of his Aratea).\textsuperscript{189} Scipio brings the kingship of Zeus—Jupiter in the Latin—to the fore, calling him the “single king of all gods and men” (unum omnium deorum et hominum regem, Rep. 1.56). Jupiter rules the cosmos, a world that gods and men can comprehend and even

\textsuperscript{188} Translation is Kidd (1997).

\textsuperscript{189} Cicero cites his Aratea poem in De Legibus Book 2, in which Marcus and Quintus have a conversation that recalls the exchange between Scipio and Laelius (respectively) at Rep. 1.56. Cicero quotes the first line of the Aratea as “From Jupiter the beginnings of the Muses” (A love Musarum primordia, De leg. 2.7). On the influence of the scholia on Cicero’s translation and inclusion of the muses in the first line, see Pellicani (2015) 85.
predict thanks to its intelligible patterns. By highlighting Jupiter’s kingship, which is only implicit in Aratus, Scipio posits a fundamental connection between the political and the heavenly realms. To answer Laelius’ question about which of the three simple regimes is best—kingship, aristocracy, or democracy—Scipio invokes Aratus, suggesting that the cosmic realm over which Jupiter presides and the human systems of government not only have something to say to one another but are seamlessly connected. By turning to an astronomical poem to answer a question about political life, Scipio, far from departing from the Vertical position, rather demonstrates Philus’ earlier point that the cosmos is fundamentally our home (Rep. 1.15).

But Jupiter is not only princeps, he is also the source of principia dicendi. The smooth transition from Aratus to the starting point of his speech invites us to consider the parallel between the cosmos and words, which, like the stars, are another system of signs. Jupiter, Scipio suggests, is the divine ratio behind the universe, driving the planets, political systems, and even our very speech. In a similar vein, the Phaenomena posits a fundamental connection between constellations and words. Seeing the stars provides the occasion for the poet to craft his own cosmos in response, not of stars and planets, but of text. Thus, the stars are analogized to another sign system: writing. The sky is like a book, and the book is like the sky. This overlap is supported by hidden signs in the Phaenomena, such as the pun on Aratus’ name in the second line of the poem and the famous ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic. Cicero may play a similar game of

190 On the ratio of Cicero’s thought and its relationship to Aratus, see Gee (2001).
191 On which, see Volk (2012) and Volk (2013).
conflating text and sky in his *Aratea*, as the (intentional?) ZONA acrostic suggests.\textsuperscript{194} In any case, Aratus’ poem in particular is an example of how words can generate vivid images of the cosmos in the reader’s mind, and conversely, how the cosmos can be generated into words.

The creation of vivid images through words is essential for good oratory and good argument. In the *De oratore*, a text that was written in 55 BCE just before the *DRP*,\textsuperscript{195} Cicero says that metaphor in particular engages our senses—especially sight—through language, “which places as it were in the sight of the mind things which we are not able to perceive and see” (*quae ponunt paene in conspectu animi quae cernere et videre non possumus, De or. 3.161*). It also, he says, adds “brilliance” (*lumen*) to the style (*De or*. 1.39).\textsuperscript{196} Metaphor translates one register to another and in so doing it “best marks out the speech with—as it were—certain stars, and illuminates it” (*maxime tanquam stellis quibusdam notat et illuminat orationem, De or*. 3.170). Cicero describes the benefits of metaphor with a metaphor, cleverly demonstrating its efficacy in his explanation of it. It is no accident, I think, that this metaphor is astral. I suspect that it is a nod to Aratus, whose Zeus “marks out” the stars to be signs for mankind (*αὐτὸς γὰρ γὰρ τὰ γε σήματ’ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξεν/ ἀστρα διακρίνας, 10–11*), much as the orator “marks out” (*notat*) his speech (its own sort of “cosmos”) with “stars” (*tanquam stellis quibusdam*). These sorts of metaphor make the speech more vivid in the mind’s eye. Light, whether metaphorical or physical, is necessary to “see” (=hear) well. Aratus, perhaps, is the quintessential


\textsuperscript{196} Cf. *Orat*. 27.92.
example of a wordsmith making his readers see with words. With his excellent poetry, Aratus
generates a sort of virtual reality where we can see the constellations of the night sky shine
through the text on the page. This sort of synesthesia is the result of excellent “wordcraft,” and I
suggest, is a trademark of Aratus.\textsuperscript{197} Part of the reason that Scipio invokes Aratus is because he
too is bringing to life before our eyes the stars of the Roman past.\textsuperscript{198}

Scipio emphasizes the role of the senses as he explains to Laelius why he brought up
Aratus and Jupiter to start the political discussion. In response to Laelius’ question, Scipio says,
“What do you think, except that which is before your eyes?” (\textit{Quid censes, nisi quod est ante
oculos?}, \textit{Rep.} 1.56). Scipio answers as if the explanation were readily apparent (\textit{ante oculos}),
even though their exchange is happening without the aid of any visual apparatus. Scipio rejects
the Jupiter of traditional religion, saying that the sort of Zeus we encounter in Homer is either (i)
a myth devised by the well-intentioned leaders of commonwealths who want to promote the
model of kingship as the best or (ii) a fable that have been passed down to us “in error” (\textit{in
errore}).\textsuperscript{199} But Scipio does not reject Jupiter altogether, nor does he reject learning about him
through words. Rather, he maintains that “we should listen to the universal (as it were) teachers
of educated men, who have (as it were) seen with their eyes what we scarcely know by
hearing” (\textit{audiamus communis quasi doctores eruditorum hominum, qui tamquam oculis illa
viderunt, quae nos vix audiendo cognoscimus}, \textit{Rep.} 1.56). These teachers deserve our ear
\textit{(audiamus)} because they have “seen” these things (\textit{tamquam oculis illa viderunt}) while we have

\textsuperscript{197} On how the ancients thought of the senses more broadly, see the collection of papers by Butler and Purves (2013).

\textsuperscript{198} Consider Knox (2011), who observes that Cicero’s interest in Aratus “more closely related to his interest in
polyphony as a credential for an orator than in its aesthetic qualities as a model for a poetic movement” (197). See also Courtney (1993) 149–50, n.7.

\textsuperscript{199} Zetzel (1995) \textit{ad loc.} observes that Scipio does not allow the possibility that Zeus actually exists.
barely even “heard” (*vix audiendo*) them. Scipio goes on to explain that these teachers are “those who have sensed by thoroughly investigating the nature of all things that this universe by a mind…” (*Qui natura omnium rerum pervestiganda senserunt omnem hunc mundum mente*, Rep. 1.56).

Unfortunately, the text breaks off here, but the trajectory of Scipio’s point is clear enough in the context: Jupiter is the divine mind who animates the universe and makes it orderly, and this order is perceptible to those who study nature and the motions of the heavens. This Jupiter/divine mind accords with the Jupiter of Aratus’ poem—not the capricious god of Hesiod and Homer, but the benevolent, intelligent force that orders the universe for the benefit of human life on the ground. We can perceive Jupiter firsthand with our own eyes by studying the patterns of nature. But we can also perceive him by listening to the words of teachers who use their words to allow us to “see.”

Scipio in his speech on political constitutions creates his own verbal “movie,” much like Aratus does in the *Phaenomena*, not of the constellations in the heavens, but of the great men of Roman history.200 With his words, Scipio allows us to see the great men of the Roman past and the constitutions they have created. Like Aratus, he creates a vivid image in our mind of the cycles of political constitutions. Yet Aratus is not without his limitations, and Cicero aims to surpass him.201 Aratus’ model is static, like the solid sphere of Archimedes. But the cosmos itself is both beautiful (like the static sphere) and in motion (like the orrery). While Aratus points out the simultaneous rising and settings of the constellations (as if his sphere rotates), he passes over

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200 It is appealing to consider that the origins of the Roman state may stand in the place of a cosmogony, a point which would solidify the connection between the cosmos and the state. On the substitution of the birth of Rome for the origin of the cosmos in Latin literature, see Bettini (2012) 69–72.

201 Bishop (2016) argues that Cicero translated Aratus in order to appropriate his popularity to himself.
the planets, saying that it would be too great a task to tell of their motion: “When I come to them my daring fails, but mine be the power to tell of the orbits of the fixed stars and fixed signs in heaven” (οὐδ᾿ ἔτι θαρσαλέος κείνων ἔγὼ· ἄρκιος εἴην/ ἀπλανέων τά τε κύκλα τά τ᾿ αἰθέρι σήματ᾿ ἐνισπεῖν, Phaen. I60–1). Cicero, however, makes a point in the DRP of discussing the planetary motion and even corrects the Greek concept of “planets,” instead preferring to point out that they are moving stars that follow predictable and regular routes driven by ratio, as the orrery demonstrates. Cicero does this by bringing together beauty and motion in the Dream.

2.7 The Dream of Scipio

What is the Dream, and what should we make of it? In light of the preceding discussion, it is time to revisit my initial claim that the Dream is not an escapist fantasy but rather the consummation of the preceding dialogue. I have argued that the DRP shows the intersection of politics and astronomy, as we saw with the two celestial spheres and the invocation to Aratus. Let us begin by considering how the stars and the state come together in the Dream. Africanus

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202 Omitting the planets is something of a literary topos, and Aratus may be following Plato’s Ti. 38, where the great astronomer Timaeus jettisons an explanation of the planets since they are too complicated in their movements to describe in detail (Ti. 38). Timaeus begins to describe the orbits of the moon, the sun, Venus, and Mercury, but omits Saturn and Jupiter. He falters, unable to explain the planets’ relative positions and how they overtake and are overtaken by one another. The task is too great (ὁ λόγος πάρεργος ὢν πλέον ἂν ἐργον ὃν ἐνεκα λέγεται παράσχοι, 38). See Fig. 1, pg. 2 of this dissertation. See also n. 4, above.

203 Cicero highlights that planets are called “wanderers and vagrants” (errantes et quasi vagae, Rep. 1.21), picking up on the Greek concept of planet qua wanderer, but then refutes this nomenclature by showing their rational courses on the orrery. On planetary motion and “saving the phenomena,” see Gee (2013) 8–10.

204 Many scholars, doubting Cicero’s originality, have looked for sources for the Dream. Coleman (1964) points to Pythagoreanism, and Luck posits some lost work of a Hellenistic philosopher (1956). Ruch (1948) sees the Dream as highly innovative, as does Boyancé (1987), who convincingly argues that the Dream is not merely adapted from Posidonius or some other Stoic source. On soul journeys in relation to Heraclides and his tale of Empedotimus, see Reiche (1993) 161–180.

205 Luck (1956) sees the “theoretical” and the “practical,” (what I call the Horizontal and the Vertical) come together in the Dream. Ruch (1948) also sees a continuity in the dialogue, pointing to the Dream as the culmination of Philus’ comment at Rep. 1.19. Lévi (2014) also sees the Dream as the culmination of the DRP. On the idea of the cosmic statesman, see McConnell (2017) 45–70.
tells his adopted grandson that the god finds the human *civitas* the most pleasing of all earthly endeavors, and that he rewards those who cultivate it (*Rep. 6.13*):

Nihil est enim illi principi deo, qui omnem mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius, quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur: harum rectores et conservatores hinc profecti huc revertuntur.

There is nothing that happens on earth more agreeable to that principal god who reigns over the entire universe than the gatherings and assemblies of people united by law which are called commonwealths: the rulers and preservers of these assemblies—who set forth from here—return here.

It seems likely that the god is pleased with human political systems because they reflect his own character. He is the *princeps deus*, the “king” god. His nature is inherently political: he rules over the cosmos (*omnem mundum regit*), including the planets and heavenly bodies. The planets are portrayed in political terms, suggesting a fundamental connection between political and celestial systems (*Rep. 6.17*):

novem tibi orbibus vel potius globis conexa sunt omnia, quorum unus est caelestis, extumus, qui reliquos omnes complectitur, summus ipse deus arcens et continens ceteros; in quo sunt infixi illi, qui volvuntur, stellarum cursus sempiterni; cui subiecti sunt septem, qui versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum

Behold, all things are joined by these nine circles, or rather spheres, one of which is divine, the outermost sphere which contains all the rest, the supreme god enclosing and preserving the others; in it are fixed those everlasting courses of stars which rotate; subjected to it are the seven spheres which revolve in the opposite direction with a contrary motion to the sky.

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206 Cf. Woolf (2015) 110: “He tells Scipio that nothing on Earth is more pleasing to the god who rules the whole universe than those gatherings of humans, bound by justice, known as states—doubtless because a well-run state follows the order of the universe.”

207 “The use of *principi* reinforces the analogy between cosmic and political organization which was applied to natural and human law by Laelius in Book 3” (Zetzel (1995) 231).
The god is associated with the outermost sphere and is portrayed as the supreme king. The political metaphor is adumbrated in “subjected” (*subiecti*), which simultaneously refers both to the spatial relationship of the spheres (i.e. they are below the outer sphere, *OLD* s.v. 1) and to their political inferiority (i.e. they are subordinate in rank to a monarch, *OLD* s.v. 5b).

The planets themselves are also portrayed in political language, as the sun is depicted in the same vocabulary as the *rector* of the state (*Rep*. 6.17):

Deinde subter mediam fere regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi e temperatio, tanta magnitudine ut cuncta sua luce lustret et compleat.

Then below the sun occupies the middle region, the leader and king and guide of the other lights, the mind of the cosmos and its moderator, of such great magnitude that it illuminates and fills all things with its light.

The sun is both *dux* and *princeps*, suggesting a connection between the astronomical and political. The word *moderator* in particular recalls the language Scipio earlier ascribed to the ideal statesmen and his almost divine perspicacity to perceive the revolutions of political cycles (*Rep*. 1.45):

Mirique sunt orbes et quasi circuitus in rebus publicis commutationum et vicissitudinum. Quos cum cognosse sapientis est, tum vero prospicere impedentes, in gubernanda re publica moderantem cursum atque in sua potestate retinentem, magni cuiusdam civis et divini paene est viri.

And there are marvelous cycles and, as it were, revolutions, of changes and alterations in public affairs. It is the part of the wise man to know these [revolutions and cycles], and to foresee them before they occur; moderating a course in governing the state and keeping her in his own power, is the part of a certain great citizen and almost divine man.
This divine statesman, like the sun, moderates the *orbes* and *circuitus*, whether they be planetary or political. Furthermore, the light of the sun, which illuminates the universe, recalls the light of the statesman’s mind (*lumen animi*, *Rep.* 6.12), which like the sun’s rays, fills its realm—the state (=cosmos)—with his light (*ostendas oportebit patriae*, *Rep.* 6.12). In this way, the sun is given authority over the other planets, even as it is subjected to the outermost divine sphere. So also, the statesman guides and controls the state, perceiving its natural motions, in a way that imitates but does not fully encompass the *deus’* cosmic rule. Thus, the terrestrial gatherings and assemblies mirror astral ones.208

Since it pleases the god to rule over the cosmos, it is fitting that his earthly ambassadors, the “rulers and preservers” (*rectores et conservatores*, *Rep.* 6.13) perform the same role on earth (on a much smaller scale) that he does in the heavens. In fact, Paullus tells his son that humans were created for this very reason: to watch over the earth (*homines enim sunt hac lege generati qui tuarentur illum globum*, *Rep.* 6.15).

According to the Dream, the parallel between human, planetary, and divine rulership points to a connection that is not mere metaphor but living. Humans’ original home is in the stars, which are themselves divine. Scipio learns that people originate in the stars (*hinc profecti*, *Rep.* 6.13), where their souls are given to them from the eternal fires of the stars (*eisque animus datus est ex illis sempiternis ignibus quae sidera et stellas vocatis*, *Rep.* 6.15). The concept of humankind’s stellar origin can be traced to Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which the great astronomer and

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208 Coleman (1964) 3 points out that King Masinissa’s address to the sun (*Rep.* 6.9) “skillfully prepares us for the solar doctrine of the *Somnium*, in particular for the remarkable description of the Sun as *dux princeps moderator luminum reliquorum*” (*Rep.* 6.17), though Powell (2005) 19 disagrees.
statesman Timaeus of Locri reveals that Zeus has assigned each soul to a star, to which it returns after completing a virtuous life (Ti. 41e):

ξυστήσας δὲ τὸ πᾶν διείλε ψυχὰς ἰσαρίθµους τοῖς ἀστροῖς ἐνειµέ θ’ ἑκάστην πρὸς ἑκαστον, καὶ ἐμβιβάσας ὡς ἐς ὄχηµα τὴν τοῦ παντὸς φύσιν ἐδείξε.

After mixing together the whole, he divided the souls in equal numbers to the stars and assigned each one to a star. And he mounted it on a chariot, as it were, and showed it the nature of the universe.

According to the Timaeus, Zeus has given mankind divine souls with an astral counterpart. In his own Timaeus, Cicero translates the same passage (Cic. Tim. 43):

Toto igitur omni constituto sideribus parem numerum distribuit animorum et singulos adiunxit ad singula atque ita quasi in currum universitatis imposuit commonstravitque leges fatales ac necessarias.

Therefore, after he arranged the whole, he distributed an equal number of souls to the stars and ajoined the souls to the stars, one by one, and he placed them in a chariot, as it were, and carefully taught them the fated and necessary laws.

The Timaeus offers an explanation of the correspondence of the human and the astral: Zeus gave each human to a star.209 In the Dream, the stars’ swift motion points to their divinity, since they are “animated by divine minds” (divinis animatate mentibus, Rep. 6.15). Human souls are also driven by this same divine motion and animated by divine fire. Indeed, Africanus makes the

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209 On David Sedley’s view, Cicero’s Timaeus was composed between 45–43 BCE, likely after the Tusculan Disputations and before De natura deorum, which of course would postdate the DRP and Dream by a decade or so ((2013) 129). White (2015) agrees with Sedley’s dating, but a later translation date of course would not preclude Cicero from reading and being influenced by the Timaeus in his composition of the Dream. For my part, I am more inclined to think that Cicero worked on the Timaeus translation for many years, and I take the strong resonance between the Dream and Timaeus on the astral origin of the human soul to raise the possibility that Cicero was reading—and possibly translating—the Timaeus in the 50s.
connection of the divine and human explicitly at the end of the Dream when he enjoins Scipio (Rep. 6.26),

Deum te igitur scito esse, si quidem est deus qui viget, qui sentit, qui meminit, qui providet, quem tam regit et moderat et movet id corpus cui praepositus est, quam hunc mundum ille princeps deus; et ut mundum ex quadam parte mortalem ipse deus aeternus, sic fragile corpus animus sempiternus movet. Nam quod semper movetur aeternum est.

Know therefore that you are a god, if indeed it is a god who lives, who feels, who remembers, who sees the future, who rules and governs and moves this body of which it has been put in charge, in the same way as that principal god rules and governs and moves this universe. And as that eternal god moves the universe, mortal in part, so also your eternal mind moves this fragile body. For that which is eternal is always in motion.

Humans are not merely like the god; they are gods, in so far as their true essence is their souls. The principal god (ille princeps deus) is eternal and rules (regit), governs (moderatur), and moves (movet) the cosmos, which is mortal. So also, the divine part of us humans—the true part, according to Scipio—rules over the mortal body (fragile corpus). Hence, as the god rules over the cosmos, so also are we humans to govern political institutions and even our own bodies.

Yet by comparing the heavenly and the earthly, the divine and the human, Scipio comes to despise the terrestrial realm and longs to join his father and adoptive grandfather in the Milky Way. In comparison with astral greatness, mere earthly affairs seem insignificant. But if the Dream is meant to spur Scipio to greater care for the commonwealth, doesn’t this insight have the opposite of the desired effect? Instead of increasing Scipio’s desire to cultivate the commonwealth—the whole reason that the god created humans in the first place—Scipio is instead drawn to the stellar grandeur and begins to despise terrestrial life, which by comparison
seems like death, tempting him to commit suicide to hasten his stellar return \((\text{Rep. } 6.15)\). As Scipio takes in the cosmic panorama, he says \((\text{Rep. } 6.16)\),

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\text{Ex quo omnia mihi contemplanti praeclara cetera et mirabilia videbantur. erant autem eae stellae, quas numquam ex hoc loco vidimus, et eae magnitudines omnium, quas esse numquam suspicati sumus, ex quibus erat ea minima, quae ultima a caelo, citima terris luce lucebat aliena. stellae autem globi terrae magnitudinem facile vincebant. iam ipsa terra ita mihi parva visa est, ut me imperii nostri, quo quasi punctum eius attingimus, paeniteret.}
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And from that point, as I looked at everything, all things seemed glorious and marvelous. There were those stars which I had never seen from this place, and their size, such as we never expected, among them \([= \text{the planets}]\) that one was the smallest circle, which furthest from the heavens, closest to the earth was shining with borrowed light \([\text{i.e., the moon}]\). However, the globes of the stars easily surpassed the size of the earth. Now the earth itself seemed to me so small, that I was ashamed of our empire, by which we touch only a point of it, as it were.

Even the greatest city of Rome seems like nothing more than a mere point. Small amounts of the earth are inhabitable, and even if lasting fame is achieved, from the cosmic viewpoint a year is nothing in comparison to the scale of the Great Year, when all of the planets return to their original position.

Rather than being distressed by the smallness of man, the Dream suggests that Scipio (and we) can be spurred to greater action, knowing that life on the ground is both divinely appointed and ultimately a very small part of a larger cosmic picture. From the cosmic viewpoint, Scipio is able to see how fleeting human endeavors are. Instead of being driven by glory and fame, which thanks to the lesson of the Dream we now know is temporary, we can aim to cultivate our civilization, which is a microcosm of the divine interactions above and which, if we care for it
well, will hasten our return to our stellar homes. The Dream provides Scipio an opportunity to recalibrate his vision and hone the divine part of himself: the soul. By studying the stars, Scipio and we, his audience, tune our souls to align with their astral counterparts so that we can create human gatherings that most closely imitate the patterns of the heavens above. The connection between the stars and the human soul is not accidental, but fundamental.

The Dream is, simply put, a stunning piece of literature: in the words of Wilamowitz, “eine schöne Dichtung.” It is a very visual text, in so far as it encourages us to “see” with Scipio as he goes on his astral tour. In this sense, the Dream accords with the static sphere, which is beautiful and appreciated visually. The Dream likewise is replete with visual cues that draw us into Scipio’s line of vision. “Do you see that city” (videsne illam urbem, Rep. 6.11); “But at that time I see, as it were, two paths of the fates” (sed eius temporis ancipitem video quasi fatorum viam, Rep. 6.12); “When I saw him, to be sure I poured forth a profusion of tears” (quem ut vidi, equidem vim lacrimarum profudi, Rep. 6.14); “There were however those stars which we have never seen from this place” (erant autem eae stellae quas numquam ex hoc loco vidimus, Rep. 6.16); I marveling at these things nevertheless kept bringing back my eyes to the earth again and again” (Haec ego admirans referebam tamen oculos ad terram identidem, Rep. 6.20); ”therefore look aloft if you will” (igitur alte spectare si voles, Rep. 6.25). These verbal cues conjure a picture before our eyes—a sort of “vision” in the interlocutors’ (and reader’s) perception. We see the beauty of the cosmos, just as Scipio does.

210 For a different interpretation, see Woolf (2015) 111–3, who sees the call to action on the political level as in tension with the Dream’s cosmic vision.

211 Recorded by Harder (1929) 116 and quoted by Luck (1956) 209. For a recent appraisal of the Dream’s beauty, see Wojaczek (2015), who says the Dream “ist wohl das schönste Stück römischer Prosaliteratur” (123).
The immersive nature of the Dream recreates the experience of Scipio’s cosmic ascent, as if we were alongside him. The vividness of the experience is exemplified in the interlocutors’ strong reaction. When Scipio recounts Africanus’ prophecy that he may die at the hands of his impious relatives, Laelius and the rest of the company respond (Rep. 6.12):

Hic cum exclamavisset Laelius, ingemuissentque vehementius ceteri, leniter arridens Scipio, St. Quaeso, inquit, ne me e somno excietis, et parumper audite cetera.

At this point Laelius shouted out, and the others groaned deeply, but Scipio, laughing lightly, said, “Sh! Please, do not wake me from my sleep, and listen a bit to the rest.”

Laelius and the others are so engrossed in Scipio’s tale that for a moment, they seem to forget that Africanus is not actually speaking before them. The text emphasizes their vehement reaction (exclamavisset, ingemuissentque, vehementius), signalling their strong emotional response. Story and reality, past and present blur, so that we almost cannot tell if the Dream is happening before our eyes or if it is just being recounted. Scipio’s response also suggests that temporal boundaries have collapsed: he tells them not to wake him from his dream (ne me e somno excietis), as if he were currently undergoing the dream and not merely retelling a memory of it. By recounting his dream, then, Scipio brings it from the past to the present, inspiring a sort of “virtual reality” where the images from the Dream are painted so vividly in the mind’s eye that it becomes consonant with present reality. In this sense, the Dream recalls Aratus’ Phaenomena (as well as the static sphere), since it is (i) beautiful and (ii) capable of creating a visual picture with words before our eyes.

