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Claudian, *Bellum Geticum*
A Literary and Historical Commentary
(Preface and ll. 1 – 123)

Giulia Saggiardi

PhD in Classics
The University of Edinburgh
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SIGNED DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Giulia Saggiardi

Rome, 2021

Abstract

This thesis contains a literary and historical commentary on the preface and on the first 123 verses of the poem *Bellum Geticum*, composed by the Latin poet Claudian to celebrate Stilicho's defeat of Alaric's Gothic army at Pollentia in 402 AD. This commentary fills a gap in current scholarship on Claudian, thus aiming to promote a fuller understanding of the poem and to offer a fresh perspective which will act as basis for potential future research. *Bellum Geticum* belongs to a group of compositions by Claudian which blend different literary genres, making use of epic metre, language and imagery, but with the eulogistic content peculiar to laudatory literature. In modern scholarship they are often described as 'epic panegyrics'. Their intent is to endorse the public influence and personal power of the general Stilicho, regent to the young western emperor Honorius. As the tendentious historical narrative is expressed through mythological allegory and the extensive use of imagery drawn from the epic tradition, the analysis of the poem pays particular consideration to the way meaning is constructed in the text. In this context, the commentary addresses the difficulties raised by *Bellum Geticum* by adopting an interdisciplinary approach and looking simultaneously at his historical, literary and philological aspects. It has also aimed at revealing yet undocumented connections between *Bellum Geticum* and other texts. The commentary is preceded by an introduction, which sets the poem within the literary and historical context of the turn of the fifth century. In particular, the first section of the introduction analyses the development of the literary genre of epic panegyrics, whereas the second provides a detailed discussion of the political dynamics of the Roman Empire, the role of the generalissimo Stilicho, the Gothic invasion of Italy led by Alaric and the battle of Pollentia. The commentary itself focuses on discrete segments of text which have an internal coherence and are suited to be examined as a unit. The first of these segments is a preface in elegiac couplets placed before the main text; the subsequent sections have been identified on the basis of their function within the poem – as in the case of the mythological proem – or on the basis of content. Each part of the text is accompanied by a new English translation which helps to demonstrate the interpretation of the text as developed in the commentary.

Lay Summary

This thesis contains a literary and historical commentary on the preface and on the first 123 verses of the poem *Bellum Geticum*, composed by the Latin poet Claudian to celebrate Stilicho's defeat of Alaric's Gothic army at Pollentia in 402 AD. This commentary fills a gap in current scholarship on Claudian, thus aiming to promote a fuller understanding of the poem and to offer a fresh perspective which will act as basis for potential future research. *Bellum Geticum* belongs to a group of compositions by Claudian which blend different literary genres, making use of epic metre, language and imagery, but with the eulogistic content peculiar to laudatory literature. In modern scholarship they are often described as 'epic panegyrics'. Their intent is to endorse the public influence and personal power of the general Stilicho, regent to the young western emperor Honorius. As the tendentious historical narrative is expressed through mythological allegory and the extensive use of imagery drawn from the epic tradition, the analysis of the poem pays particular consideration to the way meaning is constructed in the text. In this context, the commentary addresses the difficulties raised by *Bellum Geticum* by adopting an interdisciplinary approach and looking simultaneously at his historical, literary and philological aspects. It has also aimed at revealing yet undocumented connections between *Bellum Geticum* and other texts. The commentary is preceded by an introduction, which sets the poem within the literary and historical context of the turn of the fifth century. In particular, the first section of the introduction analyses the development of the literary genre of epic panegyrics, whereas the second provides a detailed discussion of the political dynamics of the Roman Empire, the role of the generalissimo Stilicho, the Gothic invasion of Italy led by Alaric and the battle of Pollentia. The commentary itself focuses on discrete segments of text which have an internal coherence and are suited to be examined as a unit. The first of these segments is a preface in elegiac couplets placed before the main text; the subsequent sections have been identified on the basis of their function within the poem – as in the case of the mythological proem – or on the basis of content. Each part of the text is accompanied by a new English translation which helps to demonstrate the interpretation of the text as developed in the commentary.

To Edinburgh
City of Poets and Slanting Light

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Abbreviations

Birt	T. Birt, <i>Carmina Claudii Claudiani</i> (Berlin, 1892)
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1862–)
FCH	R. C. Blockley, <i>The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire</i> , voll. I-II (Liverpool, 1981–3)
Garuti	G. Garuti, <i>Cl. Claudiani De Bello Gothico</i> (L'Aquila, 1991)
Gesner	J. M. Gesner, <i>Claudii Claudiani quae extant</i> (Leipzig, 1759)
Hall	J. B. Hall, <i>Claudii Claudiani Carmina</i> , (Leipzig, 1985)
Heinsius	N. Heinsius, <i>Claudii Claudiani quae extant</i> (Amsterdam, 1650)
ILS	H. Dessau (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin, 1892–1916)
LRE	A. H. M. Jones, <i>The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey</i> (Oxford, 1964)
Mariev	S. Mariev, <i>Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta quae supersunt omnia</i> (Berlin and New York., 2008)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi</i> (Berlin, 1877–98).
Müller	K. Müller, <i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> (Paris 1851)
OLD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1968–82)
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca (Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne) (Paris, 1857–66).
PLRE 1	A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> (Cambridge, 1971)
PLRE 2	J. R. Martindale, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> (Cambridge, 1980)
Roberto	U. Roberto, <i>Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta ex Historia Cronica</i> (Berlin and New York, 2005)
Schroff	H. Schroff, <i>Claudians Gedicht vom Gotenkrieg</i> (Berlin, 1927)
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> (Berlin, 1900–)

Claudian's poems

I have used the following abbreviations in citing Claudian's poems. I list the poems according to the order they appear in Hall's critical edition. The numbers in brackets correspond to the traditional numbering of the poems.

<i>P&O</i>	<i>Panegyricus dictus Probino et Olybrio consulibus</i> (1)
<i>Ruf. pr.</i> 1, 2	<i>In Rufinum, praefatio</i> to Books 1, 2 (2, 4)
<i>Ruf.</i> 1, 2	<i>In Rufinum</i> 1, 2 (3, 5)
<i>III Hon. pr.</i>	<i>Panegyricus de Tertio Consulatu Honorii Augusti, praefatio</i> (6)
<i>III Hon.</i>	<i>Panegyricus de Tertio Consulatu Honorii Augusti</i> (7)
<i>IV Hon.</i>	<i>Panegyricus de Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti</i> (8)
<i>Epith. pr.</i>	<i>Epithalamium de Nuptiis Honorii Augusti, praefatio</i> (9)
<i>Epith.</i>	<i>Epithalamium dictum Honorio Augusto et Mariae</i> (10)
<i>Fesc.</i> 1–4	<i>Fescennina dicta Honorio Augusto et Mariae</i> (11–14)
<i>Gild.</i>	<i>De Bello Gildonico</i> (15)
<i>pr. Theod.</i>	<i>Panegyricus dictus Manlio Theodori Consuli, praefatio</i> (16)
<i>Theod.</i>	<i>Panegyricus dictus Manlio Theodori Consuli</i> (17)
<i>Eutr.</i> 1, 2	<i>In Eutropium</i> 1, 2 (18, 20)
<i>Eutr. pr.</i> 2	<i>In Eutropium, praefatio</i> to Book 2 (19)
<i>Stil.</i> 1, 2, 3	<i>De Consulatu Stilichonis</i> , Books 1, 2, 3 (21, 22, 24)
<i>Stil. pr.</i> 3	<i>De Consulatu Stilichonis, praefatio</i> to Book 3 (23)
<i>Get. pr.</i>	<i>Bellum Geticum, Bellum Geticum</i> (25)
<i>Get.</i>	<i>Bellum Geticum</i> (26)
<i>VI Hon. pr.</i>	<i>Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti, praefatio</i> (27)
<i>VI Hon.</i>	<i>Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti</i> (28)
<i>Rapt. pr.</i> 1, 2	<i>De Raptu Proserpinae, praefatio</i> to Books 1, 2 (32, 34)
<i>Rapt.</i> 1, 2, 3	<i>De Raptu Proserpinae</i> Books 1, 2, 3 (33, 35, 36)
<i>Carm. min.</i> 1–54	<i>Carmina minora</i> 1–54 (Birt's numeration)

Manuscripts mentioned in the commentary (Hall's sigla)

- Γ Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale 5381, ca. 1050
- F₃ Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 250, 12th century
- g Kraków, Biblioteka Kapituły Krakowskiej 71, 12th century
- W₁ Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Gudius lat. 228, 13th/14th century
- P₂ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 8082, 13th century
- K₄ Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana I 26 sup., 15th century
- R₂₆ Vatican City, Vaticanus latinus 2809, 15th century
- Z Parma, Biblioteca Palatina 2504, 13th century (for the *carmina maiora*)

INTRODUCTION

I. CLAUDIAN AND THE TRADITION OF LATIN PANEGYRIC

The political poems composed by Claudian between 395 and 404 are at the crossroads of different literary genres, as they display characteristics that connect them both to the epideictic tradition and hexameter poetry. Like prose panegyrics, they played a key role within the functioning of the imperial court and their central theme is the praise of the emperor or powerful individuals – in Claudian’s case, the general Stilicho; like epic, they are written in hexameters, display an elevated style, feature personifications and allegories, and showcase rhetorically constructed speeches. Recent studies have particularly focussed on the distinctive features of these and other poems that allow the reader to identify the formation and consolidation, during late antiquity, of a new literary genre that partakes of both the epideictic tradition, to which panegyrics traditionally belong, and that of hexametrical poetry, in particular Latin epic. Claudian is regarded as the founder of this new way of writing poetry and his works are viewed as a turning point within the Latin poetic landscape.¹ In this section, I would like to outline the epideictic and poetic background on which Claudian’s poems primarily rest, focussing on the features which are important in order to understand the nature of the innovations introduced by Claudian’s political poems, as well as showing the specific space *Bellum Geticum* occupies within this framework.