But the Dream is not only beautiful and visually engaging, it also portrays the universe as a sonorous, moving mechanism. The planets and stars are both beautiful to look at and sweet to
hear, unifying the disparate representations of the two spheres into a true cosmos, which because of the inherent connection of ratio and beauty, must appeal to the ears and mind (like the orrery) and the eyes (like the static sphere). Like Archimedes’ orrery, the planets follow predictable routes. The Dream emphasizes their motion: “[the planets] complete their circles and paths with a miraculous speed” (circos suos orbesque conficiunt celeritate mirabili, Rep. 6.15); “they turn with a contrary motion” (versantur retro contrario motu, Rep. 6.17); “with an impulse and motion of their circuits [the music of the spheres] is created” (impulsu et motu ipsorum orbium efficitur, Rep. 6.18). Moreover, this motion is the source of their divinity, since the end of the Dream demonstrates with the translation of Plato’s Phaedrus that whatever has its own source of motion is divine. Hence, the planets are divine, like the self-moving human soul. Here, motion in particular is crucial, and in this respect the movements of the planets recall the orrery and its miniature planets.

This planetary motion also creates cosmic music. Scipio not only sees the universe, he hears it: “What is that great and sweet sound that fills my ears?” (quis est qui complet aures meas, tantus et tam dulcis sonus? Rep. 6.17). Scipio’s aural experience of the cosmos is emphasized (aures, sonus). Africanus goes on to explain that the regular intervals of the planetary spheres creates music (Rep. 6.18):

“He said, “This is the sound, which conjoined with unequal intervals which are nevertheless distinct proportionally by their ratio, and is being completed by the impulse and motion of their own circuits, and moderating the high with the low harmoniously
makes various sounds. For it is not possible for such motion to be incited in silence and its nature is such that these motions from the one extreme part sound deeply, and from the other sound at a higher pitch.

The ratio of the concentric planetary orbits generates a harmonic scale. This cosmic ratio accords with the ratio of the orrery (ratio, 1.22), as well as the ratio of the statesman, who moderates the commonwealth by harmonizing the lower, middle, and upper classes, like a musician harmonizes a range of tones (ratione, 2.59). As James Zetzel puts it, “the universe is ordered by right reason, and the harmony of the spheres is a manifestation of that reason” (1995, 240). So also, the same cosmic ratio that makes the planets sing also governs the ratio of the statesman moderating the civitas and the teacher explaining the ratio of the orrery. This ratio undergirds the fabric of the entire cosmos, which is made manifest on the level of individual (soul, mind), microcosm (commonwealth) and macrocosm (the universe). This ratio can take different forms (music, politics, speech), but its cosmic origin is the same.

Much as Philus has to learn about the ratio of the orrery, so also Scipio has to learn about the ratio of the planets. Africanus teaches Scipio about the music of the spheres, which he had never noticed before because, like people who live near a waterfall, he became inured to their rushing sound. Sometimes, the cosmos can be appreciated immediately because of its universal beauty (much like the static sphere), but sometimes the cosmos requires an explanation of its ratio (much like the orrery). The best way, it seems, to understand nature and the political systems that reflect it is to study nature itself. But the DRP also suggests that such study requires a more experienced guide. As Philus relies on Galus to understand the orrery, as Scipio needs
Africanus, so also we need an instructor who can help us to “see” and “hear” the *ratio* and *ornatus* of the universe. And for us readers, who is that guide but Cicero?

Perhaps, then, it is for this reason that writers and other artists earn a place in the stars. While on the one hand the beautiful order of the universe is self-evident, on the other, it is so complex and our own understanding is so dull that we cannot perceive the cosmos’ *ratio* without help. Artists of all sorts, whether writers, musicians, or philosophers, help us to “see” and “hear” what we might otherwise miss. In his role as author, Cicero takes off our blinders, so to speak, to reveal the cosmic reality that our human life is but a speck. But a paradox lies at the heart of the Dream: all human endeavors are temporary and contingent but also eternally relevant, since by pursuing them and creating things on the Horizontal plane—whether art or music or cities—eternal bliss is secured. But this cannot be done without the proper perspective, and hence in the Dream we see Africanus repeatedly reminding Scipio to look up. Scipio’s inclination is to focus on the ground even while the stars dance and sing overhead. Africanus constant reminders to look and listen help Scipio enter a cosmic perspective, but then he realizes just how small Rome is—small, but not irrelevant. And so, when Scipio has the impulse towards suicide, he is stopped (*Rep.* 6.15): the life of the soul exercised in the body determines its stellar return.

The contingency of human civilizations and projects also bespeaks the tenuousness of the Republic itself, which could fall. In this sense, the Dream is not an escapist fantasy as some have argued but an ambiguous tale. This sort of ambiguity also ties into the sort of limited applications of the ideals of the dialogue that Jed Atkins points out.\(^{212}\) The ideal super-lunar realm cannot be implemented completely on the Horizontal plane, which can only approximate its Vertical

\(^{212}\) Atkins (2013) 47–79.
counterpart. So also, Scipio, although he advocates kingship, is satisfied for practical reasons with the blended constitution of Polybius, precisely because when it fails—and fail it will—it is not as grand and therefore does not fall as hard.\textsuperscript{213} It seems to me that the Dream makes a similar sort of move. Scipio may be dictator and preserver of the Republic, or he may die. Facing a two-headed path, Scipio does not know if he will save the Republic as its dictator or die at traitorous hands. We readers, of course, know how the story ends: Scipio meets an untimely death, as signaled by the portent of the double suns.

Does this ominous undertone of the Dream imply that we should not take its lofty vision too seriously? Could it be a “noble lie” that incentivizes political greatness but is itself false? Perhaps, but I suggest that the Dream is a hopeful but realistic vision. Cicero, I contend, is cautiously optimistic that the \textit{ratio} and beauty of the cosmos points to the intelligibility of nature and mankind’s divinity. He seems to me a hopeful Skeptic who would like to think that a beneficent god like Aratus’ creator Zeus adorns the natural world with beautiful phenomena that communicate to the deepest, most divine parts of the human experience. But as a realist, Cicero hedges his bets by tempering the mythic romanticism of the Dream:\textsuperscript{214} he provides a rational explanation for its occurrence (our waking hours impact our dreams) and he adumbrates the death of Scipio, Rome’s would-be savior. Rather than Socrates’ “noble lie,” it might be helpful to think of the Dream in terms of Pascal’s “wager.” Cicero makes a reasonable conjecture that a divinely guided cosmic order exists. If true, he encourages himself and other Romans to strive for immortality by doing good for the state in politics and the arts. But if such a god does not

\textsuperscript{213} On Cicero’s mixed constitution and its relationship to Polybius, see Asmis (2005) 377–416.

\textsuperscript{214} See Ruch (1948) 171, who thinks “La fiction de Cicero nous semble être à la fois plus naturelle et plus ingénieuse.” For a similar view, see Coleman (1964) 2–3. For a different view on the mythology of the Dream, see Asmis (2014).
exist, what has been lost? The state has still benefited. The eschatology of the Dream is not an escape from this world, but a call to action.
Omne autem, quod gignitur, ex aliqua causa gigni necesse est; nullius enim rei causa remota reperiri origo potest. Quocirca si is, qui aliquod munus efficere molitur, eam speciem, quae semper eadem est, intuebitur atque id sibi proponet exemplar, praeclarum opus efficiat necesse est; sin autem eam, quae gignitur, numquam illam, quam expetet, pulchritudinem consequetur.

However, all that which comes into existence must necessarily come into existence by some cause; for it is not possible to find an origin of anything when a cause is absent. Therefore, if he who strives to make some work gazes upon that image which always is, and places that model before himself, he will necessarily create a brilliant work; but if he looks at the image that is coming into existence, then he will never achieve the beauty he is aiming for.

_Cic. Tim._ 3–4

3.1 Introduction

In 1485 CE, a tomb along the Appian Way was opened during archaeological excavations. A flickering lamp, marking the deceased’s spirit with its flame, suddenly went black. Within the marble tomb was a beautiful young woman who seemed to have died mere hours before. Covered with an aromatic paste of frankincense, myrrh, and aloe, the form was perfectly preserved. Luscious blonde hair was piled on her head and her flesh lightened at a fingertip’s touch, as if the capillaries beneath the surface of the skin were ready to refill with blood. This uncorrupted body allegedly belonged to Cicero’s beloved daughter, Tullia (or Tulliola, as he affectionately called her), who had tragically died shortly after childbirth in 45 BCE, over 1500 years before this tomb was opened. A translation of a letter from Daniele da San Sebastiano, recorded by the great 19th c. Roman archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani, reads, “I hasten to inform
you of this event, because I want you to understand how the ancients took care to prepare not only their souls but also their bodies for immortality.”

Cicero had indeed hoped for immortality for his daughter, who was his sole comfort as the Republic and his marriage waned. After Tullia’s untimely death, he resolved to build her a shrine, even against the counsel of his friends, who viewed his grief as excessive. In a letter to Atticus, dated May 3, 45 BCE, Cicero declares (Att. 12.36),

fanum fieri volo, neque hoc mihi [dis]suaderi potest. sepulcri similitudinem effugere non tam propter poenam legis studeo quam ut maxime adsequar ἀποθέωσιν.

I want a shrine to be made, and it is not possible to sway me from this. I am eager to avoid the appearance of a tomb, not so much because of legal penalty but in order to best achieve apotheosis.

Cicero’s primary motivation for building a shrine was to achieve apotheosis for Tullia with a visible monument, a sign to the world of her immortality. Despite the fancies of 15th c. archaeologists, it seems that Tullia’s shrine was never built. Cicero, however, continued to ponder the immortality of the soul. After Tullia’s death in late January or early February of 45, Cicero penned many philosophical dialogues, exploring the nature of the gods, fate, and the soul. As Susan Treggiari nicely puts it, “Tullia's true memorial was the philosophical work which had

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215 Lanciani (1896) 297. To the best of my knowledge, the original letter does not exist outside of Lanciani’s recording.

216 On Cicero’s contribution to the rise of deification at Rome, see Cole (2013), with a discussion of Tullia’s shrine at 1–7.
occupied Cicero’s mind more constructively.” Cicero did indeed make Tullia immortal, not with marble but with words.

In a letter dated mid-April of 45, Cicero laments that he can find no reprieve in public or private life because his two greatest loves, Rome and Tullia, are dead (Fam. 4.6):

itaque et domo absum et foro, quod nec eum dolorem quem e re publica capio domus iam consolari potest nec domesticum res publica.

And so I am absent both from home and the forum, because my home is no longer able to console that grief which I have from the commonwealth, nor can the commonwealth console me in my familial grief.

In these tragic circumstances, the questions surrounding the Dream must have taken on a new sense of urgency for Cicero. Is there a place secured in the stars for those who serve the state? Does the same immortal pattern that guides the stars also animate our souls? Do we humans have a divine mind? In the De re publica, Cicero was content to explore these questions through the drama of the dialogue. Indeed, the De re publica suggests that the order of the heavens subtends life on the ground, as I argued in Chapter Two, but Cicero crafts the dialogue in such a way that no voice gets final say, leaving the intersection of the Horizontal and the Vertical to be one of hopeful skepticism, not certitude. By contrast, in the De natura deorum and its sequel De divinatione, Cicero puts the cosmos to the test more directly. Is the cosmos filled with divine signs (which I shall refer to the Aratean view), or is it mute, the product of chance (the Epicurean view)?

For a contrasting view, see Baraz (2012) 44–95, who downplays the connection between Tullia’s death and Cicero’s crepuscular project. As she puts it, “Thus, if one thinks that the main reason behind the mass production of the more technically philosophical works of 45–44 was the need to take consolation in philosophy following the death in February 45 of Tullia, Cicero’s beloved daughter, then the author’s claims that the corpus was meant to be an important contribution to the future of the republic are bound to be taken less seriously, as secondary and rhetorical” (Baraz (2012) 44). While I agree with Baraz’ argument that Cicero’s philosophy has a strong political dimension, I do not think the two motivations are mutually exclusive.
In this chapter, I argue that Cicero puts the Aratean cosmos on trial in the *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*. By “Aratean cosmos,” I mean a worldview which generally accords with that of Aratus’ poem, entailing: (i) a beneficent god (Zeus) who created the universe to be intelligible, (ii) natural phenomena (including constellations and meteorological occurrences) that serve as “signs” for humankind, and (iii) a fundamental connection between Zeus-qua-demiurge and humans-qua-creators. This final point needs further elaboration. Aratus’ famous craftsman simile compares the creation of the celestial spheres to a human artifact, implying an overlap between divine and human craftsmanship (*Phaen.* 529–33). The simile thus suggests that human artistry mirrors the very universe itself, the handiwork of Zeus.219

Cicero tests the Aratean worldview in two ways in the *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*. First, the dialogic format sets philosophical viewpoints against one another. In good Academic fashion, Cicero takes advantage of the multiple speakers to voice various schools’ ideas without explicitly committing to a single viewpoint. In both the *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*, the Aratean worldview is called into question. In the former, the Stoic Balbus asserts that a divine *mens* animates the universe against the ripostes of the Epicurean Velleius and the Academic Cotta. In the latter, Cicero’s brother Quintus defends the practice of divination against Cicero himself.

Scholars have spilled much ink trying to determine which side of the debates Cicero comes down on in both texts.220 Two details complicate the matter further. In the *De natura deorum*, Cicero ends the dialogue by declaring he finds the Stoic Balbus’ account closer to the truth (*Nat.

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219 See *Phaen.* 529–33. On the parallel between human and divine artistry in Aratus, see Volk (2012).

D. 3.95). In De divinatione, Cicero argues sua voce against divination. How should we read Cicero’s statements? Should we take Cicero at his dialogic persona’s word, or should we read between the lines, so to speak? In what follows, I will argue that we readers should approach the texts with a critical eye when it comes to pinning Cicero down philosophically. Rather than identifying with a single character (even his own personae), Cicero, I will argue, allows the truth (or the closest thing to it) to emerge from the tension of the dialogue itself. Thus, in large part I circumvent the question of Cicero’s philosophical affiliations. After all, it seems to me that his own philosophical views are precisely what Cicero is trying to work out in writing these dialogues.

This brings me to my second point. Cicero tests the Aratean cosmos through the very act of writing itself. If the Aratean worldview is correct, and there is a fundamental connection between the god who created the cosmos and the human who creates a work of art, then the very act of writing a philosophical dialogue (a type of human art) serves as a sort of proof for that worldview. To put it more simply, humans create because god created. The ordered structure of a human work of art (=the dialogue at hand) mirrors on a smaller scale the ordered structure of the cosmos itself. Cicero performs his own consolation by the very act of writing. The suggestion is that the world can be illuminated by words, because a fundamental link connects the crafting of the text and the crafting of the cosmos itself. The connection between text and cosmos, author

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221 See Pease (1913) 25–37.

222 The timeline of Cicero’s philosophical affiliations has been greatly debated. Glucker (1992) argues that the expression of preference for Balbus’ argument at the end of De natura deorum indicates that Cicero as a young man ascribed to Antiochus’ views, which DeFilippo (2000) rightly overturns by pointing out the difference between the dramatic persona of the dialogue and the young Cicero of the 70s. Glucker (1988) and Steinmetz (1989) argue that Cicero’s philosophical commitments went through an Antiochean period and then turned to Skepticism, a view contested by Görler (1995). Linderski (1982) sees Cicero moving towards greater skepticism at the end of his life but does not detect as strict of periodization in Cicero’s philosophy as Glucker and Steinmetz. Tarán (1987) sees the conclusion of De natura deorum as evidence of Cicero’s sympathy for Stoicism.
and Demiurge, is more than mere analogy: the design of the text itself becomes a proof for the design of the cosmos. Thus, Cicero’s own writing is what I call a “performative proof” of the Aratean worldview.

The link between human creation and divine creation becomes extremely important. The stars, as the consummate example of divine creation—the most transcendent, the most beautiful—are particularly suited to demonstrating divine design. It is fitting, then, that Cicero uses his astral poetry in its service. Cicero, however, maintains distance from any single philosophical point of view, both by testing ideas via the dialogic form and by putting his poetry into the mouths of others rather than quoting it sua persona.

3.2 *De natura deorum* and the Beauty of Art

Written in 45 BCE, the *De natura deorum*, along with its companion dialogues *De divinatione* and *De fato*, forms the core of Cicero’s philosophical-theological works. De natura deorum is set in Cicero’s youth, with a dramatic date of around 77 BCE, thirty years before Cicero’s writing of the dialogue. The primary characters—Gaius Velleius, Quintus Lucilius Balbus, and Gaius Cotta, adherents of Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism, respectively—debate the nature

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223 In addition to these three dialogues, we could also include *Tusculan Disputations* and his translation of the *Timaeus* as well as the *Dream* in the DRP.

224 On the dramatic dating of the dialogue (77–6 BCE), see Dyck (2003) 7.

225 In the dialogue, the character Cicero remarks that all the philosophical schools would be represented if Marcus Piso were present as an adherent of the Peripatetics, but Cotta responds that the Peripatetics and the Stoics are so close in their philosophical positions that there is no real difference between them, a position which Balbus rebuts (*Nat. D.* 1.16).
of the gods and their involvement (or lack thereof) in human affairs. De natura deorum falls
into three books, with Velleius and Balbus offering Epicurean and Stoic arguments and Cotta
dismantling them in turn.

In the preface to De natura deorum, Cicero sua voce provides two explanations for writing
this dialogue, which I will address in reverse order. Cicero confesses that his grief turned him to
philosophy (Nat. D. 1.9):

Hortata etiam est ut me ad haec conferrem animi aegritudo fortunae magna et gravi
commota iniuria.

The injury of my mind, stirred by the grave and heavy blow of fortune, drove me to apply
myself to these concerns (i.e. the writing of philosophy).

Cicero’s pain almost seems to come through these words. The participles hortata and commota
are separated at the extremities of the sentence, depending on the word aegritudo that stands in
the center. Cicero is not subject, but object, buffeted by the great injuries of fortune. The strained
structure of the sentence mirrors the state of a man beleaguered by filial loss. Grief is a disease,
an aegritudo afflicting his person on both a physical and verbal level. Philosophy, however,
offers solace, if not cure (Nat. D. 1.9):

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226 Cicero himself also plays a part in the dialogue, primarily as an observer. Careful distinction, however, must be
made between Cicero the author and Cicero the character of the dialogue. Not only is the dialogue’s Cicero thirty
years younger than his authorial counterpart, but Cicero the author is also capable of creating a persona for literary
and philosophical purposes that does not necessarily overlap with his own views in every regard. The tendency to
collapse Cicero-the-character with Cicero-the-author rests upon an old assumption that Cicero’s dialogues are not
complex works of literary and philosophical excellence but rather compilations of other scholarly sources. In recent
years, the literariness of the dialogue has been more widely appreciated, and along with this scholarly approach
comes recognition that the characters of the dialogue operate on several layers. Thus, to distinguish between the
literary persona of the dialogue and its author, I henceforth will call the former “Marcus” and the latter “Cicero.”

227 The prodigious two-volume commentary on De natura deorum of A.S. Pease (1955, 1958) remains unsurpassed.
Pease’s commentary, however, preceded the scholarly revolution in Roman philosophy. The commentary on Book 1
by Dyck (2003) redresses some of these difficulties but only covers the Epicurean position.

228 Cf. Acad. 1.3, where Cicero, “struck by the most serious wound of fortune” (fortunae gravissimo percussus
vulnere), calls philosophy a “medicine for grief” (doloris medicinam).
Cuius si maiorem aliquam levationem reperire potuissem, non ad hanc potissimum confugissem, ea vero ipsa nulla ratione melius frui quam si me non modo ad legendos libros sed etiam ad totam philosophiam pertractandam dedissem. Omnes autem eius partes atque omnia membra tum facillume noscuntur cum totae quaestiones scribendo explicantur; est enim admirabilis quaedam continuatio seriesque rerum, ut alia ex alia nexe et omnes inter se aptae conligataeque videantur.

If I had been able to find any better remedy than it (=philosophy), I would not have fled to this relief above all; but I could enjoy it in no way better than by dedicating myself not only to reading books but also to treating all of philosophy. For all its parts and all its members are known most readily when all its investigations are set out in writing; for there exists a certain wonderful interconnection and order of things, so that one thing is tied to another and all things seem connected and joined together.

Cicero portrays himself as coming to philosophy with reluctance. Even reading philosophy is not sufficient solace. For Cicero, philosophy must be “worked through” and sorted. Philosophy hangs together as a cohesive and orderly whole, apprehended through the act of writing itself (scribendo).229

Why does Cicero emphasize philosophy’s “wonderful interconnection and order of things” (admirabilis quaedam continuatio seriesque rerum)? It seems likely that philosophy’s ordered system stands in contrast to the fragmented experience of his grief. By writing, Cicero provides himself a consolation of philosophy, organizing its elements and progressing from disorder (a state of chaos, if you will) to interconnectedness and harmony (a state of cosmos). If philosophy itself is orderly, then perhaps this same rational structure extends to the natural world. We can think of Cicero’s writing of philosophy as a “performative proof” of the world’s inherent intelligibility and order: the Aratean worldview.

229 Cf. Pease (1955) 5: “The interrelation of the parts of philosophy—epistemology, logic, physics, ethics, politics and even rhetoric—Cicero clearly recognizes.” The classic branches of philosophy are logic, physics, and ethics, a tripartite division that was originally put forth by the Stoics and subsequently generally adopted by other schools. For an introduction to Hellenistic philosophy, see Long (1986).
The other reason Cicero says he undertakes the project of writing the *De natura deorum* is to create philosophy in the Latin tongue.\(^{230}\) Expounding philosophy in Latin, Cicero writes, is for the glory and benefit of the state (*ad decus et ad laudem civitatis, Nat. D. 1.7*), since it behooves Rome to have such “weighty and admirable things expressed in Latin letters” (*res tam gravis tamque praeclaras Latinis etiam litteris contineri, Nat. D. 1.7*). Cicero asserts that writing philosophy in Latin magnifies the commonwealth, rendering his beloved state more glorious and brighter.\(^{231}\) Cicero illuminates Rome with the Latin language itself, making her achievements clearer to her citizens and thus increasing her glory and reputation.\(^{232}\) For Cicero, the Latin tongue rivals Greek for such a purpose. Thanks in no small part to his own efforts, Latin has developed to such a degree that its “abundance of words” (*verborum quidem copia, Nat. D. 1.7*) rivals Greek’s—a bold claim on Cicero’s part.\(^{233}\) After all, Lucretius famously lamented the inadequacy of the Latin tongue for expounding philosophy: it is difficult, he writes, “to illuminate the hidden discoveries of the Greeks with Latin verse” (*obscura reperta/ difficile inlustrare Latinis versibus, Lucr. 1.136–7*).

The clarity of Latin is an essential component of the dialogue, I suggest, because it corresponds to the intelligibility of the cosmos itself, which is directly tied to the involvement of


\(^{231}\) Cf. the prologue of *Tusculan Disputations* 1, in which Cicero speaks of his project as bringing the light of the Latin letters to philosophy: (*Philosophia iacuit usque ad hanc aetatem nec ullam habuit lumen litterarum Latinarum quae illustranda et excitanda nobis est, ut, si occupati profuimus aliquid civius nostris, prosimus etiam, si possimus, otiosi*, *Tusc*. 1.6).

\(^{232}\) Lehoux (2012) 30–3 argues that for Cicero, an understanding of the natural world—and particularly the laws that govern the cosmos—is foundational for the Roman state. On the political dimensions of Cicero’s philosophical “translations,” see Baraz (2012) 96–127.

\(^{233}\) For an extended study of Cicero’s philosophical translations, see White (2015). See also *Acad.* 1.25–6.
the gods in the cosmos.\textsuperscript{234} At the opening of the dialogue, Cicero says that the nature of the gods is the most obscure branch of philosophy (\textit{perobscursa quaestio est de natura deorum, Nat. D. 1.1}).\textsuperscript{235} To this shadowy branch of philosophy Cicero brings light and order with Latin. This inquiry into the nature of the gods is most excellent for considering the soul (\textit{ad cognitionem animi pulcherrima est, Nat. D. 1.1}) and essential for moderating religion (\textit{ad moderandam religionem necessaria, Nat. D. 1.1}). Although \textit{pulcherrima} here means something like “well suited,” it may also add an aesthetic dimension to the phrase. The pursuit of philosophical inquiry—particularly regarding the divine—is \textit{pulcherrima} and \textit{necessaria}, and both modifiers are suggestive of some sort of greater order.\textsuperscript{236}

The order of Cicero’s own philosophical writing corresponds to the cosmos itself. The analogy is made explicit by Balbus, who connects human and divine \textit{artes}. In Book 2 of the \textit{De natura deorum}, in response to the Epicurean Velleius, the Stoic Balbus argues that the gods are involved in the creation of the world. In order to make the case for the gods’ concern for human affairs, Balbus draws an analogy between the structures of the universe and the elements of a text. Balbus scoffs at the idea that anyone could believe that the chance collision of atoms and void could create such a magnificent and beautiful world (\textit{Nat. D. 2.93}):

\begin{quote}
Hic ego non mirer esse quemquam qui sibi persuadeat corpora quaedam solida atque individua \textit{vi et gravitate ferri mundumque \textit{effici ornatissimum et pulcherrimum} ex eorum corporum concursione fortuita?}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{234} As David Konstan puts it, “Beauty is achieved by the balance among parts, in language as in the visual arts and the human form or even the entire cosmos, which contribute collectively to the integrity of the whole” (Konstan (2014) 159).