1. THE ANCIENT BACKGROUND

The writing of panegyrics is a literary phenomenon that acquired special relevance during late antiquity. Indeed, the period starting from the third century AD has been defined as ‘the golden age of panegyrics’, on the grounds that an unprecedented continuum in the available sources – both in Latin and Greek – allow us to observe closely the developments and consolidation of the epideictic practice at this time.²

¹ In particular, Schindler (2009) and Gillett (2012).

² MacCormack (1975), 143. Authors of panegyrics are, among others, Eusebius, Libanius, Himerius, Julian, Themistius, Procopius in Greek, the authors of the XII Panegyrici Latini, Symmachus, Ausonius,

The origins of literary praise, however, are very old and go back at least to the first half of the fifth century BC, when Pindar and Bacchylides addressed some of the earlier extant eulogies to the victors of the Panhellenic games, in the form of *epinikia*.³ The first systematic inclusion of speeches of praise within a theoretical framework can be found from the fourth century BC in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, attributed to Anaximenes of Lampsacus.⁴ Aristotle, in particular, formulated the most successful and most widely used classification of rhetorical speeches, distinguishing them into three typologies: judicial, deliberative and epideictic. He includes praise, together with its negative counterpart, invective, within the remit of the epideictic genre, the purpose of which is to 'display' (from the Greek *epideixis*, 'exhibition').⁵ Aristotle's treatise, as well as subsequent handbooks and theoretical works, explain the virtues that are particularly well suited to appear in epideictic orations and give some instructions on how to attain the best result in composing speeches of praise and blame.⁶ He gives examples of mythological topics as suitable themes for eulogy, and contemporary practice shows that orators and sophists were indeed engaged in the writing of eulogies that focussed on mythological figures.⁷ A shift in the selection of topics can be witnessed in the work of Isocrates, who claimed to be the first to introduce contemporary individuals as subjects of praise in his *Evagoras* (*Or.* 9), an encomium of the king of Salamis on Cyprus. His example was later followed by Xenophon's own encomium on king Agesilaus of Sparta, and,

Claudian, Merobaudes, Sidonius, Ennodius, Priscianus, Cassiodorus and Corippus in Latin. For panegyrics in Byzantine literature, see Previale (1949), Schindler (2009), 31–3.

³ Schindler (2009), 16.

⁴ Although the Aristotelian tradition proved to be more influential for subsequent theory, the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* shows closer similarities to the handbooks of the imperial age in the way it structures the material according to headings, see Russell and Wilson (1981), xxi–xxii.

⁵ Arist. *Rhet.* 1.3.1–3. Aristotle's division is based on the different role of the listener in each of these typologies: the listener can either be a member of an assembly, making decisions on the future (deliberative kind), a judge, making decisions on the past (judicial kind) or simply a spectator who makes decisions on the ability of the orator (epideictic kind). For the reception of this division in Latin theorists, see e.g. *Rh. ad Her.* 1.2 and Cic. *De Inv.* 1.7 (*Aristoteles autem, qui huic arti plurima adiumenta atque ornamenta subministravit, tribus in generibus rerum versari rhetoris officium putavit, demonstrativo, deliberativo, iudiciali*).

⁶ Cic. *De Or.* 2.341–49, even though Cicero considers panegyrics as being more properly a Greek practice, rather than a Roman one. For a survey of the tradition of epideictic theory, see Russell and Wilson (1981), xiii–xxix.

⁷ Arist. *Rhet.* 1.3.6. As examples of epideictic oration with a mythological central theme, Isocrates wrote a speech called *Helen* (*Or.* 10) and one called *Busiris* (*Or.* 11).

with the flourishing of the Hellenistic monarchies, it became customary for orators to compete in composing works which praised influential people, governors and kings.⁸

Originally, the Greek adjective *panēgyrikos* specifically designated a composition recited during a ‘festival’ (*panēgyris*),⁹ whereas a speech of praise was normally called *enkōmion* or *epainos* in Greek, and *laus* or *laudatio* in Latin.¹⁰ However, starting from the second or third century AD, with the treatises of the Greek rhetorician Hermogenes, the name *panēgyrikos* appears to be established as a general term for praise.¹¹ The acceptance of this name was corroborated in late antiquity by the appearance of the collection of the *XII Panegyrici Latini* and by the time Claudian adopted it for some of his political poems, it had probably become the standard term for official praise.¹²

In the Roman world, the first eulogies were associated with the practice of the *laudatio*, the funerary oration normally performed in honour of eminent Roman citizens by their sons or by the closest male relative present at the funerary rites.¹³ Not many examples of these speeches survive, but we know that they were based on the achievements and virtues of the deceased.¹⁴ Polybius underlines that their performance could fulfil a practical and political function: by highlighting their ancestors’ achievements and merits, the speaker could exploit the public visibility of such

⁸ Isocrates strongly underlines the novelty of his choice (*Or.* 9.8). Differently from late antique practice, both Isocrates’ and Xenophon’s orations were written after the death of the person they honour, but they nonetheless remained influential models for later authors. See Russell and Wilson (1981), xv–xvii.

⁹ In particular, the term *panēgyrikos* was used by Isocrates as the title of the oration he delivered in 382 BC and which contained an enthusiastic tribute to Athens.

¹⁰ Sen. *Ep.* 102.5 introduces a distinction between *laus* and *laudatio*: whereas the former only implies a judgement of worthiness towards a person, the second necessarily implies words (*Itaque nemo dicit laudem funebrem, sed laudationem, cuius officium oratione constat. Cum dicimus aliquem laude dignum, non verba illi benigna hominum, sed iudicia promittimus*). The opposite of praise, invective, was called *psogos* in Greek and *vituperatio* in Latin.

¹¹ In his *On types of style*, in particular, Hermogenes used *panēgyrikos* with the broad meaning of a type of writing employed by all those writers, including poets and historians, who ‘strive to create grandeur and passages that give pleasure and almost all the other features that are typical of panegyric oratory’ (Hermog. *Id.* 404 Rabe; translation by Wooten [1987], 125).

¹² MacCormack (1975), 143–4; for an overview of the terms used to define the ‘third kind’ of rhetoric, see Russell (1998), 19–21.

¹³ MacCormack (1975), 146–8; (1976), 33–5.

¹⁴ Polyb. 6.53. Dion. Hal. 5.17.3 states that the custom was a Roman innovation rather than a Greek tradition, but Plut. *Publ.* 9.7 is open to Greek influence. See Vollmer (1892) and Kierdorf (1980) for textual examples; Covino (2010) for an overview of the function of the *laudatio funebris* and further bibliography. For funerary orations performed in a Greek context, see the well-known passage in Thucydides that reports Pericles’ *epitaphios logos* in honour of the fallen in the first year of the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 2.34–46); see also Philostr. *VS* 9 for Gorgias’ *epitaphioi*; Lysias (*Or.* 2); Demosthenes (*Or.* 60); Hyperides (*Epit.*).

occasions in order to enhance their own influence and political career, as well as inspiring a spirit of emulation in younger generations.¹⁵ This political and practical aim is a specific contribution that the *laudatio* brought to the later development of panegyrics. This feature had already been singled out by Cicero as being specifically ‘Roman’ in character. Cicero underlines how the Greeks, on the contrary, would write panegyrics for reading and for entertainment.¹⁶

An important step in the development of Latin praise came with Cicero’s portrayal of Pompey in his *Pro Lege Manilia* (or *De Imperio Cn. Pompei*) where the representation of the general’s virtues was aimed at securing him unlimited military power in order to pursue fight against Mithridates. The same approach – officially highlighting the virtues of an exceptional political figure – appears in the three orations *Pro M. Marcello*, *Pro Q. Ligario* and *Pro rege Deiotaro*. These are also called ‘Caesarian speeches’ because they are all addressed to Caesar and delivered during his dictatorship. Cicero’s orations were extremely influential as models in the development of subsequent Latin panegyrics.¹⁷

Laudationes, as well as several other types of encomium, were commonly written in prose. At least from the end of the fifth century BC, however, poetry was also widely used as a means of praising the achievements of famous leaders. Plutarch, for example, attests that the poet Choerilus followed Lysander during his campaigns in order to be able to proclaim his conquests and informs us that the other poets competed in festivals with poems in his praise.¹⁸ Following Lysander’s precedent, Alexander and the Hellenistic kings equally kept in their retinue poets charged with the task of celebrating their military campaigns.¹⁹ Given the fact that the great majority of these poems have not survived, it is unfortunately impossible to establish whether

¹⁵ Polyb. 6.54. MacCormack (1975), 146–8. Famous is the case of Caesar, who, at the funeral of his aunt Julia, dared to display the images of Marius and gained in this way the support of the people, see Plut. *Caes.* 5.