\textsuperscript{235} Cf. the assessment of Plato’s \textit{Timaeus} in \textit{De finibus}; it is obscure because of its difficult subject matter, not because of its style (\textit{Fin. 2.15}).

\textsuperscript{236} A useful comparison might be Cicero’s understanding of rhetoric, which he likewise sees as an ordered whole. On the connection between rhetorical style, ethics, and aesthetics, see Worman (2015) 274–82.
At this point, should I not wonder that there is anyone who could convince himself that certain solid, singular bodies are carried about by force and gravity and that this most decorated and beautiful world is made by the chance meetings of these bodies?

Balbus conceptualizes the universe as beautiful and ordered. For him, it is mundus, a word that emphasizes the aesthetic aspect of the world. Mundus, which is often used for personal adornment (OLD s.v. 2), emphasizes the aesthetic dimension of the universe, as do the modifiers ornatissimum and pulcherrimum. Ornatus means well arranged and decorated (OLD s.v. 1).

Similarly, Cicero often uses ornatus as a noun to refer to his own speeches, highlighting their excellent order.237 Pulcher also draws attention to the aesthetic dimension of these words, evoking the fine quality of the universe. According to Balbus, the universe is so beautiful that it is beyond comprehension that it could be created by chance. If beauty is predicated upon order, then that order must be the handiwork of an intelligent mind. Hence, it is illogical to attribute such beauty to elements bouncing off of one another and randomly coalescing into such order, as the Epicureans maintain.

As a proof of this point, Balbus uses the example of writing (Nat. D. 2.94):

Hoc qui existimat fieri potuisse, non intellego cur non idem putet, si innumerabiles unius et viginti formae litterarum vel aureae vel qualeslibet aliquo coiciantur, posse ex iis in terram excussis annales Enni ut deinceps legi possint effici; quod nescio an ne in uno quidem versu possit tantum valere fortuna.

He who thinks it is possible for this to happen, I do not understand how he could not likewise think that if an infinite number of the 21 letters, made of gold or anything else, were thrown together somewhere, that the Annales of Ennius could be made from those letters thrown on the ground, so that they could then be read! But I don’t know whether fortune would be strong enough to produce even a single verse.

237 See De or. 96–108 with commentary by Mankin (2011) 184–96. As Fantham (2004) 243 points out, ornatus is the Latin equivalent of kosmos (in terms of oratory). On Cicero’s connection of cosmos and oratory, see Gee (2001) 529–36. Gee argues that just as the arrangement of words can be used as an analogy for the order of the universe, so also can the order of the universe be used as an analogy for the arrangement of words (Gee (2001) 530). Both oratory and cosmic order are governed by the same principle of ratio.
Balbus offers a thought experiment. If you took an infinite number of letters of the alphabet, and tossed them on the ground, what are the chances that Ennius’ *Annales* would be produced? Of course, it seems absurd to think that the work of Rome’s poet laureate could randomly be produced by tossing letters on the ground (even golden letters!). The production of a single verse would be all but inconceivable. How, then, could the universe—more glorious than any poem—be the chance product of atoms meeting?

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238 Cicero’s golden letters vignette is an ancient relative of the “Infinite Monkey theorem,” which proposes that a monkey tapping on a keyboard over an infinite period of time will type any given text, even Ennius’ *Annales*. This image, now a scientific trope, probes the relationship between an apparent pattern and intelligent design. Although *prima facie* it is ridiculous that a monkey could blindly produce Shakespeare’s corpus, given an infinite amount of time, such an unwitting literary production is not only possible but even probable. The argument at this point accords with the ancient idea that our ordered universe could arise if given an infinite number of universes. Cicero’s *De natura deorum*, though understudied today, is the antecedent of William Paley’s *Natural Theology* (1802), which presents the famous watchmaker analogy: simply put, a watch is an artifact because it has an *artifex*. In modern parlance, the debate is between evolution and creationism. Richard Dawkin’s seminal work *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), whose title alludes to Paley’s watch, tackles the assertion that apparent design necessitates a designer. Nature herself, through a series of natural selections, can produce highly complex organisms. For Dawkins, the watchmaker is “blind” because it is not an intelligent *ratio* but a natural random process. At the beginning of his 1998 monograph, William Dembski quotes this very passage on Ennius and the golden letters from the *De natura deorum*. Dembski, contra Dawkins, leaves open the possibility that the appearance of design can imply a designer, which he calls the “design inference.” Although the production of Ennius’ *Annales* and a random string of letters of equal length share the same degree of improbability, we see the former as a masterpiece and the latter as gibberish because of the presence of a pattern (Dembski (1998) 3). Of course, such a pattern could be pure chance, and for this reason a positive assertion of design cannot be proven, but only inferred.
But Balbus’ argument does other work in the dialogue. With the vignette of Ennius and the golden letters, Balbus connects letters and matter, the written word and the cosmos.\(^{239}\) The design and order required to create the text at hand—the *De natura deorum* itself—invites us to make an analogous inference. As a cosmos in miniature of words and letters, the *De natura deorum* qua text works a performative proof of the universe’s intelligible design. Thus, with the dialogue itself we have the same golden letters proof writ large.\(^ {240}\)

As further evidence for my argument, let us consider the extended quotation of Cicero’s *Aratea* in the *De natura deorum*. As we saw in Chapter One, Cicero presents the *Aratea* as a text that creates a new world made out of words. The opening vowels, for example, suggest that the text is a “song of the universe” that showcases the demiurgic power of language—Latin in particular—to create a new Rome, a cosmos made not of stars and elements but rather of building blocks of a different sort: words and letters.\(^ {241}\) Furthermore, in Chapter 2 we encountered Philus’ story of Archimedes’ two spheres—one beautiful but static, the other plain

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\(^{239}\) The analogy of letters of the alphabet making up words and the elements of the universe forming matter is perhaps best known from Lucretius, who plays on the Latin word *elementa*, which Lucretius uses to mean “atoms” as well as the letters of the alphabet (*OLD* s.v. 3). Cicero may be polemically engaging Lucretius on this point in *Nat. D.* 2.93–4. Zetzel (1998) has pointed out that Cicero and Lucretius are engaged in a philosophical and literary debate in the *De rerum natura* and the *De re publica*, and more recently, Gee (2013) has demonstrated Lucretius’ sustained engagement with Cicero’s *Aratea*. As Volk (2013) puts it in her discussion of Cicero’s *De consulatu suo* and its genre, “it is attractive to view these two writers as engaged in an extended discussion that is both philosophical and literary and extends across the boundaries of genres, from historical epic to didactic poetry to philosophical prose treatise.” If this is indeed the case, as I am inclined to think it is, then Cicero’s own usage of the letters-matter analogy may be a rebuttal of Lucretius’ use of the same analogy. The weakness of the analogy from an Epicurean point of view is that it implies some sort of design inherent within the construction of words (by the poet himself) and extensively, that the arrangement of the universe is similarly arranged by a divine designer. Perhaps, then, Cicero is using the analogy in the mouth of a Stoic to expose through allusive engagement with Lucretius the weakness of such imagery deployed for Epicurean purposes. It is important to note, however, that Cicero may have anticipated Lucretius in the letter-element poetic play, as a close reading of the opening line of Cicero’s *Aratea* suggests: A IOVE contains all of the vowels of the Latin alphabet, gesturing towards a sort of analogy between letters and the matter of the universe, suffused with divine song, on which see Katz (2013) 12–3. On the atoms-letter analogy, see Friedländer (1941) 16–34; Snyder (1980) 31–51 (with a rebuttal from West (1982) 25–7); and Steiner (1994) 116–22. In *Lucr.*, see 1.823–7, 2.688–99; as well as 1.196–8 and 1.907–14. The analogy also has parallels in the Greek tradition (cf. στοιχεῖον *LSJ* s.v. 2.1 and 2).

\(^{240}\) On the Stoic argument of creation from design, see Sedley (2008) 205–38.

but technologically advanced (Rep. 1.21–2). The beautiful sphere, decorated with images, invites comparison with Aratus’ text and draws attention to the processes of translation, not only of the physical sphere itself from one place to another, but also of the rendering of the sphere into a verbal artifact: Eudoxus’ astronomical treatise and Aratus’ poem.\textsuperscript{242} The transfer of the sphere from Thales to Eudoxus to Aratus conflates sphere and text as if there were a seamless connection. Perhaps, then, we could say that the beautiful sphere is a metonymy for translation itself: from cosmos to object, from object to text. The connection between the sphere and the text also turns on beauty: the sphere is admired for its visual appeal, like Aratus’ \textit{Phaenomena}.

\subsection*{3.3. Balbus’ Aratea}

In \textit{De natura deorum}, Balbus quotes Cicero’s \textit{Aratea} at length, which I suggest serves as another example in addition to the Ennius example of the way that words and the cosmos are coterminous. Furthermore, the lengthy \textit{Aratea} quotation works as a “performative proof” of intelligent design even more explicitly.\textsuperscript{243} In \textit{De natura deorum}, the \textit{Aratea} works like a verbal celestial sphere set before the other interlocutors (as well as us readers), one that on a smaller scale models the cosmic order.\textsuperscript{244} The design of the celestial model necessitates a designer: as the text requires an author, so also the cosmos requires a Demiurge. Both the \textit{Phaenomena} and

\textsuperscript{242} The \textit{De re publica} describes the sphere as an “arrangement” (\textit{ornatum}, Rep. 1.22), the term we see deployed in the \textit{De natura deorum} to describe the design of the universe. Assuming that we can draw connections between Cicero’s various dialogues and the language he uses, I think we can see a connection between cosmos, text, and celestial sphere. Aratus’ poem in particular seems to represent such a sphere.

\textsuperscript{243} The \textit{Aratea} and the \textit{Phaenomena} are informed by astronomical learning, certainly, but their primary effect is to illustrate Zeus/Jupiter’s kindliness towards humankind through the design of the cosmos and the order of the stars. Possanza (2004) 80 puts it well: “Aratus shuns the technicalities of mathematical astronomy and puts the reader at the center of his poetic cosmos to observe Zeus’ universal order.” Cicero similarly highlights the position of the reader in the text and in the cosmos itself.

\textsuperscript{244} As Sedley points out, the Stoic argument from design coincided with the advent of Hellenistic technological advancements, in particular, celestial models (2008) 207 n.6 and n.7.
Aratea invite such a connection between sphere-text-cosmos/artist-author-Demiurge, as

showcased in the famous craftsman simile (Phaen. 529–33):

οὔ κεν Ἀθηναίης χειρῶν δεδιδαγµένος ἀνήρ
ἀλλή κολλήσατο κυλινδόµενα τροχύλεια
tοῖα τε καὶ τόσα πάντα περὶ σφαιρηδὸν ἐλίσσων,
ὡς τά γ᾿ ἐναιθέρια πλαγίῳ συναρηρότα κύκλω
ἐξ ἠοῦς ἐπὶ νύκτα διώκεται ήµατα πάντα.  

In no other way could a man skilled in the arts of Athena fit together the revolving belts of such a kind and so many, rounding the whole into a sphere, just as those in the heavens joined together by a transverse belt speed from dawn until night for all days.

The craftsman welding the metal cosmic bands of the celestial model is connected to Athena herself, the great goddess of technical craftsmanship and arts. As scholars have pointed out, the analogy also extends to the poet, Aratus, who likewise shapes and fashions the words of the poem. The process of writing points to a divinity in the author himself, because creation (on the Aratean view) is a divine act. Moreover, the craftsman simile assimilates the poem to the cosmos.

I suggest that Balbus’ extended recitation of the Aratea similarly connects written word to the natural world, particularly the stars, which Balbus characterizes as the pinnacle of the cosmic design. Although Cicero does not have Balbus include his Latin counterpart to Aratus’

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245 Text is Kidd (1997).

246 See Gee (2000) 88–90, who surmises: “The poem is parallel to a model made by a craftsman, which in turn is mimetic of the universe” (90). For an in-depth argument that Aratus’ Phaenomena invites a comparison between the letters of the poem and the “letters” (=stars) of the sky, see Volk (2012), with a discussion of the craftsman simile at 210–2. Kidd (1997) ad loc. notes that the verb used for “welded” (κολλήσατο, Phaen. 530) is the same verb used of the Demiurge in Plato’s Timaeus (κολλάω, Ti. 75d) when he fashions human beings.

247 Gee (2001) 532 suggests that Cicero may see himself as a “divine artist.” Speaking of Aratus and the craftsman simile at Phaen. 529–33, Volk (2012) draws attention to the verses’ “implicit claim to poetic demiurgy” (211). The epigram by Leonidas of Tarentum that characterizes Aratus as a “second Zeus” (Διὸς εἶναι/ δεύτερος, Anth. Pal. 9.25.5–6) also implies a certain divinity in the poet. See pg. 25–7 of this dissertation.

248 Gee (2001) emphasizes the kinship between words and the world they describe. The Aratea in Book 2 of De natura deorum showcases this connection. As Gee puts it, “Cicero’s order of words in the Aratea describes, and in a sense creates, the kosmos” (532).
craftsman simile (*Phaen. 529–33*), his quotation of the *Aratea* functions like a verbal celestial model, an observation that was first pointed out by Hannah Čulík-Baird and to whom I am indebted for this discussion. Balbus uses Cicero’s *Aratea* as proof for the marvelous cosmic order (*Nat. D. 2.104–5*):

> “Sequitur stellarum inerrantium maxima multitudo, quarum ita discripta distinctio est ut ex notarum figuriarum similitudine nomina invenerint.” Atque hoc loco me intuens, “Utar,” inquit, “carminibus Arateis, quae a te admodum adulescentulo conversa ita me delectant quia Latina sunt ut multa ex iis memoria teneam. Ergo, ut oculis adsidue videmus, sine ulla mutatione aut veritate:
>
> Cetera labuntur celeri caelestia motu
> Cum caeloque simul noctesque diesque feruntur
>
> “The great multitude of the fixed stars follows, whose ornament was delineated so that they might find their names from the resemblance of their well-known figures.” And looking at me, he said, “I shall use your Aratean verses, translated by you when still a young man, that delight me because they are in Latin, and so I hold many of them in my memory. Therefore, as we constantly see with our eyes, without any change or variation:
>
> The other stars glide with swift heavenly motion
> They are carried along together with the sky through the days and nights…”

Balbus’ quotations of the poem paint the image of the sky before our eyes, like a celestial model, emblazoning in our mind the stars so we can see the constellations glide almost as if we were watching the rotating night sky. The passage privileges the sense of sight. Balbus, looking at Marcus (*intuens*), begins to recite the *Aratea* as he asks us to see (*videmus*) the fixed stars with our eyes (*oculis*). Cicero’s poem, too, is a work of art. The quality of the universe as a work of art is highlighted by the way that it is perceived: through the eyes. In this sense, the poem “creates” the universe—or at least, an image of it—before our (mind’s) eye with Latin.

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249 As Čulík-Baird (2018) 746 puts it: “The Aratea is brought into Balbus’ prose here just as an orrery might be brought into a classroom to discuss planetary motion – both objects are smaller scale simulations of aspects of the universe which aid in conceptualizing the operations of the natural world.”

250 Gee (2001) 529 argues that Cicero’s *Aratea* is even more concerned with artistic metaphor than Aratus.
Balbus’ description of the cosmos and the Latin poem invites a connection between nature and art. *Discripta*, the perfect passive participle of *discribo*, most immediately refers to the arrangement of the fixed stars (*OLD s.v. 2*). Confusion between the *de* and *di* prefix aside, *-scribo* can refer to both drawing figures (*OLD s.v. 1*) and writing words (*OLD s.v. 2*). Balbus slides between visual and textual registries. The very boundary between text and image is porous; people are able to discover (*invenerint*) the names (*nomina*) of the stars because of their figural likeness (*ex notarum figurarum similitudine*). The names of the stars are embedded in their very appearance, implying an inherent connection between the appearance of the heavens and words.