¹⁶ Cic. *De Orat.* 2.341 (*Ipsi enim Graeci magis legendi et delectationis aut hominis alicuius ornandi quam utilitatis huius forensis causa laudationes scriptitaverunt ... nostrae laudationes quibus in foro utimur aut testimonii brevitatem habent nudam atque inornatum aut scribuntur ad funebrem contionem, quae ad orationis laudem minime accommodata est*).

¹⁷ See Rees (2012), 4–5; Dewar (1996) xxiv; Braund (1998) considers them as the earliest prototypes for imperial panegyrics because they contain the praise of an autocratic ruler, as well as suggesting a programme for the future.

¹⁸ Plut. *Lys.* 18.

¹⁹ Ziegler (1966), 16–17; Hardie (1983), 86–7; Schindler (2009), 30–31.

they had any direct influence over later practice, but even so, they appear to set a pattern for the fusion of eulogy and poetry.

Poetry figures in celebrations of important individuals also in the Roman tradition, both in the form of short, independent poems, and as encomiastic insertions within longer compositions. Representatives of the first group are the pseudo-Tibullan *Panegyricus Messallae* and the anonymous *Laus Pisonis*, as well as some of the short poems that Statius collected in his *Silvae* (for example, *Silv.* 4.1, a eulogy dedicated to Domitian on the occasion of his seventeenth consulship and – incidentally – the first known consular eulogy). These poems show mainly an enumerative structure which closely follows rhetorical precepts, listing virtues and accomplishments of the individual praised, and using mythological and historical comparisons. Different from late antique panegyrics, they appear to have had the more limited goal of securing patronage and certainly do not belong to the public sphere, but rather appear to have been intended for a private environment.²⁰ The second group includes poems belonging to different genres – such as epic, didactic literature or bucolic – all of which include in their structure sections that have the function of implicitly or explicitly praising the emperor. Examples of such are numerous, starting from Virgil's *Aeneid* and continuing with Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Statius' *Thebaid* and the bucolic poems of Calpurnius Siculus, to name only a few.²¹ The frequency of the presence of laudatory content intertwined within the narrative structure of epic poems shows clearly the permeability of both genres to adapt elements from one another and provides an important starting point for Claudian's innovations.²² In particular, Claudian's own understanding of this dynamic is revealed by his description of the relationship between Scipio and Ennius. In the preface to the third book of *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, Claudian pictures the poet as always at the side

²⁰ The relationship between these short eulogies – together with Theocritus' *Carm.* 17, a eulogy to Ptolemy, and Cicero's lost autobiographical poems – and the late antique panegyrics is analysed in detail in Schindler (2009), 36–44. As Schindler underlines, the main difference between the earlier eulogies and the late antique panegyrics can be found in the private character that the majority of the former seem to have possessed.

²¹ Schindler (2009), 26–30.

²² Schindler (2009), 21–3, points out the proximity existing from the outset between the genre of panegyric and poetry: poetic examples are massively exploited in eulogies and poetry is recognised as the ideal instrument for bringing glory to its subjects (in particular the verse of the Homeric poems, the hexameter). Besides, poetry was originally the first medium in which topics later tackled by oratory were expressed (cf. Russell and Wilson [1981], xxxi–xxxii).

of the general in order to celebrate his successes.²³ His interpretation of Ennius as Scipio's panegyrist is further emphasised by the double identification of Stilicho as Scipio and of himself as Ennius at the end of the preface.²⁴

2. LATE ANTIQUE TRANSFORMATIONS

Between the late third and the early fourth century, the instructions on how to compose panegyrics became the central topic of two rhetorical handbooks attributed to a teacher of rhetoric called Menander, but probably composed by different authors.²⁵ The first of the two texts consists of a classification of the types of praise. These are initially divided according to the object of praise – whether divine or mortal (cities and countries are included within the mortal objects, together with animal and human beings) – and secondarily conforming to the purpose or occasion in which they are delivered. The second treatise focuses more specifically on the praise of individuals and differentiates between several types of speeches, including the so-called 'imperial oration' or *basilikos logos*.²⁶ This latter model was partly derived from earlier theory and extended its influence both to late antique and Byzantine practice.²⁷ Its elements are often blended with those drawn from other typologies of speeches, for example the *epibatērios* or 'speech of arrival'. Menander explains quite schematically how the diverse types of speech should be structured under distinct headings, as well as listing some of the *topoi* and examples to be used under each of them. In the *basilikos logos*, the most relevant for our study, these headings follow the proem and they are: origin (native country, family), birth, education, accomplishments, deeds in war and deeds in peace (which in turn include sub-headings according to the specific virtues shown by

²³ *Stil.* 3 pr. 7–12 (*seu patriis primaevus manibus ultor / subdeeret Hispanum legibus Oceanum, / seu Tyrias certa fracturus cuspide vires / inferret Libyco signa tremenda mari, / hearebat doctus lateri castrisque solebat / omnibus in medias Ennius ire tubas*).

²⁴ *Stil.* 3 pr. 21–4 (*Noster Scipiades Stilicho, qui concidit alter / Hannibal antiquo saevior Hannibale, / te mihi post quintos annorum Roma recursus / reddidit et votis iussit adesse suis*). Cf. Ware (2012), 27–9, for a discussion on the interpretation of Virgil's poetry as panegyric, and Ware (2017) for an analysis of the influence that this understanding had on prose encomia.

²⁵ For discussion on the authorship, see Russell and Wilson (1981), xxxvi–xl, who come to the conclusion that both treatises date to the reign of Diocletian. Next to these two treatises, see also Ps. Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

²⁶ Menander Rhetor 368–77.30.

²⁷ For early and middle Byzantine examples, cf. Procopius and the *Vita Basilii*. See Alexander (1940); Previale (1949).

the individual), followed by an epilogue.²⁸ While prescribing such a rigid arrangement of topics, Menander also admits that the structure can be adapted to the actual circumstances in which the orator is called to deliver their speech, and modified when necessary to avoid specific arguments, for example if the emperor comes from a humble background and cannot boast an important family or, indeed, not even a renowned land of birth.²⁹ Panegyrics show different degrees of adherence to these instructions, but it is clear from their diffusion that the treatises represented tendencies that were widespread throughout the empire; their appearance testifies to the increased importance of panegyrics and to the need of having clear and standardised instructions for their composition. This might be linked to the enlargement of the bureaucratic machinery of the Roman state that took place between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century as a consequence of Diocletian's reforms. These changes might have led to an increase in the number of occasions for public rhetorical display, consequently creating a higher demand for quickly assembled speeches to be delivered on such occasions.³⁰

In the Latin-speaking world, this renewed interest is demonstrated particularly well by the exceptional continuity displayed by the *XII Panegyrici Latini*, a collection of twelve speeches which constitute our main source for the practice of late antique panegyrics in Latin before Claudian, and by Symmachus' orations.³¹ Most of the texts gathered in the *Panegyrici Latini* date to a period ranging between the end of the third century and the first half of the fourth century (precisely from 289 to 389), with the notable exception of Pliny's *gratiarum actio* which was addressed to emperor Trajan as a speech of thanks for the suffect consulship Pliny held in 100.³² The collection

²⁸ Similar guidelines are given also by Quintilian in *Inst. or.* 3.7.15–16.

²⁹ Menander Rhetor 370.9–14. For example, Pacatus avoids talking about Theodosius' father, possibly because he had died in doubtful circumstances having been charged with treason while fighting in Africa; the orator, not being able to entirely omit such an important personality from his account, resorts to praising him for fathering the emperor Theodosius (*Pan. Lat.* II(12).5–6).

³⁰ MacCormack (1975), 144.

³¹ The *XII Panegyrici Latini* have been handed down by a single manuscript discovered in Mainz in 1433; only part of the first of them, Pliny's *Panegyricus*, has an independent manuscript tradition. Symmachus wrote three imperial orations – two for Valentinian I and one for Gratian – but they only survive in fragments. Panegyric elements are also contained in *Or.* 4, dedicated to Symmachus' father, and in *Or.* 5. The orations have been edited by Seeck (1883).