Aratus recounts how humans first named the stars. Although he has no name himself, a single person names the stars, grouping them into the constellations (*Phaen. 373–82*):

```plaintext
τά τις ἀνδρῶν οὐκέτ᾿ ἐόντων
ἐφράσατ᾿ ἣδ᾿ ἐνόησεν ἅπαντ᾿ ὀνοµαστὶ καλέσσαι
HELLA, μορφώσας, οὐ γὰρ κ᾿ ἐδυνήσατο πάντων
οἰόθι κεκριµένων ὄνοµι εἰπεῖν οὐδὲ δαῆναι.
ΠΟΛΛΟΙ γὰρ πάντη, πολέων δ᾿ ἐπὶ ἰσα πέλονται
μέτρα τε καὶ χροιή, πάντες γε μὲν ἀμφιέλικτοι.
Τὸ καὶ ὁµηγερέας οἱ ἐείσατο ποιήσασθαι
Αστέρας, ὄφρ᾿ ἐπιτὰξ ἄλλῳ παρακείµενος ἄλλος
εἴδεα σηµαίνοιεν. ἂφαρ δ᾿ ὄνοµαστὰ ἐγένοντο
Αστρα, καὶ οὐκέτι νῦν ὑπὸ θαύµατι τέλλεται ἄστηρ
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…the [stars] which someone of men who are no longer contrived and perceived to call them all by names, giving them shape carefully; for he could not speak or learn the names of all the stars separated alone. For they are many on every side, and the size and appearance of many are alike, and they all are wheeled about. Therefore it seemed good to him to assemble the stars into groups, so that different stars arranged in different orders could signify forms. After that, the named constellations came to be, and no longer does a star rising take us by surprise.\(^\text{251}\)

\(^{251}\) The text is Kidd (1997); the translation is mine.
The name-giver pointed out (ἐφράσατ᾿) and noted (ἐνόησεν) the stars, giving them their forms that we now know as constellations. The naming of the constellations suggests a fundamental link between the stars and their names. The name-giver is able to name the constellations, which in effect creates the patterns of constellations that we now see in the sky. Furthermore, this passage may have a meta-poetic valence. The name-giver of the stars stands in parallel to the name-giver of the poem, namely the poet himself. Furthermore, such power to give names to the stars and to create constellations by naming them evokes the beneficent Zeus, who is the supreme name-giver. Thus, connection between stars and language invites the reader to consider the connection between the stars and text at hand.

Like Aratus’ unnamed name-giver, Balbus attributes to human beings the power to discover the names of the stars. Furthermore, picking out the stars and forming them into constellations necessitates an activity akin to reading. In other words, the people who discover the names of the stars go through the same process as the reader of a text. As Katharina Volk points out in her discussion of the semiotics of Aratus’ poem, “A reader of signs is also always a ποιητής, a re-creator and hence a writer of sorts.” Along with Marcus, Cotta, and Velleius, we readers are invited to “pick out” the signs in the text as we construct our own signification of meaning for the dialogue, which is especially salient since the dialogue requires such discerning and reading of “signs” to arrive at meaning, through arrangement of ideas, much as Cicero does in his task of

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252 Gee (2001) 532 discusses Aratus’ name-giving passage and compares it to Cicero’s version, highlighting Cicero’s foregrounding of artistic language vis-a-vis his Greek model.

253 This passage has generated debate as to whether or not the name giver discovered constellations that had already been there by Zeus (Martin (1998)) or created the constellations himself by naming them (Kidd (1997)). Volk (2012) 20 offers a third solution, pointing out that the name giver “must go through the same process of mental ordering” as the “writer” himself, in this case, Zeus. The first “reader” of the sky (the name giver) makes the constellations; in a similar vein, the reader of the poem must make sense of the text.

254 Volk (2012) 221.
writing philosophy. The involvement of the gods—and their signifying capacity in the natural world—is precisely the concern of the dialogue. Yet here we readers, like the first star gazers and namers, pick out details in the text in order to make sense of it, thereby becoming co-creators in the dialogue itself, and, through a performative proof, demonstrating analogically the presence of some sort of divine name giver who first created a text of a different sort: the cosmos.

Whether watching the stars or reading a book, vision is essential. It is fitting, then, that Balbus excerpts passages of the *Aratea* that are particularly visual. Omitting the *a iove* introduction, Balbus jumps immediately to the circumpolar constellations to begin with the Great and Little Bears (*Nat. D.* 2.105). Balbus oscillates between verse and prose, and as I hope to show, cuts lines from the poem which do not serve his purposes.255

In the next section, I will analyze the verses Balbus chooses to quote, arguing that he selects verses that (a) are particularly vivid; (b) emphasize the order and stability of the universe; and (c) showcase the superiority of Latin for capturing the “sign-system” of the stars.256 By quoting verses that draw attention to these three aspects of the cosmos, Balbus most effectively generates a celestial model in the text itself, an important component of Balbus’ overall argument for cosmic design.257

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255 Pease (1957–8) 838 suggests that Cicero chooses to include the constellations he does for two reasons: “(a) to reveal something of the variety to be seen in the firmament; and (b) to give a generous sample of his own versification.” It does not seem to me, however, that Pease’s reasons account for how these constellations in particular highlight the visual and linguistic virtuosity of Latin.

256 Čulík-Baird (2018) 739 argues that Balbus chooses quotations from the *Aratea* that best suit the citational practices of Stoic principles. While I am indebted to her excellent discussion, as will become evident in the following sections, I disagree that Stoic principles drive the selection of verses.

3.4 Latin Stars

Let us turn to Balbus’ recitation of the *Aratea* (2.104–5):

Ergo, ut oculis adsidue videmus, sine ulla mutatione aut varietate
cetera labuntur celeri caelestia motu
cum caeloque simul noctesque diesque feruntur,
Quorum contemplatione nullius expleri potest animus naturae constantiam videre
cupientis;
   extremusque adeo duplici de cardine vertex
dicitur esse polus.
Hunc circum Arctoe duae feruntur numquam occidentes:
ex his altera apud Graios Cynosura vocatur,
altera dicitur esse Helice,
cuius quidem clarissimas stellas totis noctibus cernimus,
quas nostri Septem soliti vocitare Triones

Thus, as we continuously see with our eyes, without any change or inconstancy,
the other celestial signs glide with swift motion,
they are carried along with the sky through the days and nights
at whose contemplation the mind of no human desirous of seeing the constancy of nature is able to be sated,
   and the furthest tip of both turning points is called the pole.
Around it the two Bears are carried along, never setting:
of these one is called Cynosura among the Greeks,
the other is called Helice,
whose brightest stars, to be sure, we perceive every night,
   which our people are accustomed to call the Septemtriones.

At the outset, Balbus emphasizes the stars’ constancy. The stars move predictably and continuously “without any change or inconstancy” (*sine ulla mutatione aut varietate*, Nat. D. 2.104), and they glide along eternally through every day and night (*noctesque diesque feruntur*, Nat. D. 2.104). The harmony of nature (*naturae constantiam*, Nat. D. 2.105) inspires an unending desire to contemplate its order and regularity (*quorum contemplatione nullius expleri*
potest animus naturae constantiam videre cupientis, Nat. D. 2.105). The predictable courses of
the stars and their ordered patterns are emblematic of the order of the cosmos itself.\textsuperscript{258}

The two Bears that move around the North Pole also point to the regularity of the cosmos
since they move constantly and consistently, “never setting” (\textit{numquam occidentes, Nat. D.}
2.105). The Great Bear is particularly conspicuous, which makes it a useful reference point in
the sky. Furthermore, highlighting the constellation’s visibility also contributes to the “verbal
celestial model” effect of Balbus’ recitation.\textsuperscript{259} We “see” (\textit{cernimus, Nat. D. 2.105}) these “most
bright stars” (\textit{clarissimas stellas, Nat. D. 2.105}) throughout the whole night (\textit{totis noctibus, Nat.}
D. 2.105): the Greater Bear constellation is both visible and constant.

Perhaps even more significantly, Balbus cites verses that draw attention to the names of
these circumpolar constellations. As Balbus intonates before quoting the \textit{Aratea}, the names of the
stars are encoded, so to speak, within the constellations themselves (\textit{Nat. D. 2.104}).\textsuperscript{260}

Introducing the two constellations, Balbus initially refers to them as Arctoe, a Latinization of the

\textsuperscript{258} Balbus, though a Stoic, omits the opening of the poem, the so-called “hymn to Zeus” proem. The only part of the
proem preserved in the Latin \textit{Aratea} is \textit{a iove primordia Musarum}, but presumably Cicero created his own rendition
of the rest of the opening. In Aratus’ \textit{Phaenomena}, the proem highlights Zeus’ pervasiveness, which many scholars
have pointed to as proof of the poem’s Stoic intent. While I do not think that the proem is Stoic, it arguably is the
most Stoically inflected part of the poem. Thus, it is rather marked that Balbus as a Stoic passes it by completely,
which suggests to me that Balbus’ purpose in quoting the \textit{Aratea} is not merely to bolster Stoicism but rather to
further his argument of cosmic design by generating a verbal celestial model. For a contrasting view, see Čulík-

\textsuperscript{259} On the \textit{Aratea} as a celestial model, see Čulík-Baird (2018) 746.

\textsuperscript{260} On this point, I am indebted to Bishop (2016), who discusses the Bears at pp. 158–60 and 162–4. Bishop (2016)
and Čulík-Baird (2018) both see Balbus’ choice of constellation and attention to their names as part and parcel of the
Stoic practice of using etymology for philosophical argument. I would point out, however, that etymological
wordplay—although it held appeal for the Stoic worldview of the connection between words and the natural order—
is by no means the exclusive purview of Stoicism. For example, Greek literature that predates Stoicism makes use of
puns: in the Iliad, Achilles’ name means “grief of the people” (\textit{ἄχη λᾶος}), the chorus of Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}
connects Apollo with destruction (\textit{ἀπόλλυµι}), and Plato’s \textit{Cratylus} links Zeus’s name \textit{Di-} to the preposition
“through” (\textit{διά}) because he permeates everything. On etymological wordplay among the Greeks, see O’Hara (2017)
7–21. On the pre-Socratic interest in etymology and the nature of words, see Baxter (1992). In addition to Homer
and the tragedians, he also discusses Pherecydes, Empedocles, the interpreters of Homer, Anaxagoras, the Derveni
Commentator, Protagoras, Prodicus, and Democritus. Aratus’ \textit{Phaenomena} is also concerned with etymology, on
Greek ἄρκτοι, which simply means “Bears.” While Aratus explains in a mythological digression that these bears were the Cretan caretakers of infant Zeus who were subsequently catastherized for their service (Phaen. 31–5), the Aratea (at least, the parts Balbus quotes) focuses on their names. In Latin, the circumpolar constellations are not called Ursae (vel sim.); rather, Balbus draws attention to the alternative agrarian nomenclature.

Balbus chooses to quote the lines that address the names of the Great and Little Bears: “from these one is called Cynosura among the Greeks; the other is called Helice” (ex his altera apud Graios Cynosura vocatur/ altera dicitur esse Helice, Nat. D. 2.105). The Greek name is mentioned first, but then the Latin: “which our people are accustomed to call the Seven Triones” (quas nostri Septem soliti vocitare Triones, Nat. D. 2.105). If Latin in particular is supposed to “bring pleasure” (delectat, Nat. D. 2.104) and provide an abundance of verbal wealth (copia verborum, Nat. D. 2.104), then it makes sense to attend to the Latin nomenclature of the constellations, especially when the difference between Greek and Latin is called to attention.

In the Attic Nights, Aulus Gellius provides an explanation for why the Greeks call the constellation ἅµαξα and the Latins septentriones (Gell. NA 2.21). Gellius relates a vignette in

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261 Cf. Acad. 1.10: Immo vero et haec qui illa non poterunt et qui Graeca poterunt non contemnent sua. Quid enim causae est cur poëtas Latinos Graecis litteris eruditi legant, philosophos non legant? An quia delectat Ennius, Pacuvius, Attius, multi alii, qui non verba sed vim Graecorum expresserunt poëtarum? Quanto magis philosophi delectabunt, si, ut illi Aeschylum, Sophoclem, Euripidem, sic hi Platonem imitentur, Aristotelem, Theophrastum? Oratores quidem laudari video, si qui e nostris Hyperidem sint aut Demosthenem imitati.

262 Already in Homer, the constellation is referred to both as “Bear” and “Wagon.” On the shield of Achilles, it is one of the few constellations mentioned (Ἄρκτον θ’, ἣν καὶ Ἄµαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν, Il.487). In the Odyssey, Odysseus uses the Bear as a sign for navigation as he leaves Calypso’s island, and the formulation is the exact same line (Ἀρκτον θ’, ἣν καὶ Ἄµαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν, Od. 5.273). In the Odyssey, however, Homer provides additional details about the constellation, namely that it turns in place, watches Orion, and never sets in the ocean (Od. 274–5). Interestingly, Homer only mentions the Great Bear, which, as Kidd (1997) points out, is “one of the earliest recorded constellations” (181). In Plautus the constellation is referred to as Septentriones (Amph. 273), although here Cicero employs timesis, separating septem and triones, on which see Pellacani (2015) 88–9. On the history of the constellation, see Montanari Caldini (2006) 123–36 and Le Boeuffe (1977) 82–92. See also Bishop (2016) 158–60 and 162–4.
which he and some companions, both Greek and Roman, were sailing from the little Greek island Aegina to the port of Piraeus on a summer evening.\textsuperscript{263} Above them shone the ἅµαξα/ septentriones. Gellius explains to the others that the constellation is not just named for its seven stars (hence the septem), but also for the word triones itself. Citing Varro and Lucius Aelius Stilo, Gellius argues that triones is not a nonsense word but a derivation of terriones, a name for oxen which is itself derived from “earth” (terra).\textsuperscript{264} Stilo, under whom both Varro and Cicero studied, was extremely interested in etymology.\textsuperscript{265} Although his works are lost, his pupil Varro in \textit{De Lingua Latina} provides an explanation for the origin of the constellation’s name (7.74):

\begin{quote}
has septem stellas Graeci ut Homerus vocant ἅµαξαν et propinquum eius signum βοόρην, nostri eas septem stellas triones et temonem et prope eas axem: triones enim [et] boves appellantur a bubulcis etiam nunc, maxime cum arant terram; e quis ut dicti valentes glebarii, qui facile proscondunt glebas, sic omnes qui terram arabant a terra terriones, unde triones ut dicerentur e detrito.\textsuperscript{266}
\end{quote}

The Greeks (such as Homer) call these seven stars Wagon and the constellation neighboring it Ploughman; we call these seven stars Oxen and Wagon Pole and near these Axle: for oxen are called triones by rustics even now, especially when they plough the earth; just as those of them are called “the strong dirt clobbers” that easily cut up the dirt clods, thus all that ploughed the land were called terriones from the land, so that from this they were called triones but with the “e” worn off.

Varro connects the name triones (Oxen) to the land itself, since they “plough the land” (arant terram). The name of the poet Aratus sounds like the word arator, or “ploughman.” The

\textsuperscript{263} For a discussion of this episode, see Gunderson (2009) 153–5.

\textsuperscript{264} Bishop (2016) 163–4 argues that Cicero’s decision to use the name Septemtriones and to split it apart into two words is not only due to metrical necessity but also indicates that Cicero attributes meaning to triones since otherwise the line would make no sense.


\textsuperscript{266} On the text, see De Melo (2019) 986–90, esp. p. 464 n. 368.
connection between Aratus and ploughing is already present in the *Phaenomena*, because the stars and weather signs are essential for farming. The Latin language brings the use of such language to the fore, since *arat* (and its various forms) puns on Aratus’ name and strengthens the link between farming and the stars. For example, as Joshua Katz has shown, Vergil alludes the Aratus at the beginning of the *Georgics* with the phrase “turn the earth” (*terram/vertere*, *G*. 1.1–2). The letters also can be re-arranged (loosely) to spell Aratus’ own name, suggesting that within the earth itself is a “sign” (like the stars and weather phenomena) that points to Aratus, the poet *par excellence* of natural semiotics. Indeed, it is attractive to think that Cicero’s own employment of *septem triones* in his *Aratea* is a clever allusion to Aratus. It would be a hidden “sign” within Cicero’s own poem that simultaneously nods to his predecessor and at the same time stresses the superior semiotic capacity of the Latin language.268

After the Bears comes Draco, at whose head stands a mysterious individual (*Nat. D*. 2.108):

Id autem caput
   attingens defessa velut maerentis imago
   vertitur,
quam quid Graeci
   Engonasin vocitant, genibus quia nixa feratur.
   hic illa eximio posita est fulgore Corona

However, touching that head turns the tired image of one who grieves (as it were), which the Greeks call Engonasin, because it is carried on its knees. Next to this is placed Corona with its distinguished gleam.


268 Granted, Cicero does not refer to ploughing explicitly in the quoted passage, but the name of the constellation implies farming.
While Aratus’ description of the constellation is seven lines long (*Phaen. 64–70*), Balbus quotes only three and a half. Furthermore, the lines that Balbus quotes focus on the name of the constellation, omitting details about its upper-body posture which are not directly relevant to its moniker. In the Greek, Aratus expresses uncertainty about the identity of the man: “No one knows how to call him for certain” (τὸ μὲν οὔτις ἐπίσταται ἀμφαδὸν εἰπεῖν, *Phaen. 64*). As commentators have noted, there was some ancient controversy over the identity of the individual. While in late antiquity the constellation came to be identified with Hercules—the name by which it is called today, in the classical period his identity was ill-defined, prompting suggestion that the constellation is Near Eastern in origin.\(^{269}\) Whatever the case may be, in Aratus, the crouching constellation is called Engonasin. Such a position was associated with some sort of labor, which may have later contributed to his association with Hercules and his labor of slaying the snake (=Draco) guarding the apples of the Hesperides.\(^{270}\)

Whereas Aratus conveys uncertainty about what to call the constellation, Cicero expresses no such hesitation. First, Cicero glosses the Greek “on the knees” *en* and *gonasin* with the Latin *nixa* and *genibus*, a move that imitates Aratus’ own etymological explanation for the constellation’s name: “They call it Engonasin (*On His Knees*) because the man toiling on his knees resembles someone crouching down” (ἐν γόνασιν καλέουσι· τὸ δ᾿ αὖτ᾿ ἐν γούνασι κάμνον/ ὀκλάζοντι ἔοικεν, *Phaen. 66–7*). Furthermore, the *De natura deorum* draws attention to the difference between the Greek and Latin terminology. In his own voice, Balbus supplies “the Greeks” (*Graeci*) before resuming his recitation of the poem with “call” (*vocitant*), thereby

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\(^{270}\) The controversy in antiquity over the constellation’s name seems to be long standing. Hyginus suggests various identities, including Orpheus. Some of these stories may explain the epithet of *maerentis*, as the notion of grieving may better capture some of these other alternative mythologies.
highlighting the Latin in the poem, Cicero drops the “on the knees” (genibus), referring to the constellation only as Nixa. Not only does he give it a new Roman name, he moreover concisely captures the constellation’s salient characteristics of kneeling and toiling in the past participle of nitor. With a single Latin word, Cicero beautifully shows how Latin captures the constellation and surpasses Greek nomenclature. Thus, Nixa is no calque but a Latin innovation.

To a similar effect, Cicero draws attention to the difference in the Greek and Latin names for the stars with the constellation Ophiuchus (Nat. D. 2.108–9):

Atque haec quidem a tergo, propter caput autem Anguitenens, quem claro perhibent Ophiuchum nomine Graii. hic pressu duplici palmarum continet Anguem, atque eius ipse manet religatus corpore torto, namque virum medium serpens sub pectora cingit. ille tamen nitens graviter vestigia ponit atque oculos urget pedibus pectusque Nepai.

[Engonasin] is at [Draco’s] back, but Anguitens close to its head, whom the Greeks call Ophiuchus with a famous name. This one holds the snake with the double hold of his palms, and he himself remains bound by its twisted body, for the serpent binds the middle of the man under his chest. Nevertheless, this shining one weightily places his steps and presses upon the eyes and breast of the Scorpion.

Rather than using the Greek name, Cicero coins a Latin equivalent: Anguitenens. Like the Greek name Opiuchus, a combination of “snake” (ὄφις) and “hold” (ἔχω), Anguitenens is derived from the Latin equivalents, “snake” (anguis) and “hold” (teneo). Then, the poem glosses the new

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271 As Volk (2009) 190 points out, “It is clear that Cicero, through his designation of the Kneeler as nixus, contributed crucially to the way in which the constellation was conceived by Latin writers. Once the first step had been taken, the description of Engonasin with some form of nixus and either genu or genibus apparently became commonplace, and Manilius is but one witness to this development.”

272 Cicero coins his own name for the constellation with Latin: anguem and teneo. Bishop (2016) 168 n. 48 points out that fr. XV (= Nat. D. 2.109) refers to the constellation with the transliterated Greek Ophiuchus, while it is Balbus who employs the Latin name Anguitenens (Nat. D. 2.108). However, the constellation is referred to as Anguitenens at frr. 34.358. Therefore, there is no reason to assume that Cicero does not himself use the name Anguitenens in the Aratea. See Pellacani (2015) 94–5.
Latin name with *continet Anguem* (*Nat. D.* 2.109), demonstrating how the name Anguitenens applies to the constellation in action. The importance of naming the constellations—as well as the relationship between Latin and Greek—is showcased in the preceding line, where Balbus juxtaposes the Latin name Anguitenens with the Greek Ophiuchus, drawing attention in particular to the difference in nomenclature: “called by the Greeks Ophiuchum, with a famous name” (*quem claro perhibent Ophiuchum nomine Graii, Nat. D.* 2.109). “A famous name” (*claro...nomine*) especially underscores the importance of names for the constellations as well as the correspondence between the verbal signs of the Latin and star signs in the sky.273

### 3.5 Seeing the Stars

Resuming my discussion of Balbus’ quotation of the *Aratea*, I would like to now focus on passages that appeal to the sense of sight as viewed in the mind’s eye. The vividness of the constellations further serves to generate a celestial model in the text that the reader can “see.” As the great art historian David Summers points out,

> Vision is sight and seeing, but the same word also refers to many kinds of mental activities, and although it is hard to explain how or why it is so, we know at once what it means to “see” a solution to a problem, to “visualize” a future event, to “remember’ or “recollect” a past one, or to “reflect” on our lives. These higher-order “visions” are in fact ongoing, sometimes separable only with difficulty from our experience of the here and now. Furthermore, these higher order visions, like sight itself, are shaped and directed by culturally specific spaces, times, and habits (2007 (2)).

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273 Sometimes Greek outstrips Latin astral nomenclature. For example, when Balbus comes to Taurus, he observes that constellation is “covered with many stars” (*stellis conspersum est frequentibus*), which the Greeks call Hyades, he notes, because they cause it to rain (ὕειν). Balbus reprimands the Romans for missing the etymological link between the name of the Hyades and the meteorological phenomenon: “we stupidly call them little pigs, as if they were named from pigs, not from rain” (*nostri imperite Suculas, quasi a subus essent, non ab imbris nominatae, Nat. D.* 2.111). In the case of this constellation, the Greek name captures the star sign more accurately. But as Čulik-Baird (2018) points out, Balbus sneaks in liquid language with *conspersum* in describing the Hyades, alerting the attentive reader that Latin can describe the constellations aptly. Furthermore, Bishop (2016) 170 detects a pun with “pig” (*sus*) in *Graeci vocitare suerunt*. 
Using Summers’ characterization of mental visualization as a “higher order vision,” I suggest that Cicero crafts Balbus’ presentation of the *Aratea* to make it an art object that we can see. To illustrate this, I would like to examine a couple of constellations that are especially “visual,” as well as the overall structure of the *Aratea* quotations, which for the ease of reference I present in a table of constellations comparing the *Phaenomena* to Balbus’ quotations of the *Aratea* (see Table 2).

**Draco**

The constellation Draco is introduced by Balbus in terms of its visual appeal. The constellation is designed “so that the appearance of these stars might be more spectacular” (*et quo sit earum stellarum admirabili aspectus, Nat. D. 2.*), making the image of the stars more distinct in our eyes. Hence, it is fitting that Draco is so vividly described (*Nat. D. 2.106*):

> Has inter, veluti rapido cum gurgite flumen,
> Torvus Draco serpit subter superaque revolvens
> Sese conficiensque sinus e corpore flexos.

Among these, just as a river with a speedy eddy, fierce Draco slithers, winding itself above and beneath itself and making bending curves from its body.

The comparison of Draco to a river heightens the visual drama of the constellation.274 Furthermore, the accumulation of sibilant sounds (*torvus...serpit subter superaque revolvens/sese conficiensque sinus...flexos*) makes the picture of a slithering serpent more distinct in our mind’s eye.275 The descriptor *torvus* may also have a visual shading; the grimness of the word

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274 The corresponding line in Aratus is τὰς δὲ ὀἵη ποταµοῖο ἀπορρὼξ (*Phaen. 45*). Cicero elaborates on Aratus’ “like a branch of a river” (ὁίη ποταµοῖο ὑπορρῳξ) with “with a speedy eddy” (*rapido cum gurgite*). Pease (1957–8) 810 observes that the comparison of a snake (a dragon-like figure) to a river appears as early as Hesiod.

275 Cf. Pease (1957–8) 810, who notes that the “sigmatic alliteration (*serpit subter superaque ...sese...sinus*) befits the snaky sinuosity of the serpent.”
comes from the sideways glance (L&S s. v. 1), and may even allude to the etymological link between between δρακών and δέρκοµαι.\(^{276}\) Thus, *torvus* could serve as a gloss on Cicero’s Latin coinage for the constellation, Draco.\(^{277}\)

The emphasis on the visual register continues. Balbus’ language appeals to the sense of sight: “bright appearance” (*praeca\l{}\i r\u{a} \species*, *Nat. D.* 2.107), “must be seen” (*aspicienda*, *Nat. D.* 2.107), “the gleam of the eyes” (*ardor oculorum*, *Nat. D.* 2.107), and “we perceive” (*cernimus*, *Nat. D.* 2.107). As he proceeds to describe the head of the Dragon, deemed the most visually striking, Balbus quotes the *Aratea* again, choosing the passage that illustrates the radiance of his eyes (*Nat. D.* 2.107):

\begin{quote}
\textit{huic non una modo caput ornans stella relucet, verum tempora sunt duplici fulgore notata e trucibus oculis duo fervida lumina flagrant atque uno mentum radianti sidere lucet; opstipum caput at tereti cervice reflexum obtutum in cauda maioris figere dicas}
\end{quote}

Not just one star gleams forth, adorning its head, but its brows are marked with a double glow and from its piercing eyes two fiery lights blaze, and its chin shines with a single shining star; you could say that its gaze is fixed on the tail of the Greater Bear, its head is inclined and bent with a turned neck.

Here, the constellation is not only an object to be seen, but itself a seeing object. Draco’s eyes are emphasized. With stars for eyes, he blazes forth with his own fiery gaze. As we behold his brilliant form, we are asked to imagine that Draco itself is gazing upon the tail of the Greater Bear: “you could say his gaze is fixed” (*obtutum figere dicas*, *Nat. D.* 2.107). *Obtutus*, from the

\(^{276}\) See Pellacani (2015) 90. Pease (1957–8) 810 notes that *torvus* here may here be related to *torqueo*. 

\(^{277}\) Le Boeuf\-\-fle (1977) 98–9 notes that the name of the constellation derives from its sinuous appearance which resembles a snake. Other snaky constellations, including the serpent of Ophiuchus and the Hydra, are also sometimes referred to as Anguis. Thus, likely to distinguish between these, Cicero’s Draco became the dominant name for the constellation after Vitruvius (IX.4, 5, 6).
verb *obtueor*, makes it clear that the constellation itself is seeing. The act of seeing is mirrored between the reader (who is asked to “see” the constellation in her mind) and the constellation (which itself sees its neighboring constellation). The complementary acts of stargazing of both reader and Draco is suggested in the very words of the poem. **Opstipum** mirrors **obtutum**, as both words begin with “o” followed by a labial (“p” and “b”) and a “t” and end with -*um*. The mirroring continues with the “c,” “a,” and “u” of **caput** and **cauda**, which are adjacent to their corresponding op/b- words and located above one another in (nearly) the same position in the line.