³² The custom of addressing a speech to the emperor (or another public authority) in order to thank him for the bestowing of an office, in particular the consulship, has its roots in the republican age, see MacCormack (1975), 149. Pliny admits that his panegyric was revised after its delivery (*Ep.* 3.13) and the piece shows literary ambitions. For its influence on later panegyrics, see Rees (2012).

seems to have undergone several phases of completion and might have been compiled by Latinus Pacatus Drepanius, whose speech in praise of Theodosius is the last of the panegyrics in chronological order and the one that contains the largest quantity of similarities and borrowings from earlier texts in the collection.³³ It is believed that Pliny's oration has been included as the prototype to which the other writers tried to conform and that the whole collection was put together to serve as a model for aspiring orators.³⁴ Most of the texts of the collection have a link with Gaul and are a product of the schools of rhetoric that were particularly thriving in that region at the time.³⁵ The disposition of headings and the use of comparison within single panegyrics have been analytically examined with the aim of showing the extent to which they conform to Menander's precepts, but only a few of them actually respond to this rigid scheme.³⁶ The majority of the panegyrics, in fact, do not strictly comply with the theorist's instruction – probably a reflection of the freedom explicitly conceded to practitioners by Menander – but rather use either the chronological/biographical order, or a division on the basis of virtues, or a mix of the two methods.³⁷ All the texts show an extensive knowledge of Latin, and possibly Greek, literature and they borrow from each other, which suggests that the texts probably had undergone a written circulation before finding a place in the collection.

The public who would gather to listen to the performances, in particular when these were delivered in front of the Senate, were likely to possess a literary and rhetorical background, the more so as education was increasingly considered as an essential requirement for a professional career at the court or in the provincial bureaucracy.³⁸ The use of handbooks – like Menander's or a Latin equivalent – for the composition of encomia by schools of rhetoric presumably contributed to the formation of expectations on the part of the audience, which in turn created the conditions for the consolidation of the genre.³⁹

³³ For a more detailed description of the *corpus* and of questions of authorship, see Nixon and Rodgers (1994), 3–7 and 8–10; Rees (2012).

³⁴ Nixon and Rodgers (1994), 7.

³⁵ Symmachus, for example, requested a Gallic teacher for his son (*Ep.* 6.34). This link also demonstrates a special relationship between the emperor and the territory, see Nixon and Rodgers (1994), 31–2; McCormack (1975), 173–7; (1976), 67–9.

³⁶ Mesk (1912).

³⁷ Nixon and Rodgers (1994), 10–14.

³⁸ For a detailed study of the function and importance of education in late antiquity, see Kaster (1988).

³⁹ Schindler (2009), 18.

At the opposite end of the communicative process from the audience was the speaker. Until Claudian, panegyrists were individuals – mostly professional orators – who would often be commissioned by a city, a professional body or a private individual in order to bring certain matters – generally a request or a manifestation of gratitude – to the attention of the emperor. As has been recently underlined, it could happen that an orator delivered a panegyric in the presence of the same honorand more than once, but typically there was no extended relationship between the orator and the object of his praise.⁴⁰ Many panegyrists combined a teaching profession with the delivery of public orations, as we have seen in the case of the authors of the *XII Panegyrici Latini*, but also in the cases of other prominent figures both in the Eastern and in the Western empire. Others, especially in the Greek half of the empire, appear to have practiced poetry and panegyrics at the same time. These are part of the phenomenon that Alan Cameron labelled ‘wandering poets’: professional poets who came from the Greek east – the majority of them from Egypt – and who travelled extensively throughout the empire in order to offer their services to cities and private individuals alike.⁴¹

The *Panegyrici Latini* unveil an array of circumstances in which panegyrics could be performed: celebrations for the birthday of Rome (X; VI) or of the emperor (XI), anniversaries of imperial accessions or *quinquennalia* (V; IV; VIII), imperial marriages (VII), the aftermath of triumphs (XII; II), *gratiarum actiones* for the consulship (I; III). Undoubtedly, our sources represent only a tiny portion of the actual amount of orations that were produced and thus there might have been other occasions for their delivery. Late antiquity saw remarkable transformations in ideas about imperial power and court. A number of reforms, carried out especially during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, had significantly enlarged the ranks of the bureaucracy and greatly intensified the process of centralisation, contributing to the transformation of the imperial court as the focal point of all political aspirations. Citizens from every corner of the empire would strive to address their concerns, petitions and ambitions to the emperor, and panegyrics, with their key element of praise and codified flattery, could be seen as a privileged means of achieving this aim

⁴⁰ Gillett (2012), 267.

⁴¹ See Cameron (1965), reprinted in Cameron (2015), 1–36. Cameron includes Claudian in this poetic ‘movement’.

and securing his benevolence. In turn, the emperor would seek to accentuate the attributes of his power through an often elaborate and spectacular system of etiquette and ceremony.

The implementation of the Tetrarchic system devised by Diocletian substituted a single ruler with a college of emperors. The simultaneous existence of multiple emperors and the fact that each of them had to control personally a vast extent of the empire in order to avert invasions and usurpations, led to an increased mobility of the emperors and their courts. In turn, this mobility favoured the proliferation of panegyrics in late antiquity, as one of the most important occasions for display was the arrival of the emperor and his entourage in a city. The elaborate and somewhat ostentatious parade which would accompany the event was designed to elicit the awe of the bystanders, thus accentuating the distance between the privileged world of the court and the rest of the population. This dynamic is depicted particularly well in Ammianus' description of the arrival of Constantius II in Rome: the emperor advances in the midst of marching troops in glittering armour, he is sitting alone on a chariot and both his raised position and the finery of his robes make him stand out from the rest of the crowd, at the centre of everyone's gaze.⁴² In order to underline his estrangement, even from human life, he does not turn his head or move his hands.⁴³ This attitude also appears in late antique art, where the representation of the emperor increasingly acquires the undertone of a divine entity;⁴⁴ likewise, the large-scale imperial building programme that took place during late antiquity can be seen as the answer to the need for a suitable setting for the court ceremonies, including the delivery of panegyrics.⁴⁵

The surviving panegyrics mostly address the emperor or a newly elected consul. Depending on the location in which the performance would have taken place, the audience could be variously composed: the Senate in Rome – and from the mid-fourth

⁴² Amm. 16.10.4–8.

⁴³ Amm. 16.10.10–11.

⁴⁴ For a literary example of the religious piety that was reserved to the emperor, cf. *Pan. Lat.* XI(3).11.1–3 (*Quale pietas vestra spectaculum dedit, cum in Mediolanensi palatio admissis qui sacros vultus adoraturi errant conspecti estis ambo, et consuetudinem simplicis venerationis geminato numine repente turbastis! Nemo ordinem numinum solita secutus est disciplina; omnes adorandi mora restiterunt duplicatio pietatis officio contumaces. Atque haec quidem velut interioribus sacrariis operata veneratio eorum modo animos obstupefecerat quibus auditum vestri dabant ordines dignitatis*).

⁴⁵ MacCormack (1975), 155–9.

century on in Constantinople – the high officials of the court and the local aristocracy in other imperial residences, such as Milan and Trier.⁴⁶ Several speeches bear witness to the presence of the emperor: the orator of 297, for example, explicitly declares that he is reciting in front of him and suggests that the emperor is standing while listening.⁴⁷ *Praesentia* was an important feature of the agency of imperial power in late antiquity and the panegyrics show this topic throughout their structure;⁴⁸ by virtue of his mere proximity, for example, the emperor was able to defeat enemies and bring prosperity to a region.⁴⁹ In apparent contradiction with the importance conferred to the presence of the emperor, this imperial quality did not always seem to require actual physical presence, but could be intended in a metaphorical way. The orator of 291 demonstrates this point clearly when he declares: ‘For no part of the land is without the presence of Your Majesties even when you yourselves seem to be absent’.⁵⁰ In fact, we know that the emperor did not always attend in person the delivery of a panegyric in his honour, even when he was specifically addressed by the speaker. It is the case of the panegyric delivered by Nazarius in 321, where the insistence of the orator on calling upon Constantine cannot conceal the fact that the emperor was somewhere else at that time.⁵¹

Above all, panegyrics were a form of political communication. As the focal moment of elaborate court displays, they were exploited to convey key messages, such as propagating imperial ideology, reinforcing official interpretations of recent events and giving directions for the future. Indeed, far from being a mere accessory to imperial ceremonial, they occupied a fundamental place in a process of

⁴⁶ Pliny’s *Panegyricus* constitutes an exception, as it was also meant to be enjoyed in private reading by a literary elite (see *Ep.* 3.18.1 and 3.18.9).

⁴⁷ *Pan. Lat.* VIII(4).1.1: ‘but this [awe and trepidation] is not without reason, inasmuch as I am to proclaim the divine miracles of your valour in the presence of Your Majesty yourself’; and *Pan. Lat.* VIII(4).4.4: ‘and I must be aware of the time, since I am speaking while the Caesar is standing’ (translations by Nixon and Rodgers [1994]).

⁴⁸ To the point of essentially attributing the power of ubiquity to the emperor, see *e.g.* *Pan. Lat.* X(2).5.3.

⁴⁹ *Pan. Lat.* VIII(4).6.1: ‘Thus you straightaway made Gaul ours, Caesar, simply by coming here’; and VIII(4).13.3: ‘For you yourself, you, lord Maximian, Emperor eternal, having deigned to speed the arrival of your divinity by a novel shortening of your journey, reached the Rhine unexpectedly and protected that whole frontier not with equestrian forces, not with foot soldiers, but by the terror inspired by your presence!’ (translations by Nixon and Rodgers [1994]).

⁵⁰ *Pan. Lat.* XI(3).13.5. The two majesties are Maximian – whose birthday is celebrated – and his colleague Diocletian.