*Cepheus and His Neighbors*

I would now like to turn to the constellation group mythologically related to Cepheus. The king of Ethiopia in Greco-Roman mythology, Cepheus chained his daughter the Princess Andromeda to a rock as a sacrificial offering to the sea-monster Cetus, which Poseidon had sent forth from the sea as punishment for the Queen Cassiopeia for her boast that her daughter’s beauty surpassed that of the Nereids. Although Aratus’ version does not provide the entirety of this mythological backstory, it does allude to it, characterizing the constellation group thus: “Nor will the grievous family of Cepheus, son of Iasius, be thus left unmentioned; their name has also come into heaven, for they were near to Zeus” (Οὐδ᾽ ἄρα Κηφῆος µογερὸν γένος Ἰασίδαο/ αὐτῶς ἄρρητον κατακείσεται: ἄλλ᾽ ἄρα καὶ τῶν/ οὔρανον εἰς ὄνοµ᾽ ἦλθεν, ἐπεὶ Διὸς ἐγγύθεν ἦςαν, Phaen. 179–81). In *De natura deorum*, however, no mythological context at all is given (2.111), allowing the mind’s eye to visualize the constellation more readily (*minorem autem*...)

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278 Gee (2013) 86 observes that “Cicero seems to strive for originality with *obtutum* (the form picking up *opstipum*).”
Septentrionem Cepheus passis Palmis [terga] subsequitur, 2.111). Cassiopeia and Andromeda are also extremely vivid, portrayed without details that might distract from “seeing” these stars. Balbus passes over Aratus’ comparison of Cassiopeia to a double-barred door (Phaen, 192–5), which introduces an alien image that distracts the reader from visualizing the constellation qua constellation. In a similar vein, while Aratus gives detailed directions on how to spot Andromeda in the sky (Phaen. 198–204), Balbus keeps his chosen quote brief and clear (hanc autem inlustri versatur corpore propter/ Andromeda aufugiens aspectum maesta parentis, Nat. D. 2.111), focusing on the stars themselves.

Not only does the De natura deorum illustrate these constellations concisely, it also depicts them with “seeing” words. For example, Cassiopeia, although “with a dim appearance of stars” (obscura specie stellarum) nevertheless illuminates our mind with visual cues; obscura and specie are both visual words. Furthermore, her daughter Andromeda wheels next to her with a “gleaming body” (inlustri corpore), and the Horse touches her head and shakes his mane with its “shining gleam” (fulgore micanti). These visual cues encourage the reader to utilize her mental vision to see the constellations more clearly.

Balbus’ quotations of the Aratea pass over longer mythological explanations and instructions for visualizing the stars. Although Pease criticizes Cicero for choosing which constellations to include in Balbus’ discussion rather haphazardly,279 to me the choice seems quite intentional. Cicero follows Aratus’ order of the constellations perfectly, making certain salient omissions (see Table 2). Most obviously, perhaps, Cicero passes over the famous Hymn to Zeus that opens Aratus’ poem. The most overtly Stoicizing part of the poem, the proem

279 Pease (1958) 803.
showcases the omnipresence of Zeus and his care for mankind. If Balbus’ primary purpose in quoting the poem is to prove the design of the universe and the beneficence of the divine, why does Balbus fail to include this important Stoic part of the poem? Furthermore, Balbus omits several passages that showcase the connection between humankind and the stars, especially as regards farmers and sailors. Kindly signs for humankind and tokens of Zeus’ involvement with human affairs, the stars mark seasons of sailing and agriculture, two pursuits that are vital for the flourishing of humankind. Would not these be the perfect examples for Balbus’ argument that the gods are involved in human affairs and have designed the world for their benefit? Yet Balbus skips over these passages, condensing the poem so that the constellations themselves are highlighted rather than their practical roles.

With the exception of only a couple of constellations, Balbus follows the order of the named stars in the first 450 lines of Aratus’ poem closely. Yet, he greatly condenses the poem into ten sections, not by skipping over constellations, but by describing them very succinctly. Balbus omits the mythological backstories of the constellations. Though the Aratea seems interested in Hellenistic mythography, Balbus does not; he skips over the role of the Bears as the nurses of Zeus (Phaen. 30–5, see Table 2), the vivid Myth of Dike and Myth of Ages (Phaen. 98–136), Capra and the story of infant Zeus (Phaen. 163–4), and the story of how the Lyre was the hollowed-out turtle shell of Hermes (Phaen. 268–72). By omitting the mythological

280 For a different view on the role of Stoicism in the Aratea as quoted in De natura deorum, see Bishop (2016) and Čulík-Baird (2018).

281 Consider, for example, the Pleiades (254–67) and the etesian winds suitable for sailing (149–55).

282 See Table 2: Delton (Phaen. 233–8), Arrow (Phaen. 311–2).
ecphrases, Balbus whittles down the poem and focuses on the vividness of the constellations themselves.283

The omnipresence of Zeus resonates with Stoic doctrine and recalls Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus.284 In a similar vein, the Dike passage shows the possibility of connection and communication between the divine and human. Unlike Hesiod’s Justice, who flees earth, never to be seen again, Aratus’ Dike continues to communicate with humankind rather than severing all connection.285 We do not possess the full versions of Cicero’s corresponding Latin passages (though we have no reason to suppose he did not translate them in their entirety); however, Cicero chose not to include those “Stoic-friendly” portions of the poem in Balbus’ quotation. I argue that Cicero chose portions of the poem which reveal the order and beauty of the stars rather than particularly “Stoic” passages. The argument for the order and beauty accords with Stoic principles but is not Stoic per se. What is important is to generate a verbal celestial model before our eyes that we can “see.” The celestial model is itself a “sign” for the cosmos itself, and if we can see its beauty in miniature, we can more readily recognize the beauty of the cosmos itself.

283 It is also worth noting that the constellations that Balbus includes are Aratus’ initial fixed stars. He terminates his quotation of the poem at the point where Aratus mentions the planets (Phaen. 454–61) and the celestial circles (Phaen. 462 ff.); in other words, when the poem begins to offer more technical explanations for the operations of the cosmos on the move. Balbus creates the picture of the constellations in our mind, so that they serve more like an image. The Aratea quoted thus becomes itself a visual sort of ecphrasis in the text.

284 Aratus’ Phaenomena and Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus are contemporary poems, and Hunter (1995) 21–2 argues that Aratus’ poem, whether expressly Stoic or not, swiftly became attached to the Stoic tradition.

285 Kidd (1997) 216 observes that ending the story with the Maiden in the sky “suits his purpose to stop at this point and correct Hesiod’s pessimistic ending by making Justice still watch over men.”
<table>
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<th><strong>Cicero</strong></th>
<th><strong>Aratus</strong></th>
<th><strong>Observations of similarities and differences</strong></th>
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<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Invocation to Zeus (1–18)</td>
<td>Cicero seems to have translated the proem of the poem in its entirety, but we only have the initial line <em>A Iove</em>. Nevertheless, in <em>De natura deorum</em>, Balbus passes by the opening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly bodies (<em>cetera...caelestia</em>) 2.104</td>
<td>The numerous stars (19–20)</td>
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<td>The poles, 2.105</td>
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<td>The two Bears (<em>Cynosura, Helice/Septemtriones</em>), 2.105–6</td>
<td>Bears (Wagons), introduction and explanation of name (26–44)</td>
<td>In the <em>De natura deorum</em>, Balbus passes by the mythological aetiology for the Bears’ catasterism for tending infant Zeus on Crete</td>
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<td>Draco, 2.106–8</td>
<td>Draco (45–62)</td>
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<td>Engonasin, Corona, 2.108</td>
<td>Engonasin, Corona (63–73)</td>
<td>Aratus’ version includes in brief the myth of Dionysus and Ariadne.</td>
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<td>Anguitenens, 2.109</td>
<td>Ophiuchus (74–87)</td>
<td>Aratus’ version includes more detail about the constellation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Claws (Chelae) (88–9)</td>
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<td>Arctophylax, Bootes, 2.109–10</td>
<td>Arctophylax, Bootes (91–5)</td>
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<td>Virgo, 2.110</td>
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<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Parthenos myth, Dike, myth of ages (98–136)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>nameless stars (136–46)</td>
<td><em>Nota bene</em> the <em>divina sollertia</em> in Balbus’ framing at 2.110.</td>
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<td>Gemini, Cancer, Leo (Zodiac), 2.110</td>
<td>Twins, Crab, Lion (147–8)</td>
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<td><strong>Omitted</strong></td>
<td>Hotness of sun’s track, sailing (149–55)</td>
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<td><strong>Auriga, 2.110</strong></td>
<td>Charioteer (156–61)</td>
<td>Aratus offers a more extended description than Cicero.</td>
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<td><strong>Capra and Haedi, 2.110</strong></td>
<td>Capra and Haedi (162–6)</td>
<td><em>De natura deorum</em> omits the myth of Capra and Zeus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taurus, 2.110</strong></td>
<td>Taurus (167–8)</td>
<td>Lines 168–71 are omitted in Balbus’ quotation of Cicero’s poem.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Omitted</strong></td>
<td>Taurus, cont. (168–71)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hyades, 2.111</strong></td>
<td>Hyades, cont. (172–4)</td>
<td>Names are discussed by Balbus in Cicero’s version.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Omitted</strong></td>
<td>More discussion of position of Taurus relative to the Charioteer (174–8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Omitted</strong></td>
<td>Cepheus and his family as kin of Zeus (179–81)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cepheus, 2.111</strong></td>
<td>Cepheus (182–7)</td>
<td>Instructions on finding Cepheus are omitted in Balbus’ quotation of the poem (184–7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cassiepia, 2.111</strong></td>
<td>Cassiepeia (188–96)</td>
<td>Aratus’ version mentions the full moon, which is omitted in Cicero, as is the discussion of double-barred door comparison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Andromeda, 2.111</strong></td>
<td>Andromeda (197–204)</td>
<td>Aratus mentions how to find her in the night sky, as well as her outstretched arms, but Cicero does not; however, the mention of sad mother (i.e. Cassiepeia) is transferred from Aratus’ description of Cassiepeia to Andromeda’s description in Cicero’s version.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constellation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equus, 2.111</td>
<td><strong>Equus (205–24)</strong></td>
<td>In Cicero’s version, Equus vividly shakes its mane. Omitted in Cicero is Aratus’ discussion of the myth of the Hippocrene’s origin. Pease (1957–8) 825 notes that Cicero includes <em>aeternum</em> as a modifier for <em>nodum</em>, a collocation that Aratus does not have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aries, 2.111</td>
<td><strong>Aries (225–32)</strong></td>
<td>Cicero’s version of Aries is more abbreviated, while Aratus describes how to see Aries in the night sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td><strong>Delton (233–8)</strong></td>
<td>Cicero does not mention this constellation in <em>De natura deorum</em>, as Pease (1957–8) also observes. It is interesting to note that it is not included on the Farnese globe (Kidd (1997) 266).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisces, 2.111</td>
<td><strong>Pisces (239–47)</strong></td>
<td>Cicero’s version corresponds to Aratus’ at lines 239–40, but Aratus’ goes on for several more lines, describing how the two Fishes fit together as well as instructions on how to locate them in the night sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseus, 2.112</td>
<td><strong>Perseus (248–53)</strong></td>
<td>Innovating upon Aratus, Cicero explains how Perseus is buffeted by blasts from the North. In Aratus, Perseus is described as “taller than the other figures in the North” (αὐτάρ ὅ γ᾽ ἐν βορέω φέρεται περιμήκετος ἄλλων, <em>Phaen.</em> 250). Aratus provides more of a description of Perseus’ appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleiades (Vergiliae), 2.112</td>
<td><strong>Pleiades (254–67)</strong></td>
<td>Cicero follows Aratus fairly closely in describing the Pleiades as faint (<em>tenui cum luce</em>). Aratus, however, elaborates, explaining how they are seven in number, though only six are observable. Cicero also omits Aratus’ nod to Zeus as the preserver of the stars who does not allow knowledge of them to fail. Cicero also does not mention the role of the Pleiades as signs of farming, marking the beginning of summer and winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constellation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyre (Fides), 2.112</td>
<td>Lyre (268–72)</td>
<td>Aratus gives the mythological backstory of the Lyre as the hollowed-out tortoise of Hermes (cf. <em>Hymn. Hom. Merc.</em> 25–54). (NB, Maia is one of the names of the Pleiades sisters that Aratus mentions; is this the same Maia that is the mother of Hermes in the Homeric Hymn?). Cicero omits the myth altogether. Cicero also names the constellation Fides, although it is often called Lyra in Latin (Kidd (1997) 281). See also Varro, who says that “the Greeks call it Lyre, but we Latins call Fides” (<em>quod Graeci Lyram vocant, Fidem nostri, R.</em> 2.5.12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avis, 2.112</td>
<td>Ornis (275–81)</td>
<td>Cicero devotes one line to the Avis constellation, as opposed to Aratus’ seven. Cicero’s version refers to the roof of the sky, whereas Aratus refers to the sky as Zeus (Ζηνὶ, <em>Phaen.</em> 275), and as Kidd (1997) 285 points out, Zeus-qua-sky “is also a reminder of the omnipresent Stoic god” that is so important for the poem. Cicero omits such Stoicizing tendencies (<em>sub tegmine caeli</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquarius, 2.112</td>
<td>Aquarius (282–5)</td>
<td>Cicero’s Aquarius is not mentioned in the poem itself, but rather in Balbus’ framing comments. Aratus’ description of Aquarius is also brief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricorn, 2.112</td>
<td>Capricorn (284–99)</td>
<td>Aratus’ version is more elaborate, describing the reactions of the sailors. Cicero’s only talks about his icy chill (<em>tum gelidum valido de pectore frigus anhelans</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Suffering at sea and trusting night interlude (300–2)</td>
<td>Cicero’s version focuses on the constellations rather than their affects on human beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpion and Bow, 2.113</td>
<td>Scorpion and Archer (303–12)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ales, Aquila, 2.113</td>
<td>Ornis, Aetos (312–5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Delphinus, 2.113</td>
<td>316–8</td>
<td>The Dolphin is not in the quoted poem in <em>DND</em>, but rather Balbus’ framing comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Interlude, transitioning between the north and the south (319–21)</td>
<td>Cicero’s version is simplified. Aratus includes discussion of the clearness of the sky and the ease with which Orion can be discerned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orion, 2.113</td>
<td>Orion (322–5)</td>
<td>Cicero does not include a discussion of the star Sirius, but he alludes to it with the descriptor “glowing hot” (<em>fervidus</em>), nodding to common astronomical knowledge of Sirius as an intensely bright star associated with the summer heat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canis, 2.114</td>
<td>Canis (Kuon) and Sirius (326–37)</td>
<td>Cicero translates <em>Phaen</em>. 238–9 closely, but omits the discussion of Sirius as the hare’s pursuer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lepus, 2.114</td>
<td>Lagos (238–41)</td>
<td>Aratus’ description is more detailed than Cicero’s and alludes to the myth of Jason and the Argonauts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canis, Argo, 2.114</td>
<td>Canis and Argo (342–52)</td>
<td>Aratus focuses on the chains of Pisces, omitting discussion of Andromeda. According to Kidd (1997), Aratus uses Andromeda and the other neighboring constellations as a way for the reader/viewer to orient herself in the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincla, 2.114</td>
<td>Andromeda, and tail chains of the fishes, proximity to Monster (353–66)</td>
<td>Aratus’ text discusses the relevance of the altar for sailors, which Cicero omits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Unnamed stars (367–401)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ara, 2.114</td>
<td>Altar (402–30)</td>
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<td>Centaur, 2.114</td>
<td>Centaur (431–42)</td>
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<td>Hydra, 2.114</td>
<td>Hydra (443–51)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3.6 The Cosmos as a Celestial Model

The idea that the *Aratea* works like a celestial model in the text itself is corroborated by the fact that Balbus uses a celestial model as a metaphor for the cosmos. In a passage where he discusses art (*ars*) as a demonstration of intelligence, Balbus brings up the beauty and excellence of the cosmos to make an argument for the intelligent design of the universe (*Nat. D.* 2.87):

> Quodsi omnes mundi partes ita constitutae sunt ut neque ad usum *meliores* potuerint esse neque ad speciem *pulchriores*, videamus utrum ea fortuitane sint an eo statu quo cohaerere nullo modo potuerint nisi sensu moderante divinaque providentia.

But if every part of the world is set in order so that they could not be better in use or more beautiful in appearance, let us consider whether they are the product of chance or whether they are unable to hold together in such an arrangement without sensation guiding them and divine foresight.

Balbus appeals to two criteria as a standard to measure whether or not the world is governed by a divine mind or by chance: its supreme utility (*ad usum meliores*) and its outstanding beauty (*ad speciem pulchriores*). Excellence of construction and beauty go hand in hand. Balbus next turns to the contrast of nature (*natura*) and art (*ars*). He argues the following:

- Nature is superior to art (*meliora sunt ea quae natura quam illa quae arte perfecta sunt*, *Nat. D.* 2.87)
- Art is never made without “reason” *ratio* (*nec ars efficit quicquam sine ratione*, *Nat. D.* 2.87)
- Nature must also have *ratio* (*ne natura quidem rationis expers est habenda*, *Nat. D.* 2.87)

After providing this syllogism, Balbus turns to three specific examples of artistry (*Nat. 2.87*):

> Qui igitur convenit, signum aut tabulam pictam cum aspexeris, scire adhibitam esse artem, cumque procul cursum navigii videris, non dubitare quin id ratione atque arte moveatur, aut cum solarium vel descriptum vel ex aqua contemplere, intellegere declarari horas arte non casu, mundum autem, qui et has ipsas artes et earum artifices et cuncta conplectatur, consilii et rationis esse expertem putare?
How is it possible, that when you observe a statue or painted picture, you know that art has been used; and when you see from a distance the course of a ship, you do not doubt that it is moved by reason and art, or when you consider a sundial or water clock, you understand that its hours are declared by art not chance, however the cosmos, which encompasses these arts themselves and their artificers and all things, you think is free of plan and reason?

Balbus appeals to the arts of painting, navigation, and timekeeping to demonstrate that *ratio* and *ars* fit together. Although the three crafts are distinct—making two-dimensional images, steering ships, and creating devices—they each have their own inherent *ratio*, which is the extension of the *ratio* of the one who devised it, whether painter, sailor, or inventor.

In his great work *Natural Theology*, the 18th c. philosopher William Paley argues for a designed universe with the famous watchmaker analogy. If you stumbled across a watch lying on the ground, you would not doubt that a watchmaker created it. By the same token, the universe also has a grand Watchmaker, “for every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature; with the difference on the side of nature of being greater and more and that in a degree which exceeds all computation.”

Deeply indebted to Cicero, Paley chooses the watch in particular as an analogy for the craftsmanship of the universe. Like the universe, a watch is both beautiful and useful (the two criteria Balbus mentions for evidence for design). Its circular shape and intricate gears work in harmony to tell time as well as to please its owner as a prestige object. It also relies on the motions of the sun and earth to tell time, since our measurement of time itself is tied to celestial

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286 Paley (1831) 19.
phenomena. In this regard, the watch is a simplified and miniature representation of the cosmos itself.\textsuperscript{287}

The stars in particular serve as a sign of divine order, even over and above other aspects of the natural world. Balbus praises the beauty of the world as an object worthy of contemplation (\textit{oculis quodam modo contemplandi pulchritudinem rerum}, \textit{Nat. D.} 2.98).\textsuperscript{288} The earth itself, situated in the middle of the universe, is clothed with flowers, streams, and other natural physical figures of wondrous beauty. It is almost as if these features are decorative, like the fine dress of a woman or a beautiful building. In fact, Balbus even uses the word “clothed” (\textit{vestita}, \textit{Nat. D.} 2.98). In addition to these natural features, the wonder of the world is so great that it is also decorated with living creatures. While an ecphrasis pretends to describe the movement of creatures and their sounds, but in reality can generate sound and movement only in the visual imagination of the reader, the artist of the cosmos is so great that he is able to create a true ecphrasis with actual moving and breathing creatures that decorate his great work of art. The artistry of the universe is also proved by the wide variety of natural features and living creatures.

As beautiful as the earth is, it is surpassed by the celestial spheres, which gird the earth in their ordered cycles. Balbus describes the path of the sun, from its daily patterns creating day and night to its ecliptic turns twice a year, bestowing upon earth the seasons (\textit{Nat. D.} 2.102). He mentions the moon, with her ordered paths giving borrowed light, more diffuse for the needs of the night, and in addition on occasion but at regular intervals creating eclipses (\textit{Nat. D.} 2.103).

\textsuperscript{287} Sedley (2008) observes that “the Stoics’ appeal to contemporary astronomical mechanisms makes their version of the Argument from Design even more powerful than Paley’s watch. In an age of geocentric astronomy, such as this, the structural resemblance of the state-of-the-art planetary mechanisms to the celestial globe as we see it around us was much greater and more direct than in Paley’s heliocentric age” (207).

\textsuperscript{288} Note the visual cue Balbus provides; we are to see the beauty of the heavens with our “eyes” (\textit{oculis}, \textit{Nat. D.} 2.98).
Finally, the planets, which are really not planets at all (as the Greek πλανάω would suggest), are moved in patterns that are sometimes in forward movement, sometimes retrograde, and sometimes without motion altogether (Nat. D. 2.103). The sun, the moon, and the planets are, in Balbus’ words, the most beautiful sight anyone could ever behold (quo spectaculo nihil potest admirabilius esse, nihil pulchrius, Nat. D. 2.104). The earth, in all its beauty, is eclipsed by the beauty of the planets and stars.289

As a thought experiment, Balbus turns to Aristotle’s now-lost treatise De Philosophia. In this dialogue, Aristotle asks his reader to imagine that people lived beneath the earth in an abode equipped with comforts and light, decorated with statues and pictures (ornata signis atque picturis, Nat. D. 2.95). Although they had never seen the outside world, the subterranean people had heard that above them existed a certain force and power of the divine (quoddam numen et vim deorum, Nat. D. 2.95). Then, one day, the earth suddenly opened and the inhabitants were able to enter the land which we now inhabit, where they could see the natural world in its full glory (Nat. D. 2.95), including the earth, the waters, the sky, the clouds, and the winds. The celestial phenomena, of both the day and night, provoke the greatest response from these earthborn peoples (Nat D. 2.95):

Cum repente...aspexissentque solem eiqusque cum magnitudinem pulchritudinemque tum etiam efficientiam cognovissent, quod is diem efficeret toto caelo luce diffusa, cum autem terras nox opacasset, tum caelum totum cernerent astris distinctum et ornatum lunaeque luminum varietatem tum crescentis tum senescentis eorumque omnium ortus et occasus atque in omni aeteritate ratos immutabilosque cursus—quae cum viderent, profecto et esse deos et haec tanta opera deorum esse arbitrarentur.

289 This passage echoes Timaeus 47a–b, where Timaeus praises sight as the greatest of all the senses since it is by sight alone that we are able to grasp the beauty of the stars, which in turn benefits our souls. On vision in the Timaeus and other Platonic dialogues, see Nightingale (2015) 57–62.
And when suddenly they saw the sun and recognized not only its size and beauty but also its influence, because it creates the day with its light diffused in the entire sky, and when the night had darkened the lands, then they perceived the whole sky marked and adorned with stars and the variety of the moon in light, now waxing, now waning, and the risings and settings of all these and the courses fixed and immutable in all eternity—when they saw these things, they immediately believed there were gods and that all these great works were their handiwork.

This vignette of course recalls Plato’s cave allegory (Rep. 7.514a2–517a7). The story, however, departs from its Platonic counterpart in a few important regards. Balbus describes the cave as ornata, a word, which, as we have seen, is closely associated with the concept of kosmos and which is picked up on when the heavens are revealed to the cave dwellers. This cave is filled with artifacts, “statues and pictures” (signis atque picturis). Signum most immediately refers to statues within the cave but simultaneously evokes the idea of an astral signum, a valence that is confirmed by the parallel between the world outside the cave and the world within it. Likewise, pictura refers both to painted pictures and to the constellations of the night sky, which are like astral pictures.

The cave/cosmos parallel plays upon the micro/macro analogic theme that runs through the dialogue. The cave is filled with artworks, and the cave-dwellers have no concept of what a world outside the cave would look like. Nevertheless, they are able to recognize the beauty and excellence of their condition—though limited—within the cave. Once the cave breaks open and the cosmos is revealed, they experience the same sort of marvel that they had for the beauties of their own cave but on a much grander scale. The wonder of the stars, their regularity, and their beauty immediately lead the cave-dwellers to recognize that some divine craftsman rendered such transcendent cosmic works of art.
Conversely, works of human craftsmanship model the cosmos (Nat. D. 2.88):

Quodsi in Scythiam aut in Britanniam sphaeram aliquis tulerit hanc quam nuper familiaris noster effecit Posidonius, cuius singulae conversiones idem efficiunt in sole et in luna et in quinque stellis errantibus quod efficitur in caelo singulis diebus et noctibus, quis in illa barbaria dubitet quin ea sphaera sit perfecta ratione?

But if someone brought into Scythia or Britain that sphere which our friend Posidonius recently made, whose every rotation makes happen the same thing in the sun and moon and five wandering stars which happens in the sky every day and night, who is there in the foreign land who would doubt that this sphere was fashioned by reason?

The image of the sphere functions on several levels in the text. It is an object that not only reveals its intrinsic design, hence pointing to a designer, it is also an object that mimics the planetary patterns of the cosmos, which, as we have seen, are most perfect aspect of the cosmos itself. Hence, Posidonius’ celestial model serves as a proof of the design of the universe, as well as the fundamental connection between *ars*, *natura*, and *ratio*. In a sense, Posidonius’ orrery is coextensive with the cosmos itself.

Posidonius’ sphere also evokes the *Aratea*, which likewise models the celestial realm, albeit without moving parts. Furthermore, the poem also demonstrates that *ratio* subtends throughout the natural order, even though the poem is itself a product of human *ars*. Thus, the *Aratea* itself functions like Posidonius’ sphere, and like it, the *Aratea* is in a sense coextensive with the cosmos itself. Hence, the *Aratea* serves not only as an example of what craftsmanship looks like but itself embodies the same *ratio* (albeit on a smaller scale) that orders the stars themselves. As Balbus laments, people appreciate the celestial model more than the original