⁵¹ Nazarius admits as much at *Pan. Lat.* IV(10).3.1. For a discussion of the implications of the abstract qualities of imperial *praesentia*, see Rees (2002), 11–17.

communication that worked simultaneously in two directions. On the one hand, the emperor himself could exploit panegyrics to broadcast details of his life (real or fictional) or traits of his persona, which would contribute to legitimise his power and bolster the support of his subjects. This function of panegyrics distinctively crops up, for example, in the group of speeches from the *XII Panegyrici Latini* which are dedicated to the emperor Constantine.⁵² In these panegyrics, it is possible to witness the development of the presentation of the emperor from a member of the Tetrarchic system, legitimised through his marriage to Maximian's daughter Fausta, to the heir of an illustrious dynastic lineage that reaches back to Claudius II and does away with any association to the previous political system.⁵³ Given the highly sensitive nature of the political situation, at least part of this material is likely to have been prompted by the emperor himself or to have been inspired by official communication.⁵⁴

On the other hand, by putting their rhetorical skills and literary knowledge to the service of this communicative process, the panegyrists themselves became active agents and gave voice to the aspirations and concerns of the communities they were representatives of.⁵⁵ Top-down communication was consequently accompanied by a movement in the opposite direction: in their speeches, the orators would offer positive examples and role models the emperor and other members of the elite were expected to conform to, thus giving advice and reminding their illustrious audience what a good conduct should entail and what was best to avoid.⁵⁶ In addition, they could also act as intermediaries between the emperor and a specific community or political body. A clear example of this social function of the panegyrist is effectively illustrated by *Pan. Lat. II(12)*, a speech given by the orator Pacatus Drepanius in the aftermath of Theodosius' victory over Maximus. In this panegyric, Pacatus successfully manipulates the otherness of his Gallic provenance in order to ultimately reaffirm the loyalty of his community to the rightful emperor, thus defending his fellow citizens'

⁵² The Constantinian speeches are *Pan. Lat. VII(6)*, *VI(7)*, *V(8)*, *XII(9)* and *IV(10)*.

⁵³ In particular, in *Pan. Lat. VII(6)* and *Pan. Lat. VI(7)*, recited respectively in 307 and in 301.

⁵⁴ Sabbah (1984), 374–5; Ware (2019), 293. Panegyrics interacted with other forms of dissemination of the political ideology, such as coins, commemorative medallions and art works, see Sabbah (1984), 373–8.

⁵⁵ Maranesi (2016), 32–9, focuses on the role of the panegyrists in constructing an authoritative power-model for Constantine; on the delineation of the dynastic principle for Constantine as irradiating from the emperor himself, see Maranesi (2016), 79–84.

⁵⁶ In this light, the figure of the panegyrist could be compared to the of the educator, see Sabbah (1984), 379–80; on the connection between praise and advice, see also Pernot (2015), 93–4.

forced adhesion to the regime of the usurper.⁵⁷ Pacatus' speech also demonstrates how panegyrists would adapt their attitudes towards individuals and institutions, and manipulate historical circumstances according to the changes in the political landscape.

As part of this fundamentally circular process of communication, both top-down and bottom-up, the creation of consensus was another major concern of panegyrists: by reinstating widely recognised values and applying them to the presentation of the emperor, their performances aimed at cementing the bonds between the ruler and society. Members of the public were implicitly called on to share the praise of the emperor and the version of the events given during the performance of the panegyric, and – by virtue of their attendance at this court ceremonial – would thus convey a form of political assent which had the effect of reaffirming the right of the emperor to rule.⁵⁸

3. THE INNOVATIONS OF CLAUDIAN

At the end of the fourth century, when Claudian began his literary career in the Western half of the Roman empire, the tradition of prose panegyrics was already well established. The last oration of the collection of the *XII Panegyrici Latini* – that of Pacatus for the emperor Theodosius, celebrating the previous year's victory over the usurper Magnus Maximus – dates to 389, only a few years before Claudian's own debut in Rome on 1 January 395. Although the time lapse between the two works is very short, from a first reading of Claudian's panegyric it is already evident that we are dealing with something radically different. From the formal point of view, in contrast with the late antique tradition which had until that point consolidated the use of prose for official praise, Claudian began his career composing his very first panegyric for the consuls Olybrius and Probinus in hexameters. The choice of the metre is significant: hexameters were the traditional metre of epic, employed by Homer in order to narrate the deeds of famous heroes, and for this reason they were considered to give prestige to the subject matter; they were also very flexible, as

⁵⁷ See the analysis of Pacatus' technique in Rees (2013).

⁵⁸ In order to create consensus, panegyrists would often focus on a symbolic rather than factual reading of the events: see MacCormack (1975), 160–5. On the notion of consensus applied to ancient politics, see Maranesi (2016), 19–26. Pernot (2015), 94–100, brings these arguments even further, envisaging the creation of an utopian world in the speeches of panegyrics.

Homer had already included elements in his poems of the kind which would later come to define distinctive genres of poetry, and allowed therefore for a smooth inclusion of a variety of topics.⁵⁹ As referred to earlier, this particular format of praise – mostly written in hexameters, but occasionally also in elegiacs – had a number of precedents both in the Greek and in the Latin tradition, but it had been previously employed in a private context, rather than for public declamations.

In the Greek-speaking part of the empire in particular, poetic praise gained currency during the Hellenistic age first, and then during the period of the so-called Second Sophistic, thanks to the ever-increasing network of festivals and celebrations which provided a platform for public display of rhetoric prowess. Although evidence of literary activity is very scarce for the third century AD, elements of continuity with the early centuries of the empire can be found in cultural institutions such as festivals and schools in the fourth century, which demonstrates that not all artistic and educational activities suddenly ceased during this period.⁶⁰ It is then reasonable to conclude that poetry too continued to be practised, albeit perhaps on a minor scale. In late antiquity, the largest body of evidence for poetical encomia in Greek comes from Egyptian papyri. These attest to a bustle of poetic activity across the whole country and mark eulogies of men and cities as one of the most frequently pursued literary genres. According to the earlier mentioned thesis first proposed by Alan Cameron, even though none of their poems has been preserved in its entirety, hints and references reported by contemporaries and by later Byzantine scholars point to the existence of a ‘school’ of ‘wandering poets’ who journeyed mainly from Egypt, providing their services to customers throughout the Roman empire. What these poets had in common – and led Cameron to label them as a ‘school’ – are in particular their extensive travelling, their status of *poetae docti* (scholars as well as men of letters), and their skills in treading along the dangerous path of politics when writing about contemporary subjects.⁶¹ Several of the fragments that have been preserved on papyri are not easily categorised as either firmly epic or firmly panegyric, because there is a

⁵⁹ For an overview of the practice of Greek encomiastic poetry and the implications of the use of the hexameter as a metre, see Hardie (1983), 86–91; Schindler (2009), 24–6.

⁶⁰ Hardie (1983), 15–16, who also cites as evidence the self-aware comparisons drawn by the orators themselves with their predecessors.

⁶¹ Cameron (1965), reprinted with substantial alterations as Cameron (2015).

tendency for the two genres to overlap when the subject of a poem in hexameters is a living person.⁶² The fact that Claudian emerged from such a cultural environment is significant, given the evidence which demonstrates a taste for blending the features of two different genres within a single poem, and this may help to shed light on the reason for his choice of poetry as a means of conveying his praise.

As well as acknowledging Claudian's early literary exposure to Greek poetic tradition, it is also worth noting that the Latin tradition Claudian joined was one in which poetry had from its beginning a strong focus on recent or contemporary events,⁶³ and in which panegyric elements were also often incorporated in poems written in hexameters and belonging to other genres. This phenomenon became particularly evident in poetry produced during the Augustan and early imperial periods, due to the fading of the literary patronage traditionally exercised by the families of the Roman aristocracy and the concentration of subsidies and sponsorship at the imperial court.⁶⁴ Augustan authors often included the emperor as one of the divinities and invoked his guidance. This style of praise then evolved into a key trait of the literature of the early empire, especially in the writers active under Nero and the Flavian emperors.⁶⁵ Lucan included a bombastic praise of Nero in the proem of his *Bellum Civile*, declaring that the civil wars were a small price to pay if they served to bring about an age when Nero is prince;⁶⁶ Valerius Flaccus opened his *Argonautica* placing Vespasian on the same level of Apollo in his request for guidance and thus implicitly attributing a similarly divine status to the late emperor's two sons, mentioned within the same passage;⁶⁷ at the beginning of the *Thebaid*, Statius shuns the possibility of singing Domitian's deeds, while at the same time insisting on their greatness and portraying Jupiter and the sky offering the emperor a spot among the stars.⁶⁸

⁶² Schindler (2009), 32–3, discusses this group of authors as early Byzantine encomiasts and also considers their fragments as ambiguously placed between epic and panegyric; however, she thinks that they would have had virtually no influence on the development of Latin verse panegyrics and that they do not show the characteristics of official poetry because they seem to show a predominance of narrative structures. The fragments are collected in Heitsch (1961–4).

⁶³ The *Annals* of Ennius are an obvious example. See Schindler (2009), 34–5, for a discussion of the influence that the lost poems Cicero wrote about his own career could have had on later practice.