itself: *natura ipsa* (*Nat. D. 2.88–9*). Posidonius’ and Archimedes’ celestial models (and the *Aratea*) are imperfect imitations of their cosmic counterpart.\footnote{The connection between poetry and design is confirmed with Balbus’ next example, in which he turns to Accius’ description of the Argo. The shepherd in the poem, who had never seen such a vessel, compares it to natural phenomena: “a bursting storm cloud” (*interruptum...nimbus, Nat. D. 2.89*). After gazing upon the object, the shepherd comes to realize that it is not a natural object but a manmade one. The fact that Cicero uses a poem to demonstrate the concept of design suggests a connection between the two, since the poem itself is also a product of design.}

Cicero uses the *Aratea* like a celestial model to demonstrate the divine design of the cosmos, which is most readily apparent in the celestial order itself. Poetry, which is carefully constructed in terms of meter, imagery, and diction, is also a clear example of design. Hence, Cicero’s *Aratea*, which brings together both the celestial order and the poetic medium, serves as a consummate example of design.

The use of Cicero’s own writing (=the *Aratea*) to demonstrate the design of the universe invites us to also consider the role of Cicero’s own writing in the medium of the dialogue at hand, the *De natura deorum*. Like the *Aratea*, the *De natura deorum* is also made up of carefully crafted words and verbal structures that are governed by the underlying *ratio* of the author. As we saw with Balbus’ example of the golden letters cast on the ground, there is a fundamental connection between the *elementa* of words (=the alphabet) and the *elementa* of matter (*Nat. D. 2.94*). Thus, the ordered structure of the dialogue itself serves as a “performative proof” for the design of the cosmos, which is coextensive with the text itself.

### 3.7 Skepticism and the Art of the Dialogue

My theory, however, is complicated by the fact that Cicero does not locate his voice in a single character. Rather, Cicero sets Cotta’s Skepticism, Balbus’ Stoicism, and Velleius’ Epicureanism
against one another in the form of the dialogue. Granted, Cicero does conclude the dialogue by saying in his own narratorial voice that he finds Balbus’ argument more convincing \((\text{Nat. D. 3.95})\), a point which I will discuss further in due course. Nevertheless, at the outset of the dialogue, Cicero enjoins the reader that his philosophical attitude is one of skepticism, not dogmatism.\(^{291}\) He critiques the Pythagoreans, who subscribe to the teaching of their founder without criticism, simply because “he himself said it” \((\text{ipse dixit})\). For Cicero, the strength of the argument, rather than the opinion of the master, should be the guide \((\text{Nat. D. 1.10})\):

\[\text{non enim tam auctoritatis in disputando quam rationis momenta quaerenda sunt. Quin etiam obest plerumque iis qui discere volunt auctoritas eorum qui se docere profitentur; desinunt enim suum iudicium adhibere, id habent ratum quod ab eo quem probant iudicatum vident.}\]

For in debate one must seek to be guided not so much by authority as by reason. For very often the authority of those who profess that they teach is a barrier to those who wish to learn, for they stop using their own judgment, and what they perceive to be the judgment of him whom they approve, they considered decided.

Cicero resists the idea that the authoritative opinion of the master should outweigh the rational opinion of the seeker of truth. In fact, the very expression of a teacher’s opinion can deter the student in his own quest for philosophical understanding. Hence, the Pythagoreans, rather than employing their own rational investigation, rely on the authority of their master Pythagoras. Cicero does not wish to be a Roman Pythagoras, at least not in terms of unquestioned philosophical authority. Rather, he emphasizes from the beginning of the dialogue the importance of personal philosophical conviction.

Thus, the dialogical format of the \textit{De natura deorum} is an essential component of Cicero’s own philosophical outlook. Instead of the authoritative voice being located in a single persona,

\(^{291}\) On Cicero’s Skepticism in the \textit{De natura deorum}, see Fox (2007) 3–9.
Cicero crafts his literary dialogue to reflect his philosophical position. Various schools are set against one another in dialogic form, allowing the reader to draw her own conclusions about the merits of each argument and engage in the act of philosophy herself.292

Cicero does not wish to come to an opinion too decisively or too hastily. In good Academic fashion, he acknowledges that many different people have various opinions about the nature of the gods, which is a topic of the utmost importance. Therefore, it is the virtue of Skepticism to withhold assent from uncertain beliefs rather than come to a hasty conclusion based on inadequate knowledge and cursory investigation (Nat. D. 1.1). Cicero points out that scholars of the utmost integrity and standing have come to very different conclusions on the subject, although the majority has affirmed that the gods do indeed exist. Those who uphold the existence of the gods, however, have widely differing opinions about the nature of these deities (Nat. D. 1.2). The crux of the debate, Cicero asserts, revolves on the question of whether the gods are self-sufficient and removed from the concerns of mankind (the Epicurean position), or if the gods take part in the creation and sustained governance of the world (the Stoic, or Aratean viewpoint). Our view of the gods has political implications. If we do not uphold that the gods have any power to aid or hinder us, then our religious offerings (and the political institutions bound up with them) are to no avail, for they can exert no influence for good or for ill upon the lives of humankind. In this case, the order of society and religious piety dissolves, and life itself becomes

292 Schofield (2008) 63 points out that Ciceronian dialogue works as a real philosophical investigation that weights the merits and deficiencies of each character’s position: “In dialogues such as Academica, De Finibus, De natura deorum and De divinatione Cicero gives properly argued alternatives a real run for their money, and adopts a variety of literary strategies for indicating that further reflection on their merits and choice between them is left to the reader.”
one of disorder, chaos, and societal breakdown.\textsuperscript{293} Thus Cotta, although a Skeptic, subscribes to traditional authority, which is especially important given his role as Pontifex.\textsuperscript{294}

Does Cicero, politically inclined as he is, thus have an incentive to demonstrate the involvement of the gods in human affairs in order to justify the social unions of humankind and the establishment of justice itself? Cicero certainly displays his concern for the maintenance of societal and religious order. At the same time, Cicero declares his allegiance to philosophical truth and the process of finding it. As Raphael Woolf puts it, “If this approach represents, in his view, the best of the Academic tradition, it is so in virtue of its permitting the individual to treat philosophy as a living discipline, not one to be reverentially adhered to on the authority of a founder (cf. \textit{Nat. D.} 1.10 on Pythagoras); philosophy might as well be dead if that were the case” (Woolf forth.).

As Woolf argues, there seem to be two modes of Academic Skepticism offered in the dialogue: Marcus and Cotta. Cotta, as Woolf points out, is keen to dismantle his opponents without offering a positive alternative. Marcus, by contrast, operates within the realm of probability but still seeks to affirm some positive propositions: “Cicero presents himself, both in his authorial preface and in the words he puts into the mouth of his young counterpart, as one who will assess each argument fair-mindedly. Cotta by contrast is portrayed as oriented simply towards refutation” (Woolf forth.). While Cotta does not offer his own viewpoint but rather only dismantles Balbus’ and Velleius’, Marcus confesses that he finds Balbus’ account more

\textsuperscript{293} Cicero also expresses his concern about atheism and the breakdown of the social fabric (\textit{Nat. D.} 1.3–4). As Woolf (2015) 35 puts it, “Cicero is not concerned with religion as an important vehicle for individual expression. Rather, its role is seen chiefly in terms of its ability to help sustain social order.”

\textsuperscript{294} On Cotta’s Skepticism, see Wynne (2015) 245–74, who argues that Cotta avoids “true” beliefs but rather follows views which seem like the truth, allowing traditional practices and psychological histories to guide his practices but not his philosophical convictions.
proximate to the truth. This expression of preference for Balbus’ account does not mean that Marcus has subscribed to Stoicism wholesale, but rather that Marcus, based upon his current knowledge and reasoning, finds Balbus’ argument closer to the truth (Nat. D. 3.95).

Even though Marcus gives his opinion, the reader is not obliged to follow him. In fact, the dialogue ends with an invitation to the reader to consider which of the arguments she considers the most similar to the truth. We see two different examples: Velleius prefers Cotta’s argument, while Marcus favors Balbus’. For Marcus, Balbus’ account is the victor. But let us take a closer look at what this means (Nat. D. 2.95):

Haec cum essent dicta, ita discessimus ut Velleio Cottae disputatio verior, mihi Balbi ad veritatis similitudinem videretur esse propensior.

When he had said these things, and thus we parted, the reasoning of Cotta seemed truer to Velleius, but to me the reasoning of Balbus seemed closer to the likeness of truth.

Although Marcus certainly expresses preference for Balbus’ philosophical argument about the nature of the gods, this preference is cloaked in skepticism, allowing Marcus to have distance from committing to a specific philosophical position wholesale. Several layers of distance are interposed between Marcus and a full assent to Balbus’ philosophical position. Balbus’ account “seems” (videretur, Nat. D. 2.95) to be more compelling; Marcus does not declare that it is actually more truthful. Furthermore, Marcus does not say that Balbus’ account hits the truth, only that it is “closer” (propensior, Nat. D. 2.95). Even then, it is not even enough for it to be close to

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295 Woolf (forth.) suggests that Cicero is more inclined to Balbus’ Stoicism because of his quotation of Cicero’s own poetry. Given Cicero’s youth at the time of the dialogue’s dramatic setting, Woolf proposes that Cicero succumbs to his propensity for flattery. By contrast, I think that the Aratea as an object of design is linked to larger arguments about the design of the universe. Hence, Cicero qua author finds more sympathy with Stoicism as a philosophy which supports the notion of rational cosmic design.

296 It is interesting to note that Cotta does not put forth a substantial argument in the text, but rather deconstructs the various views of Velleius and Balbus without offering any positive philosophical position of his own. What does this say about Velleius’ reasoning? Does it mean that Velleius’ judgment is obscured, or that he perhaps is more inclined to a sort of nihilistic position?
the truth; it must be closer to the “likeness” (*similitudinem, Nat. D. 2.95*) of the truth. Marcus is careful to express his preference for Balbus’ account in very distancing terms, which allows him to maintain skepticism without succumbing to nihilism.

In *Academica II* (Lucullus), Cicero explains his philosophical approach (2.66):

> Sed, ut hoc pulcherrimum esse iudico, vera videre, sic pro veris probare falsa turpissimum est. Nec tamen ego is sum qui nihil umquam falsi adprobem, qui numquam adsentiar, qui nihil opiner, sed quaeirimus de sapiente.

But, as I judge this to be the most beautiful, to see true things, thus it is most base to approve of false things in place of true ones. Nevertheless, I myself am not the type of man who never approves of anything false, who never grants assent, who has no opinion, but we are making inquiry concerning a wise man.

Cicero uses an aesthetic term (*pulcherrimum*) to describe his philosophical position, and he describes knowledge in terms of sight: to see the truth is “beautiful.” By the same token, to exchange truth for falsehood is *turpissimum*, another aesthetic term: “ugly.” As we saw in in the discussion of the *De natura deorum*, aesthetic terms are used of the *Aratea* as well as the cosmos itself in order to demonstrate its design. Cicero portrays himself as one who has not achieved the status of a *sapiens*, who never gives assent to anything false, but rather as an “opinion-giver” (*opinator, Luc. 2.66*).

As a demonstration of this philosophical approach, Cicero uses his own *Aratea* (Luc. 2.66):

> Ego vero ipse et magnus quidem sum opinator (non enim sum sapiens) et meas cogitationes sic derigo, non ad illam parvulam Cynosuram qua fidunt duce nocturna Phoenices in alto, ut ait Aratus, eoque derectius gubernant quod eam tenent quae cursu interiore brevi convertitur orbe, sed Helicen et clarissimos Septemtriones, id est rationes has latiore specie, non ad tenue elimatas.
But I myself am both a great opinion holder (for I am not a wise man) and I direct my thoughts thus, not to that small Cynosura which

The Phoenicians at sea trust as their nighttime leader, as Aratus says, and thus steer straighter because they follow the star that
is turned on an inner course in a brief orbit but rather to Helice and the most bright Septemtriones, that is, to these explanations with a wider appearance, not to those delineated subtly.

What do we make of Cicero’s use of the Aratea here? We have seen him quote his own poetry in the De natura deorum, De re publica, and De divinatione. In those examples, Cicero has another character quote his poetry. Yet in the Academica, Cicero quotes his own poetry sua voce, and furthermore, uses his poetry to describe his own philosophical method. Unlike the Phoenician sailors, who prefer to follow Cynosura, which follows a narrower and hence more accurate course, Cicero makes his guide Helice and the Septemtriones, which roam a wider ambit, portraying his own philosophical method in astral terms but with room for imprecision.

Helice is useful as a metaphor for his own philosophy because it circles the North Pole more widely than Cynosura. This is useful for Cicero’s Skepticism, because it allows him more freedom and space in his philosophical outlook. If Cicero’s Aratea represents his philosophical outlook, what other conclusions can we draw? Cicero follows the stars as a guide of truth, albeit in a less fixed way. Furthermore, as we have seen, the Aratea is associated with beauty, order, and design. Yet Cicero does not wish to commit to all of those concepts wholesale, and so he chooses stars which follow wider paths, allowing him to philosophically do the same thing, exploring various ideas and testing the truth of each. The quotation of this poetry suggests that Cicero is drawn to the rational order of the stars, even as he is hesitant to follow them too closely. In other words, the stars (and all they represent—order, beauty, transcendence) are an essential part of his philosophy but are followed without full commitment. Hence, Cicero draws
upon the wider roaming constellations to allow for his own academic Skepticism, which remains an essential part of his own philosophical outlook.\footnote{Wynne (2015) 256–7 refers to this passage in his evaluation of Cicero’s and Cotta’s Skepticism in the De natura deorum. Wynne makes a distinction between what he terms the “Mitigated Reply” and “Radical Reply”; the former is a less radical skepticism that allows dogmatism, the latter does not take any beliefs to be true (Wynne (2015) 248). Wynne considers this passage to be evidence for Cicero’s “Radical Reply” form of Skepticism.}

### 3.8 Reading the Signs of *De divinatione*

The *De divinatione* naturally follows the *De natura deorum*, and indeed, serves as its complement.\footnote{The opening dialogue of *De divinatione* invites us to read it closely with *De natura deorum*, as Quintus informs his brother that he has just finished reading the end of *De natura deorum* (*Div*. 1.8). In the prologue, Cicero also mentions the three books of *De natura deorum* and the careful comparing of argument with argument (*Div*. 1.7). On reading *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione* as a unity, see Wynne (2019) 46–9. For the place of *De divinatione* in Cicero’s philosophical corpus, see Wardle (2006) 9–10. Wardle (2006) also sees the two dialogues as being tied closely together: “Indeed, *De Divinatione* can be seen as the continuation of the argument which Balbus had desired, but which was artificially terminated by sunset (*ND* 3. 94)” (10 n. 40). *De fato* also goes along with *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione* (*Div*. 2.3), but is fragmentary.} Both dialogues consider the involvement of the gods in earthly affairs and the existence of gods who are concerned for the welfare of human beings. Sending signs through nature is one way in which the divine cares for humans. In this regard, the chief inquiry of *De divinatione* shares much with the *Aratea*, since *De divinatione* seeks to explore the topic of the possibility of communication between the human and divine realms via signs. The possibility of such human-divine communication rests upon an assumption that the gods exist in the first place, and furthermore, that the gods deign to communicate with humankind, a position which the Epicureans in particular would refute since the gods exist but only in their own state of ataractic bliss.

Although Cicero is far from an Epicurean, his persona in the dialogue (whom I shall again refer to as “Marcus”) does take an antagonistic position against his Stoic brother Quintus, who
argues in favor of divination. In this respect, Quintus mirrors the *De natura deorum*’s Balbus, with Marcus taking up the corresponding role of Cotta or perhaps even Velleius. The *De divinatione*’s structure is straightforward. Following a preface, Quintus argues in favor of divination in the first book, and in the second, Marcus discredits it. Yet, as we saw in the case of *De natura deorum*, the artistry of the form of the philosophical dialogue resists a simple reading where Marcus is Cicero’s mouthpiece. Rather, the dialogic form beckons the reader into the conversation so that she must engage in the philosophical discourse herself to interpret the text. With the addition of *De divinatione*, the exercise becomes even more complex, because the reader must also construct meaning between the two dialogues in conversation with one another.

In this second part of the chapter, I will attempt to provide such a reading of *De divinatione* alongside *De natura deorum*. As I argued above, the *De natura deorum* utilizes metaphors of human artistry and technologies—the celestial model in particular—to demonstrate the design of the cosmos. Since conceiving of the cosmos as a whole is beyond human ken, miniaturizing the cosmos and translating it into more concrete illustrations not only makes the inconceivable cosmos conceivable (and envisionable), but it also analogically serves as a performative proof of cosmic design. As Posidonius uses his godlike genius to fashion his celestial sphere and Ennius arranges his letters to compose the inspired *Annales*, so also Cicero, the craftsman—or Demiurge, if you will—of the dialogue orchestrates the arrangement of the text. The parallel between the text and cosmos is made even more poignant with the extended quotation of the *Aratea*, which unites the other analogies the *De natura deorum* uses to sketch a portrait of the cosmos: poetry and celestial models. Indeed, the *Aratea* is a celestial sphere within the dialogue.

299 For the argument that Marcus does no espouse Cicero’s own views, see the influential pair of articles by Schofield (1986) and Beard (1986), and more recently, Wynne (2019). See Wardle (2006) 10–7.
itself, a cosmos-in-miniature drawn before our mind’s eye, whose poetic beauty points to an even grander cosmic beauty. And yet, Cicero is able to have his proverbial cake and eat it, too, since the hermeneutic labor the dialogic format requires precludes us from drawing conclusions any more certain than the wider course of the constellation Helice (Luc. 2.66). Like Cicero, we look to the stars for guidance in our philosophy, though their beacon is imprecise.

In what follows, I address three main aspects of De divinazione. First, I argue that the poetry quoted in De divinatione, much like the Aratea in De natura deorum, serves as a suggestive “performative proof” of divination. If divination is a series of signs allowing communication between one party (the gods) to another (human beings), then perhaps we can draw an analogy with the “signs” in the text itself: its very words. Words are themselves “signs” that enable the communication between the author and the reader, much like the cosmic signs of the gods that appear in entrails and lightening bolts. In particular, the quotation of Cicero’s poetry, I argue, parallels the divinatory signs of the cosmos. Whereas the Aratea as quoted in De natura deorum painted the cosmos in our mind, engaging a more visual register, the Prognostica (the second half of Cicero’s translation of Aratus’ Phaenomena) and De consulatu suo are particularly concerned with the signs the gods send to humankind. It is fitting that the poetry Quintus quotes is focused on cosmic signs rather than an image of the cosmos (as with the Aratea), since signs are the concern of the dialogue at hand.

Next, I provide a close reading of the long quotation of Cicero’s De consulatu suo (Div. 1.17–22), a three-book poem on Cicero’s consulship of 63 BCE and his suppression of the (so-called) Catilinarian conspiracy.\textsuperscript{300} We have only a few fragments of the poem, unfortunately (at

\textsuperscript{300} On the genre of De consulatu suo and its innovative style, see Volk (2013) 93–112.
least in my view!),\textsuperscript{301} and Cicero’s self-quotation of the Muse Urania’s speech from Book 3 of *De consulatu suo* is the largest fragment of the poem we possess. This fragment in particular emphasizes the connection between the Horizontal and the Vertical, since its central idea is that the gods communicate with humans through signs, namely the portents that appeared before Catiline attempted to overthrow Cicero’s consulship. Although it has been pointed out that the poem has strong Stoic undertones,\textsuperscript{302} I would like to resist reading it as a Stoic poem per se. Like Aratus’ *Phaenomena*, the *De consulatu suo* permits a Stoicizing reading, but the worldview it advances—one in which the Horizontal and Vertical intersect and the cosmos is charged with meaning and design—seems to me to transcend a single philosophy, though it is certainly compatible with Stoicism and its teachings of cosmic *sympatheia*. The *De consulatu suo*, particularly the speech of Urania quoted in *De divinatione*, is concerned with the possibility of human beings communing with the gods: after all, the gods not only send signs through natural phenomena but in Cicero’s poem speak with our protagonist face to face. In the same spirit as the *Somnium Scipionis*, human beings come near to the divine and their home in the stars.

Finally, I consider why Cicero chooses to have Quintus quote his poem rather than assigning it to his own persona Marcus. Of course, on my own reading we should not make too much of Cicero’s decision to have his brother quote Urania’s speech; after all, neither Marcus nor Quintus offer the “correct” philosophical interpretation of divination. Navigating the sets of arguments is the very philosophical work we readers are being asked to do. That said, I would like to suggest that Cicero distances himself from his poem on his consulship in order to

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\textsuperscript{301} The reputation of Cicero’s poetry is notorious, even within his lifetime (see Cic. *ad Q. fr.* 2.15.5, *Pis.* 29.72, *Phil.* 2.8.20, *Off.* 1.22.77). For a synoptic view of Cicero’s reputation as a poet, see Marcinak (2015) 81–111.

downplay the strength of the connection between the Horizontal and the Vertical, especially as regards political life. If Cicero’s project of linking Rome to the stars in the *Aratea, De consulatu suo*, and *De re publica* made it possible for men to become gods and rise to the heavens themselves—“know then, that you are a god” (*deum te igitur scito esse*, *Rep.* 6.26), as Africanus reminds Scipio at the end of the *De re publica*—then Africanus’ exhortation also has the potential to apply to other statesman, and indeed, one prominent individual in particular seems to have taken such a sentiment to heart: Julius Caesar. In fact, Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March, 44 BCE, during which time Cicero was writing the *De divinatione*.³⁰³ Both before and especially after Caesar’s death, when the possibility of posthumous apotheosis loomed, Cicero likely wished to minimize Caesar’s deification.³⁰⁴ And yet, an aging Cicero whose beloved Republic had permanently changed surely longed for the cosmic ascent he had imagined ten years earlier in the *Dream*, not only for himself, but also for the loved ones he had lost, his beloved Tullia especially.

### 3.9 Cosmic Semiotics

As most of Cicero’s dialogues, the *De divinatione* opens with a preface in Cicero’s own authorial voice. Cicero begins by pointing out that the practice of divination is an old one that extends into the recesses of human memory and the shadows of history (*Div.* 1.1). Furthermore, divination is

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³⁰⁴ On Caesar’s connection of his rise to supremacy to the gods, and Cicero’s desire to distance himself from that position, see Krostenko (2000) 380–5. Caesar was bestowed divine honors, making him a state divinity and giving him the name *Divus Iulius*, though whether or not these divine honors were bequeathed while Caesar was still alive is a matter of debate (see Rawson (1975) 171). After Caesar’s assassination, Cicero’s *Philippics* suggest that Antony (who had been appointed as his flamen) put off the deification rites of Caesar and the adoption of Octavian. On Cicero’s relationship to the rise of deification at Rome and Caesar in particular, see Cole (2013) 170–84.
a long-standing practice amongst the Roman people, which suggests that Cicero gives heed to it because of its traditional Latin roots.\(^{305}\)

As we saw in the *De natura deorum*, Cicero is especially interested in the development of philosophy in the Latin language. Cicero takes the chance to demonstrate the suitability—even superiority—of Latin by pointing out how its terminology for divination surpasses the Greek. Whereas the Greeks call divination μαντική, in Latin it is *divinatio*. Μαντική, as Cicero reminds us, is connected to “madness,” *furor* in the Latin and *mania* in the Greek. *Divinatio*, by contrast, is bound up with the word for gods (*divī*) (*Div.* 1.1).

Cicero here adumbrates a connection between words and external reality. Latin is superior in its terminology because it better describes divination. Whereas Greek connects divination to madness, Latin more accurately describes it in terms of the divine. Cicero’s preference for the Latin over the Greek signals a bolstering of Latin over Greek, and significantly, Cicero’s own role in moving the Latin language forward in its development.\(^{306}\) This preference, however, also suggests that Latin is more accurate than Greek in this respect, implying that divination is more closely connected to the divine than to madness. Perhaps, then, at the start of the dialogue we see some affirmation of divination’s veracity.

Furthermore, the etymological connection between words and the world they describe recalls the wordplay we saw in the *De natura deorum*, where words served as an example of the underlying *ratio* driving every layer of reality, from stars to the arrangement of letters. In a

\(^{305}\) Romulus, for example, was imagined as an augur (e.g. *Div.* 1.31, 1.107–8, 2.80). On Roman politics and religion, see Beard-North-Price vol. 1 (1998) 114–40, Liebeschuetz (1979) 7–29, and Bouché-Leclercq (1963).

\(^{306}\) It is interesting to note that Cicero seems to have been the first to use *divinatio* as its own abstract category, drawing together all of the arts that we would consider divination (astronomy, haruspicy, augury, dream interpretation, etc.) into a single topic, on which see Volk (2017) 331.
similar vein, the connection between the divination and the divine points to a sort of “sign” within the word itself that is part and parcel of the connection between the Horizontal and Vertical that makes divination possible.\textsuperscript{307} It is fitting, then, that Quintus deploys the same sort of artistic analogy that Balbus used in \textit{De natura deorum}, mentioning Apelles’ painting of Venus of Cos as well as a textual analogy (\textit{Div.} 1.23): “If a pig marked the letter A on the ground with its snout, would you therefore suppose that Ennius’ \textit{Andromache} could be written by it?” (\textit{Sus rostro si humi A litteram impresserit, num propterea suspicari poteris Andromacham Ennii ab ea posse describi?}). But here, the argument from design is used not only to demonstrate the craftsmanship of the universe, but moreover, to impress upon the reader that the signs we see encounter are the communications of an intelligent divine mind.

The connection between divination and language comes to the fore with Quintus’ quotation of Cicero’s poetry: the \textit{Prognostica} and \textit{De consulatu suo}. After distinguishing between two types of divination, one by art, the other by nature (\textit{Div.} 1.11–2),\textsuperscript{308} Quintus probes the natural world as a benefactor for humankind. Nature gives signs, which through careful observation and record, have allowed physicians to know which herbs to use. Quintus divides the usefulness of nature from divination proper, but nevertheless maintains that it is “more similar to divination” (\textit{divinationi sunt similliora}, \textit{Div.} 1.13). Quintus points to the \textit{Prognostica} as a prime example of these sorts of natural signs. Cicero’s \textit{Prognostica} is a Latin translation of the second half of Aratus’ \textit{Phaenomena}, which lists the weather signs and other meteorological and