⁶⁴ Hardie (1983), 41–4.

⁶⁵ Schindler (2009), 26–8.

⁶⁶ Lucan. 1.33–66.

⁶⁷ Val. Flac. 1.5–21.

⁶⁸ Stat. *Theb.* 1.17–33.

The same technique is not restricted to epic, but it is found also in other genres, for example in the bucolics of Calpurnius Siculus and in the *Carmina Einsidlensia*. During the fourth century, it continued to inform the poetic experiments of the emerging Christian literature: the anonymous *Laudes Domini*, a short text which belongs to the cultural milieu of the school of rhetoric of Autun, adapts the language of praise to Christian needs, blending the eulogy of Christ with a prayer to protect the emperor Constantine and the presentation of the latter as an exemplary prince who embodies all the necessary virtues; moreover, the poet expresses the hope that his progeny could follow in his steps, thus endorsing a dynastic principle and inscribing it within Christian values.⁶⁹ Similarly, in his paraphrasis of the gospels published in 329, Juvencus inserts a eulogy of Constantine as the keeper of the *pax Christiana* and, around the same year, Optatian devoted many of his calligrams to celebrate the emperor.⁷⁰

Considering together the interconnections thus established between praise and poetry in hexameters for both Claudian's culture of provenance – Greek – and the literary tradition with which he started to engage after moving to Italy around 394 – Latin – it is therefore possible to understand the line of development along which Claudian moved when he began to write panegyrics in verse. In fact, there might have been close parallels in Latin to the type of panegyrics Claudian composed. Unfortunately, we mostly know about such examples through indirect evidence and only a few titles and a few fragments survive. These are: the *Bellum Histricum* by Hostius, the *Pragmatia Belli Gallici* by Furius, the *Bellum Sequanicum* by Varro and the *De Bello Germanico* by Statius.⁷¹ Given the popularity that Statius – together with other authors of the so-called Silver Age of Latin literature – reached in late antiquity, it is possible that Claudian was influenced by his lost poem *De Bello Germanico*, celebrating the military campaign that Domitian fought in Germany around 83. Another interesting precedent for Claudian's own oeuvre is a lost poem written by Proba, an aristocratic Roman lady born in a senatorial family. The name of Proba is

⁶⁹ On the rhetorical techniques employed by the anonymous author of the *Laudes Domini*, see Rees (2010).

⁷⁰ On the different levels at which Optatian's poems can be read, see Pelttari (2014), 80–4; on a broader analysis of Optatian's peculiar aesthetics, see Squire (2017).

⁷¹ See Schindler (2009), 33–4.

normally associated with her biblical *cento*, in which she uses lines from the works of Virgil in order to rewrite the stories contained in the Bible; however, a subscription contained in a lost manuscript and copied by the scholar Bernard de Montfaucon at the end of the seventeenth century, attests that Proba is also the author of a lost poem on the usurpation of Magnentius (351-353).⁷² Although it is not possible to say for certain what these poems would have looked like, titles which consist of the name of a war and the content of the surviving fragments seem to suggest that they were written in the epic style and consequently in the epic metre, the hexameter; besides, given that their subject matter was the narration of the military achievements of living emperors, it is highly likely that they would have contained panegyric elements. These few examples therefore demonstrate the existence of a number of precedents for the particular style of composition that Claudian would later adopt and also suggests that contemporary audiences were likely accustomed, to some degree at least, to this type of panegyric poetry.

Even though Claudian might not have been the first to mix historical and epic narrative with a panegyric style, his works are the first extant examples of the practical use of this technique and for some of the occasions for which they were written – for example, consular panegyrics – also the very first poems in their genre. In his poetry, Claudian is able to skilfully adapt elements taken from his epic models and integrate them smoothly within the structure of the panegyric, creating a seamless whole that consistently combines ingredients with a different origin. Claudia Schindler has offered a useful classification of the epic elements contained in the panegyrics written by Claudian. She remarks that, whereas Claudian borrows relatively little content from the great epic cycles, mostly relegating their stories and myths to comparisons, he resorts rather to a number of formal elements of epic. She then distinguishes these elements in two categories: those that contribute to the development of the plot (*die handlungstragenden Elemente*) and those that cause instead a break in the narration (*die nicht-handlungstragenden Elemente*). In the first category, she lists ‘typical scenes’ of epic, such as descriptions of battles, the divine apparatus (often reduced to the mere presence of allegorical figures), episodes of

⁷² Matthews (1992), 278–80 quotes the entire subscription with Montfaucon’s own notes: *Proba, uxor Adelphi, mater Olibrii et Aliepii (sic pro Alypii), cum Constantini (sic pro Constantii) bellum adversus Magnentium conscripsisset, conscripsit et hunc librum.*

divination, and dreams. Some of these features can be easily identified in *Bellum Geticum*. For example, Claudian does not give an actual, full description of the war against Alaric, but condenses the whole of the military campaign and the final fighting at Pollentia in a short sequence centred on the heroic death of an anonymous leader of the Alanic contingent enlisted on Stilicho's side (vv. 581–97). As Schindler notes, the scene constitutes an *aristeia*, the description of a warrior's greatest achievements in battle, and contains a blessing to the hero (*makarismós*) that displays a formula already crystallised in the epic use.⁷³ The sphere of the divine is above all represented by the prodigy of the two wolves, inside whose entrails human limbs were found (vv. 249–67), and the false prophecy that deceived Alaric and made him believe he would reach the *Urbs* – Rome – when the oracle meant instead a small river of the same name, flowing close to Pollentia (vv. 540–57).⁷⁴

The second of Schindler's categories – that of the 'non-narrative' elements – consists of the descriptive forms of the catalogue, the ekphrasis and the simile. Catalogues often have a geographical or ethnographical content; in *Bellum Geticum*, for example, Claudian draws a list of the barbarian populations already subjugated by the Roman legions that are going to face Alaric in order to exalt their ability to intimidate their enemies (vv. 414–19). As in epic, similes focus on a detail of a character and build the comparison in order to amplify such detail; Claudian uses them very often.⁷⁵ Schindler recalls a simile precisely from *Bellum Geticum* in order to illustrate the method with which Claudian adapts this epic element to the panegyric intent of his poem. She refers to the fact that panegyrics always strive to focus only on the positive aspects of a subject and quotes the passage in which Stilicho, travelling across the Alps in order to gather more legions for the defence of Rome from the Goths, is compared to a lion that abandons his den and braves the adverse weather conditions in order to bring back food for his cubs (vv. 323–9). The scene is a reminiscence of a typically Homeric simile, where the fighting warriors are compared to fierce and raging lions, and completes the function of glorifying Stilicho by equalling him to the Homeric heroes. At the same time, however, Claudian counters this epic tendency acting in response to the demands of the panegyric and he is

⁷³ Lucan. 4.393 and other authors, see Schindler (2004), 26.

⁷⁴ See *infra* p. 75, n. 249, and *comm. ad v.* 61.

⁷⁵ Schindler (2004), 32.

therefore very careful to play down any ambiguity that could be present in the original Homeric simile and stresses instead the lion's affection for its offspring.⁷⁶

The epic nature of Claudian's poetry is also confirmed by the fact that both he himself and his audience regarded his panegyrics mainly as epic poems. This is testified by the formal recognition that the Senate of Rome and the emperors decided to bestow on the poet as witness of their appreciation: a statue bearing the likeness of Claudian was erected in the forum of Trajan and furnished with an honorary inscription that celebrated his literary achievements. The dedication of the statue is touched upon by Claudian himself in the preface to *Bellum Geticum* (vv. 7–9) and the text of the inscription has been preserved. The official Latin inscription is followed by an elegiac couplet in Greek that reveals how contemporaries were supposed to understand Claudian's poetry. In its first line, it reads: Εἰν ἐνὶ Βιργιλίῳ νόον καὶ Μοῦσαν Ὀμήρου.⁷⁷ Claudian is thus consciously portrayed as an heir of Virgil and Homer and his work inserted within their same poetic tradition – that of epic.

This constant presence of epic features and the awareness with which both Claudian and his audience seem to have considered the panegyrics as partaking in the epic tradition, have induced several scholars to include Claudian's compositions under the umbrella of a new literary sub-genre – that of 'panegyric-epic'. This terminology was initially proposed by Heinz Hofmann in an article devoted to the systematisation of non-Christian Latin epic in late antiquity. Hofmann was the first to recognise the formation and consolidation of a new genre that extended from the poems of Claudian – previously divided between 'panegyrics', 'invectives' and 'historical poems' – to those of the African author Flavius Cresconius Corippus in the sixth century AD, including authors such as Merobaudes, Sidonius and Priscianus. He included this new genre in the domain of epos.⁷⁸ The approach has found particular favour in the German scholarly tradition and has been the focus of more recent studies, both in German and in English, that trace the origins and the development of 'panegyric-epic' as a distinctive literary genre, focussing on the transformations introduced by Claudian and

⁷⁶ Claudian's simile, in particular, seems to blend together the features of two passages from the *Iliad*: *Il.* 12.299–306, where Sarpedon rushes against the Glaucus like a lion that severe hunger has made fearless, and *Il.* 17.133–6, where Aias, protecting the corpse of Patroclus, is compared to a lion protecting its cubs.

⁷⁷ *CIL* 6.1710 = *ILS* 2949. Cf. *comm. ad pr.* 2.

⁷⁸ Hofmann (1988).

on the success that such innovations found among later authors and audiences alike.⁷⁹ Andrew Gillett, in particular, offers a detailed analysis of Sidonius' *Carm.* 9.274–301, with which he strives to demonstrate that Sidonius was already consciously hinting at panegyric-epic as a specific sub-genre.⁸⁰ Although Gillett's scrutiny is very accurate, it is very unlikely that modern nomenclature could reflect the understanding that ancient readers had of the poems of Claudian and his successors (and might have not been shared by Claudian anyway). However, the evidence of Sidonius, as well as the success that Claudian's formula had in the fifth and sixth century, does bear witness to the awareness of a shift in the writing of panegyrics. Talking about 'epic-panegyric', therefore, could be useful in order to underline the innovations introduced by Claudian and to differentiate his poems from earlier practice.⁸¹

As the term 'panegyric-epic' underlines, although the poems of Claudian share many features with epic literature, they cannot be completely assimilated within it. In fact, Claudian organises his material in a way that resembles more a prose panegyric than an epic poem. In conformity with the guidance offered by the treatises of rhetoric for the composition of panegyrics, the poems seem to proceed as if under headings, rather than following the development of a plot. In the case of *Bellum Geticum*, for example, despite the fact that the subject matter – a successfully military campaign against a barbarian enemy and fearsome antagonist – potentially allowed for a narrative structure, Claudian chose instead to stitch together a series of episodes, focussing on particular scenes, rather than on the whole poem as a narrative unit. This is particularly evident when considering the scarcity of actual action that takes place in the first and longest section of the poem, which is dedicated to Stilicho's preparations for the war: he promises the frightened citizens of Italy that he is going to deliver them from their enemy, travels through the Alps to bring back additional legions and then returns to the cheering of his people. All these actions are outlined in a relatively short space, whereas the descriptions, catalogues and comparison that surround them are treated much more in detail. For example, the reader must wait

⁷⁹ See Schindler (2009), 2, n. 5, for an overview of the German scholars who follow Hofmann's terminology.

⁸⁰ Gillett (2012), 271–8.

⁸¹ Ware (2012), 19–20, agrees with the fact that it is not possible to consider Claudian's works either as only panegyrics or only epic; she is nonetheless sceptical about the use of modern terminology.

almost one hundred lines before Stilicho makes an appearance as a character in the poem, asking his fellow citizens to resist the barbarian invader a little longer while he takes care of looking for more troops. Before then, there is a series of elaborate descriptive passages: the proem with its sophisticated comparison between Stilicho and the helmsman of the mythical ship Argo (vv. 1–14), followed by other comparisons with mythological figures (vv. 14–35), a representation of Rome under attack (vv. 36–60), a prefiguration of the fleeing enemy which contains another mythological comparison (vv. 61–103), a sequence of examples of previous invasions Rome as successfully repelled (vv. 105–65), a long portrayal of the Goths' destructive horde (vv. 166–226), and, finally, a number of prodigies that had foretold the events of the Gothic war (vv. 227–66). Although they are written in the language and metre of epic, all of these passages primarily converge to fulfil the purpose of a panegyric, namely of either praising Stilicho explicitly – as in the initial comparison to Tiphys – or indirectly exalting his achievements by stressing the challenge of the odds he was facing. Claudian sets himself apart from the prose panegyrics by clearly creating a plot for his panegyrics: for *Bellum Geticum*, the narrative action is shaped by Alaric's determination to attack Rome, Stilicho's heroic journey to gather enough forces to resist the enemy, and the final clash between the two leaders. At the same time, however, he chooses to limit the scope of the plot in order to subordinate the organisation of the material in a way that is always functional to the praise of Stilicho. In this and in the constant use of comparisons with mythological and historical heroes, the influence of the epideictic tradition as represented in the treatise of Menander is most evident.

Together with formal innovations, Claudian also radically altered the way in which panegyrics functioned as a means of political communication.⁸² Until the end of the fourth century, the authors of prose panegyrics, like those contained in the compilation of the *Panegyrici Latini*, wrote their orations as isolated pieces that were intended for a specific occasion. They did not necessarily expect to write about the same subject a second or a third time. Although their relationship with the public body or the private individual who had hired their services could last for a long time, their association with the honorand was normally short-lived. When Claudian appeared in

⁸² Gillett (2012), 280–8.

Rome for the first time with his panegyric for the newly appointed consuls for 395 AD – the brother Olybrius and Probinus, from the Anician family – he probably attracted the attention of Stilicho with his bold choice of hexameters and his classicising style. Within a year, on 1 January 396 AD, we find him delivering another panegyric in Milan, this time for the third consulship of the emperor Honorius himself. For then onwards, Claudian went on to produce several other poems in honour of Honorius, Stilicho, and other important figures linked to the court, as well as directing relentless invectives towards their enemies. In contrast with previous practice, his poems were no longer ephemeral compositions designed to fit a single occasion, but rather they began to be conceived as a lasting contribution to the public portrayal of the generalissimo Stilicho.⁸³ They took the form of a connected series of poems, all addressing the same subjects and linked to one another by the use of recurrent elements.⁸⁴

The majority of the poems are also supplied with a poetic preface which becomes the privileged place in which the author can insert comments about himself, his literary production, and the circumstances of his performance. In the preface of *Bellum Geticum*, for example, Claudian introduces the poem by prompting his audience to remember that he has not recited in public in a while, that he has already spoken in the same setting and to the same people before, and that in those circumstances he had delivered a poem on the war against the African tyrant Gildo.⁸⁵ In this way, he exploits the preface in order to create a web of connections between his works and to enter into an open communication with his public. This dynamic raises questions about the composition of the audience who would assist to his recitations and about the addressees – both explicit and implicit – of the poems. With a few exceptions, the majority of the poems are plainly addressed to Stilicho and to the emperor Honorius, but identifying the members of the *sacra caterva* that constitutes Claudian's audience in *Ruf. 1 pr. 16* is more difficult.

⁸³ For the modern technical term generalissimo applied to the position of power occupied in late antique by generals, see *infra* p. 35, n. 98.

⁸⁴ Ware (2012), 4–5, strongly underlines this aspect and speaks of ‘different instalments of the continuing story of the hero, Stilicho, and his maintenance of Roman order’.

⁸⁵ *Get. pr.* 1–6.

4. CLAUDIAN'S POETICS

Despite the many classicising elements and allusions that pervade Claudian's works, his poetry fully reflects the literary taste of his times.⁸⁶ In fact, the traditional label of Claudian as 'the last classical poet of Rome' has now been challenged: scholars have increasingly analysed and appreciated the elements which differentiate Claudian's poems from classical poetry and that inscribe them, instead, within the aesthetic conventions of late antique poetics.⁸⁷ A few examples will help to illustrate some of the constitutive elements of Claudian's poetics and will serve as a basis for specific points raised in the commentary.

One of the most striking features of Claudians' poems, in line with late antique development, is the stark attention given to individual episodes at the expense of the narrative cohesion of the whole.⁸⁸ This is not to say that the single elements of a poem do not contribute to the success of the entire composition; on the contrary, it is clear that Claudian devised his poems carefully and that each episode was instrumental in conveying his message. However, the majority of scenes are juxtaposed as a series of self-contained tableaux, rather than being interconnected to build a fluid narrative: whole sections of *Bellum Geticum*, for example, consists of descriptions, historical and mythological exempla, digressions, explanations and laudatory apostrophes which do not drive the narrative forward, but that on the contrary transmit the feeling that the poem is a static entity.⁸⁹ This tendency is particularly evident in the structure of *De bello Gildonico*. The poem, which ostensibly narrates the war against the African rebel Gildo, amounts to five long speeches spaced out by few transition lines with very limited narrative elements. The arrival of the divine personification of Rome to Olympus in vv. 17–27, for example, involves a detailed description of her appearance and only two actions: v. 18 (*ad rapidi liminen tendebat Olympi*) and vv. 26–7 (*attigit*

⁸⁶ Roberts (2006), 142–4, identifies the reasons that have led scholars to coin and endorse this definition with the pagan apparatus that permeates his poems (in contrast with Christian poetry) and with the composition of the mythological *De Raptu Proserpinae*.

⁸⁷ The notion that Claudian is 'the last classical poet of Rome' is challenged e.g. in Roberts (1989), 2–3; Ware (2012), 36; Robert (2006), 144–6. Roberts (1989), in particular, has paved the way for the appreciation of late antique poetics in its own right, rather than in relation to the classical canon.

⁸⁸ Cameron (1970), 265.

⁸⁹ Ware (2012), 36–7.

ut tandem caelum genibusque Tonantis / procubuit).⁹⁰ This rigidity in the structure of Claudian's compositions can be partly ascribed to the laudatory content of his poems, since panegyrics did lend themselves to a structure that consists of self-contained units glued together to a frame, with or without short narrative parts. On the other hand, however, this is a tendency which can be clearly observed for all of late antique poetic production.⁹¹ To cite just an example, three quarters of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* consists of the separate descriptions of seven distinct battles, which are merely juxtaposed.