\textsuperscript{307} As Denyer (1985) 5–6 observes,“it is striking how, whether rightly or wrongly, the vocabulary of ostenta, portenta, monstra, and prodigia is given etymologies from verbs of communication.” Denyer (1985) also points out that “there is the analogy between divination and philology. Diviners are \textit{interpretes} of signs, \textit{ut grammatici poetarum} (\textit{Div.} 1.34; cf. 1.116 and \textit{N.D.} 2.12)” (6).

\textsuperscript{308} Cf. \textit{Div.} 1.34, 1.72, 2.26–7, 2.100. On Quintus’ distinction between artificial and natural divination, see Woolf (2015) 69 and Wynne (2019) 208–21.
terrestrial phenomena that benefit humankind because of their regular and predictable patterns.

Quintus quotes the following lines (Div. 1.13):

Atque etiam ventos praemonstrat saepe futuros
inflatum mare, cum subito penitusque tumescit,
saxaque cana salis niveo spumata liquore
tristificas certant Neptuno reddere voces,
aut densus stridor cum celso e vertice montis
ortus adaugescit scopulorum saepe repulsus.

And often the inflated sea portends winds to come, when suddenly and from the depths it begins to swell, and the white rocks covered with hoary foam strive to return saddening voices to the sea, or when from the mountain’s lofty peak a continuous whistling has come forth, which again and again increases as it rebounds off the crags.

The poem here describes the completely natural occurrence of an imminent storm (ventos...futuros, Div. 1.13). The sea and the mountains give telltale signals that a storm is coming. The sea suddenly swells from its depths (subito penitusque tumescit, Div. 1.13) and dashes its waves against the rocks, creating a battlefield of “saddening voices” (tristificas...voces, Div. 1.13). Nature herself follows a consistent series of patterns (a ratio, if you will) that is comprehensible to human ratio and can hence be used to make reasonable predictions about natural occurrences.

In quoting the Prognostica, Quintus seems to suggest that nature itself is encoded with an intelligible pattern that can be used to understand the past, read the present, and predict the future.

Whereas De natura deorum focuses on an aesthetic component of the universe as a proof of its divine artistry, in De divinatione we have less emphasis on the aesthetic appeal of nature and more emphasis on its ability to “speak” to us, as it were. Hence, it makes sense that Quintus would quote Cicero’s poetry where nature “speaks,” which demonstrates a fundamental connection between the Horizontal and Vertical realms.
“These forewarnings of things” (his rerum praensionibus, Div. 1.13), as Balbus calls them, are tied to causes which we can attempt to explain, as he says the Stoic Boethius has “tried” (conatum, Div. 1.13) to do, but only has met success in describing those that occur in the “sea or sky” (mari caelove, Div. 1.13). But the causes of other phenomena are more difficult to describe, Quintus says, asking “who can say probabiliter why they happen?” He then proceeds to quote more of Cicero’s Prognostica (Div. 1.14):

Rava fulix itidem fugiens e gurgite ponti
nuntiat horribilis clamans instare procellas
haud modicos tremulo fundens e gutture cantus.
Saepe etiam pertriste canit de pectore carmen
et matutinis acredula vocibus instat,
vocibus instat et assiduas iacit ore querellas,
cum primum gelidos rores aurora remittit.
Fuscaque non numquam cursans per litora cornix
demersit caput et fluctum cervice recepit.

And so a gray water fowl, fleeing from the abyss of the sea, cries out and announces that dreadful gales draw nigh, pouring out immoderate cries from its quivering throat. Often the nightingale sings a dire song from its breast, and threatens with its early-morning calls, when the dawn sends forth its first icy dew. And the dark crow continuously traversing the shores, submerges its head and catches the wave with its neck.

This portion of the text has to do with three birds: water fowl, nightingales,309 and crows. The birds signal their presages of coming storms. “We see that these signs almost never are deceptive nevertheless we do not see why they happen in this way” (videmus haec signa numquam esse mentientia nec tamen cur ita fiat videmus, Div. 1.14). Quintus then turns to another animal: frogs (Div. 1.15):

Vos quoque signa videtis, aquai dulcis alumnae,
cum clamore paratis inanis fundere voces

309 “Nightingale” is one possible translation of acredula, which is attested nowhere else in Latin literature. Acredula is a translation of Aratus’ ὀλολυγών (Phaen. 216).
And you also see signs, you nurslings of the sweet water, when with a cry you prepare to pour forth your empty voices and you stir the springs and pools with your absurd croak.

Quintus focuses on the sonorous qualities of these creatures. The herons “announce” (nuntiat, Div. 1.14) and “shout” (clamans, Div. 1.14). The nightingale pours “immoderate songs” (haud modicos cantus, Div. 1.14) from its throat (gutture, Div. 1.14). The frogs utter cries that are “empty voices” (inanis...voces, Div. 1.15) and with an “absurd sound” (absurdoque sono, Div. 1.15). Quintus avers that there is present even in frogs a “force and certain sign-making nature” (vis et natura quaedam significans, Div. 1.15). The emphasis on sound contrasts with the visual register of the Aratea. Furthermore, the quotations from Prognostica showcase the capacity of nature to serve as the point of communication between the gods and humans. Natura ipsa speaks to us with a “cosmic semiotics” that is made possible by the intelligibility of the gods and their desire to speak to us through the world.

Before turning to the longest and most striking quotation of Cicero’s poetry, Urania’s speech from De consulatu suo, I would first like to consider another poem that Quintus quotes, Cicero’s epic poem Marius (Div. 1.106). The quoted passage of the Marius is also concerned with signs from the divine. In a section about the validity of augury, Quintus asserts that he will use his brother’s poem Marius as a source of authority for the auspices (Quid est illo auspicio divinius quod apud te in Mario est? Ut utar potissimum auctore te, Div. 1.106), a sentiment that echoes Quintus’ introduction of De consulatu suo (sed quo potius utar aut auctore aut teste quam te? Div. 1.17). The Marius was an epic poem about the Roman statesman Gaius Marius (157–86 BCE), who held the office of consulship seven times over his life. Like Cicero, Marius was a
*novus homo* who hailed from Arpinum. We have very little of the poem, but it apparently was influential: we can detect several of Vergil’s allusions to these lines, and can only wonder how many other references exist that we can no longer determine.\(^{310}\)

Like the quotations from the *Prognostica*, the passage from *Marius* focuses on the legitimacy of communication between the gods and the divine (*Div. 1.106*):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hic Iovis altisoni subito pinnata satelles} \\
\text{arboris e trunco serpentis saucia morsu} \\
\text{subigit ipsa feris transfigens unguibus anguem} \\
\text{semianimum et varia gravior cervice micantem;} \\
\text{ quem se intoquantem lanians rostroque cruentans.} \\
\text{iarn satiata animos, iam duros ulta dolores,} \\
\text{abicit ecflantem et laceratum adfligit in unda,} \\
\text{seque obitu a solis nitidos convertit ad ortus.}
\end{align*}
\]

Here, suddenly from the trunk of a tree the winged attendant of high-sounding Jove, wounded by the bite of a serpent which she carried, piercing with her fierce talons the snake—half alive and glistening fatally on its variegated neck—which she lacerated while it slithered, dripping blood from her beak. At last satisfied in her passion and avenged in her harsh pains, she hurled down the dead snake and flung it lacerated in the wave, and turned from the direction of the sinking of the sun to its shining risings.

The first quoted line posits a connection between the natural world and the gods. The eagle, Jupiter’s favored bird, is referred to as the “attendant of Jove” (*Iovis...satelles, Div. 1.106*) rather than by *ales* or *aquila*, thereby emphasizing the eagle’s role as the messenger of Zeus and highlighting the connection between the natural and divine realms. The struggle between the eagle and the snake serves as a sign for Marius to interpret (*Div. 1.106*):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hanc ubi praepetibus pinnis lapsuque volantem} \\
\text{conspexit Marius, divini numinis augur,} \\
\text{faustaque signa suaue laudis redivitque notavit;} \\
\text{partibus intonuit caeli pater ipse sinistris.} \\
\text{sic aquilae clarum firmavit Iuppiter omen.}
\end{align*}
\]

When Marius, the augur of divine will, caught sight of the eagle flying with its striving wings and course, he took note of the signs of his glory and of his return; and the Father himself thundered on the left side of the sky. Thus Jupiter confirmed the clear omen of the eagle.

The poem names Marius an augur (\textit{divini numinis augur}) who is able to interpret the signs (\textit{faustaque signa}) of nature correctly, as confirmed by Jupiter’s thundering approval on the left. Marius is a model interpreter who is able to read the signs of nature sent by Jove correctly, and in this regard, may in the context of the dialogue serve as an example for the reader herself, who must also interpret the “signs” of the text.\footnote{The importance of \textit{Marius} to Cicero is evident from the opening of \textit{De legibus}, in which Atticus and Quintus make remarks about an old oak tree (\textit{quercus}) from \textit{Marius} (Leg. 1.1). The tree of the poem, which Quintus says is planted by “genius” (\textit{ingenio}), will last longer than any tree tended by a farmer (Leg. 1.1), suggesting that poetry provides some path to immortality. Quintus mentions the eagle, “the golden messenger of Jove, a wondrous figure to be seen” (\textit{nuntia fulva Iovis miranda visa figura}, Leg. 1.2), which may very well be the very eagle mentioned at Div. 1.106. If that is the case, the tree in Div. 1.106 (\textit{arboris e trunco}) is presumably the \textit{quercus} of Leg. 1.1, although a fiction.}

Even the wings of the eagle have a portentous quality; the \textit{praes} of \textit{praepetibus} suggests they tell of the future.\footnote{Gee (2013) 99 points out that \textit{praepes} is used by Ennius in an augural context at \textit{Ann.} 1.86–9, but the collocation of \textit{pinnis praepetibus} is uniquely Ciceronian and is interestingly picked up on by Vergil in \textit{Aen.} 6.15 (though notably in a rather inauspicious context).} The existence of divine signs sent from Jove operates in the same philosophical universe as the \textit{Aratea}, which itself begins \textit{a Iove}, as well as its companion the \textit{Prognostica}, which focuses on animals and other natural features to speak to humankind. The key point is that the phenomena of the world are messengers of the gods themselves.

\section*{3.10 \textit{De consulatu suo} and Physics’ Preamble to Politics}
The strength of the connection between the terrestrial and celestial realms is most forcefully presented in Urania’s speech, quoted by Quintus from Book 2 of Cicero’s *De consulatu suo.*

Urania, the Muse of Astronomy, begins her speech to Cicero by declaring that Jove’s divine presence extends throughout the cosmos (*Div.* 1.17):

\[
\text{principio aetherio flammatus Iuppiter igni vertitur et totum conlustrat lumine mundum, menteque divina caelum terrasque petessit, quae penitus sensus hominum vitasque retentat aetheris aeterni saepta atque inclusa cavernis.}
\]

In the beginning Jupiter, enflamed by the ethereal fire turns and fills the entire cosmos with his light, and seeks out the heavens and earth with his divine mind, which holds deeply the senses and lives of human beings, although hedged in and enclosed by the vaults of the eternal ether.

As is fitting, Urania’s speech begins with an encomium to Jove who suffuses the entire world with his divine presence, which she portrays in terms of light with words like *conlustrat, lumine, flammatus,* and *igni.* By using light-filled imagery to describe Jove’s cosmic omnipresence, Urania also seems to evoke the role of Jupiter as the sun god and light source, while at the same time alluding to the Stoic idea of *pneuma,* which would appeal to Quintus and accord with his own philosophical beliefs.

But more importantly, in my view, is the way in which Urania’s opening lines sketch a vision of the cosmos which is fundamentally connected in the terrestrial and celestial realms. Jove’s divine mind seeks out the earth and the heavens alike (*menteque divina caelum terrasque petessit*), suggesting that the same rational and enlightened order permeates both. The overlap between the realm of Jupiter and the world of humans recalls the opening of Aratus’

\[313\] As Pease (1920) points out, Urania is “an appropriate Muse to recite to Cicero these phenomena, many of which were in the heavens” (260). For a discussion of Urania’s speech, see Jocelyn (1984), who criticizes the poem rather harshly. For a more positive appraisal, see Kubiak (1994) 52–66.
*Phaenomena*, which emphasizes Zeus’ omnipresence—a prerequisite for the divine’s communication with humankind through astral and other natural signs.\(^{314}\) Furthermore, Urania suggests that human beings partake in Jove’s divine mind, which “holds deeply holds their lives and senses” (*quae penitus sensus hominum vitasque retentat*). Humans’ very lives and senses—the seat of perception and hence knowledge of the phenomenal world—are animated by Jove’s divine mind, the same mind which drives the natural order. Thus, we are able to read the signs of the natural world and comprehend them because we ourselves are a part of the same cosmic fabric, which is intelligible because of Jove’s kindliness and orderliness, even though that divine mind is enclosed in the heavenly ether above (*saepta...inclusa*). Even so, humans have the divine mind required to read the cosmic signs.

The correspondence between human rationality and the order of the cosmos becomes especially clear in the following lines, in which Urania speaks of the motions of the stars and planets (*Div.* 1.17):

> Et, si stellarum motus cursusque vagantis
> nosse velis, quae sint signorum in sede locatae (quae verbo et falsis Graiorum vocibus errant, re vera certo lapsu spatioque feruntur), omnia iam cernes divina mente notata.

And, if you wish to know the motions of the stars and their roving courses, which are located in the seat of signs (which in name and the false terminology of the Greeks “wander,” but in truth are carried about by a certain gliding course and interval), you will perceive that all things are designated by the divine mind.

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\(^{314}\) The connection between the *Aratea* and *De consulatu suo* is also noted by Gildenhard (2011) 295 and Kubiak (1994) 52–66. The worldview furthered by Urania is in direct opposition to the Epicurean cosmos of Lucretius, and the quotation of *De consulatu suo* in *De divinatione* may be part of Cicero’s philosophical-literary rebuttal of the *De rerum natura*. It is important to note, however, that *De consulatu suo* preceded Lucretius’ poem, in which case the *De rerum natura* would be responding to Cicero, with Cicero then re-deploying his cosmic poetry as a sort of allusive rebuttal in *De natura deorum* (with the *Aratea*) and in *De divinatione* (with the *De consulatu suo*). On the interaction of *De consulatu suo* and *De rerum natura*, see Volk (2013) 98–9. On Cicero and Lucretius’ literary and philosophical exchange, see Zetzel (1998).
This passage suggests that there is a cognitive correspondence between the divine mind and the human mind, which, in the second person context of the poem, is that of none other than Cicero himself (and perhaps, by extension, anyone else who participates in the life of the divina mens). The knowledge Cicero obtains of the courses of the stars (as indicated by nosse) is picked up in the language of Jove’s intellectual activity, which, as Urania tells us, has designated all things (omnia...divina mente notata). By implication, the motions of the stars and the planets are the manifestations of this divine mind, which the observer perceives with his own divinely-inspired mind. Thus, a sort of cosmic sympathy resonates between the revolutions of the stars and the thought process of those who looks at the stars—in this case, Cicero.

Urania then turns to Cicero’s time as consul (Div. 1.18):

Nam primum astrorum volucris te consule motus concursusque gravis stellarum ardore micantis tu quoque, cum tumulos Albano in monte nivalis lustrasti et laeto mactasti lacte Latinas, vidisti et claro tremulos ardore cometas, multaque misceri nocturna strage putasti, quod ferme dirum in tempus cecidere Latinae, cum claram speciem concreto lumine luna abdidit et subito stellanti nocte perempta est.

When you were consul, you also observed the flying motions of the stars, the grave paths of the planets shining with their gleam, and the tremulous comets with the bright blaze, when you had ritually purified the snowy hills on the Alban mount and celebrated with sacrifices the Latin festival with happy milk. You thought that many happenings were mixed with nocturnal destruction, because the Latin festival had fallen into an entirely dire time, when the moon with darkened light hid her bright visage and suddenly vanished on a starry night.

The speech pivots from the workings of the cosmos and Jove’s role in it to Cicero’s consulship, a rhetorical move that implies a deep connection between the cosmos and the state of Rome. As
Ingo Gildenhard (2011) points out, “abstract, philosophical exposition gives way to an account of recent Roman history and religious practice” (295). Despite Cicero’s carrying out of the requisite religious duties, namely the lustration rites of the *feriae Latinae* performed for Jupiter Latiaris,\(^{315}\) the fabric of the cosmos falls apart. The stars run off course, comets blaze, and the moon is eclipsed. These dire omens are not the result of Cicero’s inappropriate sacrifices; rather, they are signs that Cicero can read perfectly well precisely because of his piety. As we have seen, Cicero has tuned his mind to the revolutions of the heavens and set it in accordance with the cosmic *mens*; therefore, he can mark these portentous phenomena and interpret them correctly. Even Cicero’s movements across the mountains are in tune with the stars; the word *lustrasti* is used to describe his patterns of motion, a word elsewhere Cicero commonly uses for heavenly bodies.\(^{316}\)

Ironically, the cosmic dissolution is a sign of the gods’ providence. The world speaks and thus indicates that something is amiss. The fact that the cosmos sends forth these terrible signs is a product of its intelligibility and its connection to political happenings. In the *Dream*, we learn that nothing is more important to the god than the political associations of human beings (*Rep.* 6.13). In that text, the connection between the political and cosmic realms paves the way for statesmen to rise to the stars for their service. The same principle is at play in *De consulatu suo*, although in the opposite direction: Rome is so important to the gods that nature comes apart at the seams when her wellbeing is at risk. The cosmos is in tune with the city, and Cicero is the intermediary between the two. Thus, physics is a prelude to Roman politics and political action.

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\(^{316}\) Ewbank (1997).
The connection between the Horizontal and Vertical continues to be made manifest with more baleful signs (Div. 1.18–9):

quid vero Phoebi fax, tristis nuntia belli,  
quae magnum ad columnen flammato ardore volabat,  
praecipitis caeli partis obitusque petessens?  
aut cum terribili perculus fulmine civis  
luce serenanti vitalia lumina liquit?  
aut cum se gravido treme fecit corpore tellus?  
iam vero variae nocturno tempore visae  
terribiles formae bellum motusque monebant,  
multaque per terras vates oracula furenti  
pectore fundebant tristis minitantia casus,  
atque ea, quae lapsu tandem cecidere vetusto,  
haec fore perpetuis signis clarisque frequentans  
ipse deum genitor caelo terrisque canebat.

But what of the torch of Phoebus, the sad messenger of war, which was flying to the great vault with its fiery gleam, and seeking out the heights of heaven’s realm and then her lower settings? Or when a Roman citizen struck by a terrible lightening bolt left the lights of life, though the day was serene? Or when the earth caused itself to shake with a heavy body? Straightaway terrible forms of all kinds were seen at night, warning of war and sedition. And throughout the lands prophets were pouring from their inspired breasts many oracular responses warning of grave disasters, and the things which had happened at last by a long-established outcome, these the father of the gods was singing would happen, using continuous and clear signs in earth and in heaven.

Urania enumerates prodigies that happen throughout the cosmos, from the skies above to the earth to human prophets. The “torch of Phoebus” (Phoebi fax) declares that war is at hand and is itself a messenger (nuntia), highlighting its role as Jupiter’s mouthpiece. The connection between Jupiter and his messenger is further strengthened by the word petessens, which is the same verb Urania used earlier to describe Jove’s divine mind permeating the cosmos (petessit). The list of portents transitions from sky to land with the lightening bolt that strikes a civis, though this dreadful event is also the handiwork of Jove: the bolt appears on a “clear day” (luce

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317 Pease (1920) 108 suggests that the Phoebi fax is a meteoric phenomenon, which is especially suitable since meteors are often omens of war. See also Wardle (2006) 149.
serenanti). The word serenanti may imply divine providence, since sereno is often used of Stoic Jove.318

The earth itself also participates in cosmic signification; it gapes open in an earthquake and specters are seen roaming the earth. Moreover, vates utter prophecies throughout the earth. Even human beings become the conduit of the divine. All of these events, we learn, are fated to happen and announced by Jove through “clear and consistent signs” (perpetuis signis clarisque), who sings of them (canebat) through a cosmic song.319 Jove’s cosmic song recalls the song of the poet himself, who also sings of portentous signs—namely, Cicero himself. Thus, Cicero fulfills the same sort of role that Jove does in singing of the signifying cosmos, albeit in the world of the poem which is itself a reflection of the world of the cosmos.

The events of Urania’s speech closely align with the portents that appear in Cicero’s Third Catilinarian. Cicero attributes his success in suppressing the conspiracy to the gods, and he purposefully blurs the boundary between divine and human in that speech (much as he does in De consulatu suo). Rather than seeking a divine monument to commemorate his deeds, Cicero rather asks for himself to be held in the hearts (animis) of his countrymen (Cat. 3.26). As long as his memory lives on, so will Rome. The destiny of Rome is bound up with Cicero’s own fame, through which he achieves an apotheosis of a sort. In this same passage, Cicero even connects the boundaries of Rome to the stars, thanks to Pompey’s efforts (Cat. 3.26).

Although Cicero says he does not want any statue, a statue of a different sort is installed on the very day Cicero delivers his Third Catilinarian—a statue of Jupiter (3.21):

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318 Pease (1920) 169 provides a list of instances in ancient literature where lightning appears in a clear sky, which he notes is “always ominous.” Pease (1920) 169 also observes that the word serenanti “is unique in this absolute use.”

319 The gods are also said to sing in Cat. 3.18 (ut haec quae nunc fiunt canere di immortales videntur).
Illud vero nonne ita praesens est ut nutu Iovis Optimi Maximi factum esse videatur, ut, cum hodierno die mane per forum meo iussu et coniurati et eorum indices in aedem Concordiae ducerentur, eo ipso tempore signum statueretur?

But surely the fact that, on the morning of that day when at my command both the conspirators and their judges were being brought through the forum to the temple of Concord, at that very time the statue was being erected, is so timely that it seemed to be done by the will of Jupiter Optimus Maximus?

Cicero presents the statue of Jupiter as a portent—a sign (signum)—that legitimizes his defeat of Catiline and the conspirators. As we learn from the speech and from the De consulatu suo, the statue had begun to be made during the consulship Torquatus and Cotta in 65 BCE at the injunction of the Etruscan diviners. Yet the fact that the statue of Jupiter was erected during Cicero’s consulship and on the very day that conspirators were taken through the Forum to the temple of Concord is itself a sign of divine approval. Cicero plays on the word signum, which can mean both statue and sign. The timing of the installation of the statue is portrayed a cosmically significant event. After Jupiter had sent destruction upon the monuments of the Capitol, this new statue seems to serve as a sign of renewed peace and order that was established at just the right time.

In De consulatu suo, the same statue is portrayed as essential for the cessation of cosmic dissolution. The Etruscan diviners explain (Div. 1.21),

atque haec fixa gravi fato ac fundata teneri,
ni prius excelsum ad columnam formata decore
sancta Iovis species claros spectaret in ortus;
tum fore ut occultos populus sanctusque senatus
cernere conatus posset, si solis ad ortum
conversa inde patrum sedes populique videret.

And these portents would be fixed and established by a grave fate, unless beforehand a sacred image of Jove with a beautiful form on a high column look out into the bright east; then it would happen that the sacred senate and the people would be able to venture to
descry hidden things, if it, turned towards the rising of the sun, should look from that position at the seats of the fathers and the people.

Establishing the statue of Jupiter not only averts the dire cosmic events, it also serves as a means for the people and senate to perceive “hidden things” (*occultos*). The statue of Jupiter is both a reminder of the god’s presence as well as the guarantor of the people’s knowledge of the workings of the world, including the secrets of nature. In the *De consulatu suo*, once the statue is established, another sign is given: the scepter of Jupiter shines forth, announcing the disaster Catiline was preparing for the state (*Iuppiter excelsa clarabat sceptrum columnae,/ et clades patriae flamma ferroque parata:/ vocibus Allobrogum patribus populoque patebat*, *Div. 1.21*). The piety and wisdom of the Roman people is praised by the Muse because they honored the gods.

Urania then addresses the relationship of leisure and service to the state (*Div. 1.21–2*):

_Haec adeo penitus cura videre sagaci,_
_otia qui studiis laeti tenuere decoris,_
inque Academia umbrifera nitidoque Lyceo
fuderunt claras fecundi pectoris artis.
_e quibus ereptum primo iam a flore iuventae_
te patria in media virtutum mole locavit.
tu tamen anxiferas curas requiete relaxas,
quod patriae vacat, id studiis nobisque sacrasti._

With wise care they looked deeply into these things, who happily spent their leisure in the pursuits of beauty, and in the shady Academy and shining Lyceum they poured forth the bright arts from a fruitful breast. Torn from these men already from the first flower of youth your fatherland had located you in the middle of toil for virtues. You, nevertheless, relax your anxious cares in respite, and the time that is not required for the fatherland you dedicate to studies and to us.

The Muse commends Cicero for devoting himself to study, suggesting that it was his study and pursuit of wisdom that allowed him to handle the situation with Catiline so deftly. Although she does not mention the study of the cosmos explicitly, the time Cicero devoted to learning the arts
of the Muses surely included natural philosophy—the arts of Urania in particular. The *artes* of leisure form the foundation for Cicero’s greatest political moment. As we saw in Chapter 2, astronomical learning and political service go hand in hand. As in the *Dream*, the Horizontal and the Vertical intersect and make it possible for humans to draw closer to the gods. The mention of the Academy and Lyceum nod to the gymnasia Cicero’s own estate, which he named after the schools of Plato and Aristotle. At the outset of the dialogue, Marcus says that he and his brother had been discussing divination in the Lyceum of his estate (*Div.* 1.8).320 Perhaps, then, we are to see a connection between the end of the quoted *De consulatu suo* passage and the conversation of the dialogue: the philosophical conversation that Marcus and Quintus are having now will also honor the gods and serve the Roman state.

3.11 Caesar and the Skeptical Statesman’s Path to Heaven

In the *De consulatu suo*, the portents that appeared leading up to Catiline’s conspiracy, as I argued in the last section, showcase the connection between the Horizontal and the Vertical. The cosmos and Rome are so connected that when trouble roils the state, even the stars respond. Much as two suns appeared portending Scipio’s imminent death in *De re publica*, so also the cosmos recoils when Rome is under threat because of the conspirators’ machinations. Nineteen years later, when Cicero was in the middle of writing *De divinatione*, dire signs appeared again—this time around the death of Julius Caesar. The end of the first book of Vergil’s *Georgics*

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320 See Volk (2017) 98 n. 24: “One wonders whether line 73 contains an in-joke about Cicero’s own ‘Academy’ and ‘Lyceum,’ the two gymnasia on his Tusculan estate.” See also Pease (1920–3) *ad loc.*
describes portents that accompanied Julius Caesar’s death: the sun hid its face, Mt. Aetna sent forth fiery globes, animals were able to speak, statues began to weep, and comets burned in the sky (G. 1.461–97). Cicero’s *De divinatione* does not make mention of these portents, although it does mention the ill omens that led up to Caesar’s assassination. In his argument for the existence of divine signs, Quintus brings up portents that occurred before Caesar’s death, which the gods sent “in order that he might foresee his death, not that he might prevent it” (*quae quidem illi portendebantur a dis immortalibus ut videret interitum, non ut caveret*, Div. 1.119). First, when Caesar was offering sacrifices, the bull was found not to have a heart (*qui cum immolaret illo die quo primum in sella aurea sedit et cum purpurea veste processit, in extis bovis opimi cor non fuit*, Div. 1.119). The diviner Spurinna offered Caesar a warning, interpreting the missing heart as a portent of Caesar’s doom since the heart is the seat of thought and life (*timendum esse ne et consilium et vita deficeret*, Div. 1.119). Nevertheless, this warning, Quintus notes, was not intended to avert his death but to give him forewarning of what would come (Div. 1.119).

In his rebuttal of his brother’s promotion of divination, in Book 2 Marcus alludes to the dire signs that preceded Caesar’s death, but takes issue with Quintus’ argument that such signs are of any benefit. After all, he argues, Caesar would not have been able to prevent his death, and the possessing knowledge that he would fall at the hands of friends would make life excruciating (Div. 2.23). Furthermore, the notion that the heart would suddenly disappear at the moment of

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321 For commentary on this passage, see Thomas vol. 1 (1988) 145–55.

322 See Suet. *Iul.* 81.


324 See Denyer (1985) 2–3.
sacrifice seems absurd. As Marcus quips, it seems much more plausible the bull lost its heart 
(corde privatus) when it saw Caesar had lost his mind (excordem). The surety of such signs 
seems dubious, Marcus argues: Chaldean seers had predicted that Caesar would die at home in 
old age with great reputation (Div. 2.99), and Caesar himself ignored a warning that he should 
not cross into Africa before the winter solstice to no ill effect (Div. 2.52).

Marcus’ critique of Quintus’ argument extends far beyond the signs that preceded 
Caesar’s assassination. In fact, many scholars have found Marcus’ critique so scathing (and 
Quintus’ arguments so weak) as to undermine utterly the position presented in favor of divination 
in Book 1. Some have interpreted Marcus’ arguments to reflect a change in Cicero’s stance 
towards divination. Whereas the dialogues of the 50s—namely the De re publica and De legibus 
—were friendly towards divination, or at the very least, warmly positive, in the 40s Cicero’s 
regard for the practice took a more skeptical turn. The optimism of the Dream and the tepid 
appraisal of De legibus—“I do not deny that divination exists” (non ui
do
cur divinationem 

geneg, Leg. 32) and “I think that divination exists” (divinationem...esse sentio, Leg. 32)—shifts 
to outright denial: divinationem nego (Div. 2.74). Despite his close friendship with the seer par 
excellence, Nigidius Figulus (98–45 BCE), and despite his own tenure as augur in 53–52 BCE, 
Cicero, when applying a rigorous lens in writing the dialogue, found the practice untenable.

325 _An quod aspexit vestitu purpureo excordem Caesarem, ipse corde privatus est? (Div. 2.37)._ 


Nevertheless, in its role for the good of the state, Cicero supported divination, but not as a legitimate vehicle of divine communication.\footnote{328 See Volk (2017) 329–47. On the role of divination in the late Republic, see Rawson (1985) ch. 20.}

On the other side of the debate, scholars have read the dialogue as the exercise of setting one argument against another, and do not attach Cicero’s own views to his avatar Marcus. In a pair of particularly influential articles, Malcolm Schofield (1986) and Mary Beard (1986) both advocate for this interpretation, though with different emphases.\footnote{329 Schofield (1986) sees the setting of one argument against another as the fruit of oratorical practice “to be followed in the two books of Div., of presenting both sides of an argument. For that method gives the writer maxima dicendi exercitatio: the scheme of arguments pro and contra attracts Cicero because it affords the opportunity for rhetoric, for using the advocate's skill in presenting a case as powerfully as his resources permit (TD II. 6 ff.)” (1986) 51. Beard (1986) complements Schofield (1986) but focuses on political and religious aspects of the dialogue, taking the approach of a cultural historian.} David Wardle (2006) argues against Schofield and Beard, making the case that Cicero’s demolishes Quintus’ argument. Brian Krostenko (2000) explains Cicero’s distancing from divination in terms of his relationship to Caesar: as Caesar moved closer to becoming a god, Cicero moved further away from his own writings that could encourage such an apotheosis. Cicero, however, was still able to partake in the sort of self-promotion that is characteristic of his infamous personality by having Quintus quote his own poetry at length, allowing Cicero “to have his cake and eat it too.” I will discuss this position more fully at the end of this chapter.

Cicero certainly does have his persona Marcus distance himself from his earlier poetry. Marcus directly attacks the events mentioned in his De consulatu suo, specifically the lightning that struck the statues and monuments on the Capitol, as well as the installation of the statue of Jupiter during the conspiracy (Div. 2.45).\footnote{330 See Goar (1968) 244: “This much, at least, is clear: in order to build a strong, consistent case against divination, Cicero is ready to go so far as to hint that his own use of haruspicine, in a time of crisis, was undertaken for reasons of political expediency, and had nothing to do with belief.”} Marcus even quotes a couple of the verses that
Quintus had cited (nam pater altitonans stellanti nixus Olympo/ ipse suos quondam tumulos ac
templa petivit/ et Captolinis iniecit sedibus ignis, Div. 2.45 = Div. 1.19). Marcus complains to
his brother: “you are oppressing me with my own verses” (sed urges me meis versibus, Div.
2.45). After quoting his De consulatu suo, Cicero says (Div. 2.46):

‘Tu igitur animum induces (sic enim mecum agebas) ‘causam istam et contra facta tua et
contra scripta defendere?’ Frater es; eo vereor. Verum quid tibi hic tandem nocet? resne,
quae talis est, an ego, qui verum explicari volo? Itaque nihil contra dico, a te rationem
totius haruspicinae peto.

‘Will you therefore resolve’ (for thus you were arguing with me) ‘to defend that case of
yours against your own accomplishments and your own writings?’ You are my brother.
For that reason, I have respect. But what in the world is bothering you so? Is it the topic
—which is of such a sort as it is—or is it me—I who desire that the truth be made clear?
Therefore I say nothing in response, but I trouble you for an account of the practice of
haruspicy in its entirety.

Marcus paraphrases what his brother said in Div. 1.22, sharply pointing out the difficult position
he has been put in to argue against himself: his own consulship and verses. His response is
notoriously enigmatic; what, precisely, is the effect of vereor?331 And what is the effect of
pointing out their brotherhood? As we consider these lines, we must remember that the entire
dialogue is orchestrated by none other than Cicero himself. Cicero intended his avatar’s response
to be ambiguous. As Raphael Woolf (2015) puts it, Cicero takes on a Socratic role of self-

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331 As Katharina Volk (2017) 339 puts it, “This response is evasive in the extreme.”
examination, examining his own mind for truthfulness.\footnote{Woolf (2015) 68–9.} If nothing else, it seems safe to me to say that Cicero does not reject his brother’s quotation of his poetry in its entirety.\footnote{Marcus treats Quintus’ quotation of the Prognostica similarly. He criticizes his brother for advocating for divination without providing an account for the causes behind signs: what happens, not why it happens, is the question (\textit{Div.} 2.46). In this context of causes versus effects, Marcus brings up the \textit{Prognostica}, saying that Quintus quoted his poem and discussed medicinal herbs. Quintus had said that the variety of herbs used in medicine by physicians are put to good use, even though “their power and nature reason had never explained” (\textit{quorum vim atque naturam ratio numquam explicavit}, \textit{Div.} 1.13). Quintus goes on to say that much like herbs, nature often gives predictable signs, though he points out that these signs are different from divination though they resemble it (\textit{quae quamquam ex alio genere sunt, tamen divinationi sunt similiora}, \textit{Div.} 1.13). Quintus uses Cicero’s poetry to showcase the predictable natural order of the world, which can be studied and used to make inferences about what will happen, even if the precise natural cause remains unknown. Marcus concedes that a connection exists between seemingly unrelated natural occurrences, such as the moon and the tides of the ocean (\textit{Div.} 2.34). Nevertheless, Marcus avers, this connection does not imply that cosmic sympathy provides any correlation between, say, a cleft in a liver and personal fortune. It seems, then, that Marcus allows for some sort of connection that subtends through the cosmos even as he rejects \textit{divinatio}.}

Furthermore, the portion of the poem that Marcus derides is quite specific: namely, the destruction of the statues. Marcus contests the idea that the lightning that struck the Capitol was a sign of Jupiter’s displeasure at the political events. As he argues elsewhere, it is ridiculous to think that Jupiter’s thunderbolts are warnings or signs since so many thunderbolts strike the sea or desert \textit{(sic} \textit{licet, si ista Iuppiter significaret, tam multa frustra fulmina emitteret!}, \textit{Div.} 2.45). Furthermore, the Stoics have naturalistic explanations for thunderbolts, so, Marcus says, it is vain to use them to descry future events (\textit{Div.} 2.44). Marcus is bitingly sardonic in his rebuff: “How clever Jupiter thought of this!” \textit{(Hoc tam callide Iuppiter cogitavit, Div.} 2.47). But on my view, it is notable that Marcus focuses his rebuttal of the \textit{De consulatu suo} on Jupiter’s lightening and the installation of his statue at a seemingly fortuitous hour (\textit{Div.} 2.47). No other part of the poem is attacked.\footnote{Even Wardle (2006) 145 observes that Marcus’ rebuttal “altogether fails to respond to Quintus’ argument.”} Most notably, the cosmic opening of Urania’s speech, which advances a worldview of design and providence, remains unscathed. Although Marcus questions whether the
The demolition of statues should be viewed as a portent, he does not seek to undermine the fundamental philosophical outlook of Urania’s cosmos.

Even as he dismantles the practice of divination, Marcus seems to continue to support the sort of cosmic connection and order that characterizes the opening of Urania’s speech. For example, Marcus’ rejection of extispicy is—perhaps surprisingly—based upon an understanding of divine nature and its pervasive laws (*divina cum rerum natura tanta tamque praecclara in omnes partes motusque diffusa*, Div. 2.29). Near the end of the dialogue, Marcus reasserts the beauty of the cosmos and the existence of some transcendent being (Div. 2.148):

Nec vero—id enim diligenter intellegi volo—superstitione tollenda religio tollitur. Nam et maiorum instituta tueri sacris caerimoniosisque retinendis sapientes est, et esse praestantem aliquam aeternamque naturam, et eam suspiciendum admirandamque hominum generi pulchritudo mundi ordoque rerum caelestium cogit confiteri.

But—for I want to be understood correctly—religion is not destroyed by the destruction of superstition. For it is the part of a wise man to preserve the institutions of our forefathers by holding onto the sacred rites and ceremonies, and the beauty of the cosmos and the order of the celestial realms compels me to confess that there is some outstanding eternal nature and that it deserves to be contemplated and admired by the race of human beings.

Marcus makes a sharp distinction between superstition and religion. The former pertains to the interpretation of dubious signs—from entrails to the conjunctions of stars—while the latter consists of two major components: (i) the honoring of Roman tradition and ancestors and (ii) recognizing the beauty of the cosmos and stars and admiring and wondering at the eternal divine nature. This is the attitude of the wise man (*sapientis, Div. 2.148*). Marcus has not utterly abandoned the sort of Aratean worldview that Urania describes in her speech of *De consulatu suo*. Even in his diatribe against divination and superstition, he clings to the beauty (*pulchritudo,*

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The “order of the celestial realms” (ordoque rerum caelestium, Div. 2.148)—in other words, the stars and planets—also inspires a sense of religious awe. Furthermore, even as he denies that the gods send signs and oracles, Marcus nevertheless upholds some view of the gods—or rather, god—which he conceives as eternal, outstanding, and natural (praestantem aliquam aeternamque naturam, Div. 2.148).336

Following Schofield (1986) and Beard (1986), I do not see the character of Marcus as the mouthpiece of Cicero. Like them, I prefer to read the dialogue as a work of literary philosophy, in which we readers are asked to weigh the arguments against one another.337 The De divinatione concludes with a reaffirmation of the Skeptical viewpoint (Div. 2.150), suggesting that we too should read the dialogue with a Skeptical lens.338 Yet, even if we are supposed to read Marcus’ views as closely aligned with Cicero’s own opinions, it is notable that Marcus still holds onto the cosmic beauty and order that was articulated by Balbus in Book 2 of De natura deorum.

Reading De natura deorum and De divinatione as a literary unit invites us to compare Balbus’ quotation of the Aratea and Quintus’ quotation of the De consulatu suo, as well as the Prognostica and Marius. Both advocate Stoic positions and quote Cicero’s poetry, and to a

336 On the dialogue’s upholding of a belief in the gods, see Goar (1968) 243.

337 For a counter argument, see Wardle (2006) 10–14. Wardle (2006) maintains that since Cicero-qua-author could pick and choose participants in his dialogues as he pleased, and that since his characters are portrayed in alignment with their own philosophical views, we should take the character Marcus as the mouthpiece of Cicero’s own philosophical views. Wynne (2019) 229, however, argues that Quintus is not a Stoic but attracted to the Stoic arguments of De natura deorum, pointing to Div. 2.100 as evidence.

338 The conclusion of Book 2 of De divinatione is an important passage in the scholarly debate regarding Cicero’s relationship to his persona Marcus and his personal philosophical views. Beard and Schofield point to Acad. 2.150 as evidence that we readers are meant to take a Skeptical stance and that the debate is ultimately open. Wardle (2006) 14–15 disagrees: “To conclude from this that the dialogue is truly evenhanded is to misunderstand what Marcus has achieved in his argument and what he says in the words quoted above” (=Acad. 2.150). Woolf (2015) suggests that Marcus’ rebuttal “reflect[s] the Academic sceptic’s habit of adopting a critical stance towards positive claims” and that “the structure of the work as a whole, is firmly, fraternally two-sided” (64). Most recently, Wynne (2019) argues that the readers are not meant to accept Marcus’ views as Cicero’s own (see esp. 264–78). For my part, I also think that the dialogue is still open to interpretation.
degree, Balbus and Quintus are natural pendants of one another. It seems unlikely to me that Cicero sua voce would prefer Balbus’ position on the gods in *De natura deorum* only to reject wholesale a world in which the gods have a hand in *De divinatione.*339 And, despite placing his poetry in the mouths of others, the poetry is quoted at length and is a forceful presence in both works. Moreover, as I have argued above, Cicero’s persona does not renounce a crafted cosmos; he renounces the idea that gods communicate through signs which humans can use for personal and political gain.

Taken together, the poetry quoted by Balbus and Quintus conveys a worldview that is compatible with Stoicism but that ultimately transcends it. The *Aratea* and *De consulatu suo* in particular paint a picture of the cosmos that is ordered, beautiful, and connected to the stars. This Aratean worldview, as I would call it, is agreeable to Stoicism but not Stoic per se, much as the cosmos of Aratus’ *Phaenomena* is Stoic-friendly but not necessarily Stoic. On my view, the *De divinatione* does not overturn an Aratean cosmos.

But one important feature of an Aratean worldview is a beneficent deity who communicates with humans through consistent and intelligible signs. These signs are not clefts in livers or chickens portending doom, but wholly natural signs: the ordered constellations that appear at certain seasons, meteorological occurrences that animals sense, predictable weather

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339 Wardle (2006) 10–11 aims to reconcile the views of Marcus in *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione* by pointing out that Cicero “was free to choose individual doctrines from any philosophical school while rejecting others” (11) and furthermore, that even Stoics could reject divination while upholding the existence of the gods, which was the position of Panaetius (11). Thus, Wardle (2006) 11 concludes, Marcus’ position is consistent across the two works, and “Beard’s contrast is illusory.” I agree with Wardle (2006) that a rejection of divination does not necessitate a rejection of the sort of gods that Stoics uphold to exist; however, I would allow Cicero more latitude as an author to let his characters (including his avatar Marcus) express views that are not necessarily his own. In this regard, my position is closer to Beard (1986) and Schofield (1986). Wynne (2019) much like Schofield and Beard, sees Marcus’ riposte to Quintus as “Cicero’s plain objective…to balance the case for divinatory phenomena” (263).
patterns, even the words on a page.\textsuperscript{340} Even so, in \textit{De divinatione} Marcus strives to overturn the idea that the gods communicate through signs at all. Furthermore, Marcus does distance himself from the cosmic semiotics of the \textit{De consulatu suo} and \textit{Prognostica}, even though the latter’s signs are naturalistic.\textsuperscript{341} Why does Cicero seem to distance himself from his poetry in the \textit{De divinatione}?

Here, I am inclined to follow Brian Krostenko’s (2000) lead, who argues that “Cicero’s insertion of his own poetry into Q.’s mouth was…a deliberate attempt to distance himself from that poetry and its claims of personal relationships, and even direct contact, with the divine” (383), which was especially relevant at the time of composition in 45/44 BCE, when divine honors were coalescing around Julius Caesar.\textsuperscript{342} Caesar’s use of religious symbols to bolster his own claims to divinity were distasteful to Cicero, who had allied himself with Pompey in the Civil Wars and who saw Caesar’s approach to the divine as dangerous for the Republic.\textsuperscript{343} Of course, Cicero himself had previously cemented the link between cosmos and state, between gods and statesman, most explicitly in the \textit{Dream} at the end of \textit{De re publica} and in his own \textit{De consulatu suo}. Furthermore, Cicero had previously exalted Pompey as a divine, savior-like figure, even at one point saying he had fallen from the stars themselves.\textsuperscript{344} With his

\textsuperscript{340} Wynne (2019) 230–2 points out that Quintus’ definition of divination (the prediction of future events) is different from Chrysippus’ (the science of explaining signs from the gods). As he puts it, “it is hard to pin down exactly what divination is. Of course, we know roughly what its goal is—to receive communications from the gods—but it is still hard to say what it consists in” (232).

\textsuperscript{341} Although, as Woolf (2015) 66 points out, perhaps we can “naturalize” divination: “if, for example, it turns out that there are simply causal regularities built into, and admitting of being read off from, the natural workings of the universe, one might be inclined to say that knowledge of such regularities fall under one or other branch of the natural sciences, there no longer an additional place for the techniques of divination” (66–7).

\textsuperscript{342} See also Lehoux (2012) 29–34.

\textsuperscript{343} See Weinstock (1971).

\textsuperscript{344} \textit{Att.} 41.
poetry and philosophical dialogues, Cicero had developed the framework that made it possible for statesmen to rise to the stars. Cicero had helped make it possible for Julius Caesar to become a god. But the sort of cosmic ascent that Cicero had only dreamed of had become reality in the dictator. Thus, by distancing himself from his poetry of cosmic aspirations, we can understand Cicero as neutralizing the claim such a statesman might have to be located amongst the stars. And indeed, it was only a few short months later that a comet appeared during the *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris*, which became a sign of Caesar’s apotheosis. The man would become a star: the *Sidus Iulium*.

At the same time, Cicero could not bring himself to utterly abandon his hope for human connection to the cosmos. The ordered beauty of the world, and the stars in particular, promise

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345 Woolf (2015) 77–9 and 85 points out how Rome’s sacred status as the favored city of the gods, the cosmic state, is threatened by Marcus’ sally against Quintus’ arguments. On Cicero’s role in contributing to the rise of deification at Rome, see Cole (2013).

346 Although Cicero spends the first two *Philippics* objecting to the cult of Caesar and his deification, in his letters to Atticus he privately extols the acts of the conspirators’ deed as “opening up a path to heaven” (*aditum ad caelum dederunt*, *Att.* 14.14.3). Privately, then, it seems that Cicero still held fast to the idea of deeds leading up a place to the stars—but he did not want to allot that privilege to the man who ended his most beloved country as he knew it. As Spencer Cole (2013) 171–2 points out, Cicero frames the *First Philippic* as “a principled objection to mixing human and divine honors,” and Cicero in the speech himself says “I could not be induced to connect any dead man with the worship of the immortal gods” (*adduci tamen non possem ut quemquam mortuam coniungerem cum deorum immortalium religione*, *Phil.* 1.13).

347 For a similar reason, Cicero distances himself from the *Marius*. Although his persona Marcus does not quote from the *Marius*, he brings up Marius’ appearance in a dream predicting his return from exile (*Div.* 2.136). On Cicero divinizing Marius, see Cole (2013) 80.

348 Pandey (2013) argues that the association of comets with dire events is a later construction of the Augustan poets. Pandey thinks that Augustus, contrary to the commonly held belief, did not have an active role in constructing a mythology around the comet that appeared during the games: She argues that “the widespread assumption that Octavian manipulated the crowd must therefore, in fact, be reversed: it was the crowd that initiated Caesar’s deification, and their support that allowed Octavian to begin developing an independent power base” (415). Resisting pro-/anti-Augustan readings, Pandey (2013) points out that Augustus’ rise to power was much more complex and that he likely did not have the requisite influence in 44 BCE to implement a wide-spread mandate to believe in Caesar’s apotheosis. On the comet, see Ramsey and Licht (1997) and Gurval (1997) 39–71.

349 The famous name *Sidus Iulium* appears only once in Latin literature, in Horace’s *Odes* 1.12.47.
some sense of transcendent divinity that is attainable for humans.\textsuperscript{350} As Caesar was becoming a god, Cicero himself was trying to make his beloved Tullia a goddess. This tension comes to the fore in \textit{De divinatione}, in which Cicero plays “an elusive game,”\textsuperscript{351} as Katharina Volk puts it, distancing himself from his cosmic poetry even as he clings to the possibility of his daughter and presumably, himself, finding a place in the celestial realm. But the divine signs surrounding Caesar’s death, and most notably, the comet itself, were dangerous for Rome.\textsuperscript{352} Cicero never mentions the comet, not even in the \textit{First Philippic}, which he delivered shortly after its appearance. The literary form of the dialogue is an ideal space in which to wrestle with the complexities of the situation at Rome and Cicero’s own ambivalent feelings towards deification and Rome as the chosen cosmic city.\textsuperscript{353} Even while probing the possibility of portents and prodigies, Cicero was dreaming of a sign of a different sort: a sacred σῆµα for his daughter.

\textsuperscript{350} It is interesting to note that Cicero later uses the existence of portents and prodigies to argue against Marc Antony (\textit{Phil.} 4.10), on which see Wardle (2006) 5. Wardle (2006) 12, however, rightly points out that Cicero’s positions in orations are often made for the sake of argument and do not reflect his own views.

\textsuperscript{351} Volk (2017) 98 n. 23.

\textsuperscript{352} For ancient sources on the comet’s appearance, see Plin. \textit{NH} 2.93–4, Suet. \textit{lul.} 88, and Dio Cass. 45.6.4–7. Pliny records that a comet—visible even during the daytime—appeared for seven days during the Ludi Victoriae Caesaris (\textit{NH} 2.93–4), which bolstered Caesar’s cult and solidified his transformation into a star. The comet appeared mere weeks before Cicero gave the first Philippic (Sept. 2, 44 BCE), but Cicero makes no mention of Caesar’s comet.

\textsuperscript{353} As Linderski (1982) 16 observes, “In Rome the fight for political power was also a fight for control over the gods.”
EPILOGUE

Nullum saeculum magnis ingeniis clusum est,
nullum non cogitationi pervium tempus.

No age is closed to great minds; and no time is
not traversable with thought.

Sen. Ep. 102.22

In this dissertation, I have examined cosmological dimensions of Cicero’s work, organized around the topics of his poetry, politics, and philosophy, in order to show how Cicero contributed to the rise of astral culture at Rome in the 1st c. BCE and beyond. Although in recent years, Cicero has been appreciated for his philosophical contribution, his natural philosophy has been largely overlooked. Furthermore, his natural philosophy (especially De natura deorum and De divinatione) must be read in close connection with his cosmological poetry, since much of that poetry is integral to the dialogues themselves. Looking at Cicero’s life from youth to old age, we can observe a persistent and strong interest in the stars, from the Aratea translation he completed while a young man, to the De divinatione, penned (at least in part) after the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE and mere months before his own assassination. Cicero never left the stars, and the stars never left him. The stars, as the most beautiful and transcendent aspect of the cosmos, signified for Cicero many things, including: the hope for the immortality of the soul and glory in this life and the next (Dream of Scipio); the order and power of a cosmic city writ large, and conversely, the idea that the city (=Rome) can in some sense participate in that stellar community; and the demiurgic power of the artist (i.e. writer) to use words to create worlds (Aratea), with the elements and the individual stars standing parallel to the letters of words created at the power of the pen (De natura deorum).
The next generations of authors (who, like Cicero, did not make a harsh distinction among poetry, philosophy, and politics) certainly used the stars in these ways in their own writings, from Vergil to Ovid, from Seneca to Lucan. Although it would take a very different sort of thesis to demonstrate that Cicero directly influenced these later poets and philosopher(s), I have in the preceding pages made a more modest argument, namely that Cicero pioneered the sort of Latin language and thought processes recorded in the written word that set the stage for the explosion in star culture of the 1st c. BCE. However, as a gesture towards where I may take this project in the future, I offer for your consideration one of the most famous lines of Latin poetry of all time (Aen. 1.1):

Arma virumque cano…
I sing of arms and the man…

Although the opening three words of the Aeneid are not explicitly cosmological, they may contain an allusion to Cicero’s cosmological poem, De consulatu suo. As Servius notes in his commentary on the Aeneid, the metonymical use of arma for “war” goes back to the (in)famous line, cedant arma togae of Cicero, who precedes Vergil in using arma in this way.\textsuperscript{354} Without reading more than we should into the allusion, we can, perhaps, still see that the De consulatu suo’s protagonist (Cicero himself, of course) allows warfare to yield to peacetime as part of a larger cosmic picture, thanks to the advice he received amongst the council of the gods. In a similar sense, in the Aeneid, the subject matter of the poet’s cosmological song is warfare and the

man (Aeneas), the near opposite of the sort of cosmic peacetime promised in Cicero’s line. However we interpret these lines, my point is that Cicero’s cosmological and poetic imagination may have an even more expansive reach than my dissertation suggests.

But that is the pursuit of another day. In this thesis, I have conducted my study in three main parts, organized chronologically and thematically around Cicero’s poetry, politics, and philosophy. In the first chapter, I provided a study of Cicero’s Aratea and its background and influence at Rome, including its impact on Lucretius’ De rerum natura. Next, I considered how the astronomy and politics of De re publica fit together, arguing that the dialogue brings together the cosmological and political (the Horizontal and Vertical, as I call it). In the final chapter, I suggested that Cicero put his Aratean worldview on trial in De natura deorum and De divinatione, testing the limitations of a cosmos in which the gods are designers and actively involved. In the end, I have come to the conclusion that Cicero did not undergo any seismic (cosmic?) changes in his philosophical outlook, but rather, throughout his life remained a cautiously optimistic Skeptic who looked to the stars for guidance, but preferred to keep his gaze fixed on the wider-ranging Helice rather than the more precise Cynosura, for about cosmic matters, one can never be too sure.
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