Speeches themselves have transformed in more fixed entities. The trend – whereby works of epic contain fewer but lengthier speeches, culminating in Claudian – is in line with other developments in the poetics and tastes of late antiquity: as the plot tends to fade away and actions thin out, speeches lose their dynamic narrative function and are treated more and more as self-contained units. This is clearly exemplified by Stilicho's address to the rebellious populations of Vindelicium and Noricum in *Bellum Geticum* (vv. 380–99). The speech is plainly made relevant to the circumstances by a direct reference to the unrest in the area (vv. 382–4, *non ita Romanum fati violentia nomen / opprimit, ut vestros nequeat punire tumultus / parte sui*) and the remainder of the speech exploits an historical exemplum – Leavinus' expedition against Philip V of Macedonia during the Second Punic War – in order to demonstrate that Rome can defend herself from lesser people in any circumstance; however, the context and the effect of the speech itself are only scantily explained: Stilicho arrives, spreads panic simply in virtue of his presence, speaks, and is obeyed. The rebels are described as dismayed by Stilicho's apparition, but they do not intervene in the dialogue nor react: the voice of the narrator only tells us that with his reprimand Stilicho has stopped the rebellion and obtained new troops for the war against the Goths (vv. 400–1, *Hoc monitu partier nascentia bella repressit / et bello quaesivit opes*). Another example is constituted by the series of brief interventions made by the personifications of nations under Roman rule in the second book of *De Consulatu Stilichonis* (vv. 227–68): Spain, Gaul, Britain, Africa, and Italy (*Oenotria*) meet at the temple of Rome on the Palatine and shortly weave Stilicho's praise in turn.

⁹⁰ Cf. the remark that 'all of Claudian's major poems [...] consist of little but a succession of speeches and description' in Cameron (1970), 262–3.

⁹¹ Roberts (1989), 56–7.

The clothing and attire of each of them is exquisitely described; they do not speak to each other, but all implicitly address Stilicho, closely resembling the processions of saints depicted on the walls of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna: a closely-knit succession of almost identical figures, distinguished only by their clothing and all tending towards a common destination – in this case, a common addressee, Stilicho – without ever interacting with each other.⁹² This stiffness in the representation of interactions between characters clearly reflects on the characters themselves; they become increasingly stereotyped and play rigid roles: the heroic saviour (Theodosius, Stilicho), the divine emperor (Theodosius, Honorius), the enemy (Gildo, Alaric), the monster (Rufinus, Eutropius), thus almost overlapping with personifications of virtues and vices, rather than appearing as all-round individuals.

Claudian's poems abound in descriptions. These often assume the form of similes or of digressions on geographical or historical details brought up in the poem. The narration of Stilicho's journey across the Alps (*Get.* 319–63), for example, is interrupted first by the comparison between Stilicho and a lion braving the cold winter to bring food to his cubs (vv. 323–9), then by a detailed account of the rivers that flow in Raetia (vv. 329–39) and by an explanation of how dangerous its mountains are in winter (vv. 340–8). In another case, the uprising of Tribigild in Phrygia gives Claudian the chance to pinpoint accurately the geographical position of the region, list the population that have inhabited the land, comment on the priority of the Phrygians in terms of antiquity, quote famous myths that are linked to the country, and describe the rivers and products of the region (*Eutr.* 2.238–73), all in one digression. This taste for erudition and ornament is nowhere more evident than in the use of the ekphrasis, in which the poet strives to recreate on the textual level the brilliance of the visual arts he describes.⁹³ Claudian's representation of the triumphal toga worn by Honorius during the celebrations of his fourth consulate is a case in point (*IV Hon.* 585–601). The written name of gems, whose catalogue emphasises the luxury of the toga, are in some case as conspicuous and rare as the items themselves; at the same time, attention is constantly drawn to the bright colours and to the glowing of the precious materials (e.g. the expressions *virent, fulgor, arcanis flammis, caerulea, picturatumque metallis*

⁹² Cf. Roberts (1989), 85.

⁹³ Roberts (1989), 111–14.

vivit opus). The same technique, and almost the same precious stones, are listed in the shorter, but not less brilliant, depiction of the palace of Venus (*Epith.* 86–96). The structure of the ekphrasis is carefully balanced: five verses list the gems and gold with which her halls are built (vv. 87–91), while other five verses detail the exotic plants which fill her grove (vv. 92–6). This symmetry of structure provides the regular frame over which the poet can weave a pattern of parallelisms and variations which put his skills in the spotlight.⁹⁴

Finally, allusion is an ubiquitous feature of Claudian's works, as it will be demonstrated by the commentary. On the one hand, through referential allusions to the work of his predecessors, Claudian creates layers of meaning: in the case of the representation of Alaric as a new Hannibal in *Bellum Geticum*, for example, the association between the two characters is enhanced by punctual references to the epic of Silius Italicus, which allow Claudian to tie his own poem to the end of the *Punica*, thus connecting the whole of Roman history in a coherent and continuous epic cycle.⁹⁵ On the other hand, the more frequent nonreferential allusions do not hint at hidden readings, but they simply allow the poet to parade his talent and expertise, and the reader (or listener) to recognise and appreciate the literary heritage they share with the author.⁹⁶ Allusions, too, as well as all the other elements already discussed, are then used as if they were the tesserae of a mosaic: the work of poetry consists of the sum of their individual brightness, which is the fruit of the poet's labour, and each word or expression becomes another factor in the constant play of parallelism and variation.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Roberts 36–7; on the purely decorative role played by ekphrasis in most of the cases in which Claudian employs it, see Ware (2012), 37–9. Also the attributes which Claudian allocates to the personifications of *Stil.* 2.227–68 are mere embellishments. For the use of *variatio*, cf. e.g. the accumulation of synonyms for 'ship' in *Get.* 1–12.

⁹⁵ See the allusion discussed in *comm. ad v.* 51; similarly, cf. the reference to the popular version of Hannibal's oath in *comm. ad vv.* 80–1, and the referential allusions to Catullus and Horace in *Get.* 1–2 (see *comm. ad loc.*).

⁹⁶ See the observations on *Rapt.* 2.250–1 in Peltari (2011), 132–3.

⁹⁷ For the image of the mosaic, see Roberts (1989), 70–2.

II. STILICHO AND *THE GOTHIC WAR(S)*

The main subject of *Bellum Geticum* – Alaric’s incursion into Italy and Stilicho’s response to it – are crucial events embedded in a complex series of causes and consequences that go back at least to the battle of Adrianople, the major defeat suffered by the Romans at the hand of the Goths in AD 378, and its aftermath. The period separating that momentous battle from Claudian’s recitation of the poem on a more recent Gothic war witnessed the rise of pivotal issues that upset both the political life and the social fabric of the Roman Empire. First, an exceptional sequence of young or weak emperors led to the increased prominence of supreme leaders, often of part-barbarian origin and hailing from the ranks of the military, who succeeded in concentrating an almost absolute power in their hands: a remarkable example of this category of individuals, who are sometimes labelled with the modern term *generalissimos* in secondary literature, is represented by Stilicho, the uncontested hero of Claudian’s political poems.⁹⁸ Second, the deepening of the rift between the two halves of the empire – whose ministers, after Theodosius’ death in 395, tended more and more to undermine one another – led to an escalation of tensions which culminated in the East’s declaration of Stilicho as *hostis publicus* and in the exploitation by both sides of local dynasts and foreign military leaders to undermine the other half;⁹⁹ such a divide – which Claudian, especially in his first poems, often tries to minimise – makes a conspicuous appearance in *Bellum Geticum*. Third, the exacerbation of the pressure exerted by barbarian groups, living inside and outside the boundaries of the empire, over Roman institutions and political dynamics – of which Alaric’s foray into Italy in 401/2 is an example – transformed these barbarian groups into protagonists capable of conditioning imperial politics.

In this section, I aim to tackle these three key issues and provide the historical background against which to read and understand Claudian’s *Bellum Geticum*. I will begin by analysing the political and military role of the *generalissimos* and, more

⁹⁸ The use of this modern terminology for such powerful generals who held the reins of power on behalf of the legitimate emperors goes back primarily to O’Flynn (1983).

⁹⁹ See *infra* pp. 54–7, for the political machinations that led to the rebellion of Gildo in Africa in 398, and the possibility that Alaric’s invasion was, if not induced, at least favoured by the Eastern empire; Stilicho in his turn decided to exploit Alaric and his forces to push his claim to control the Eastern court in 405 according to Zos. 5.26.1–2 and 5.29.8.

specifically, by examining the main foundations of the regime established by Stilicho. This in turn will lead me to scrutinise the increasingly strained ties between the Western and Eastern courts and how personal rivalries appear to have impinged on the unity of the empire. Finally, an exploration of the relationship between Romans and Goths at the close of the fourth century and of the role of Gothic groups and their leaders in influencing Roman policy, will illustrate the circumstances that led to the battle of Pollentia, whose outcome is conceptually – if not narratively – at the heart of *Bellum Geticum*.

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS: ANCIENT LITERARY SOURCES

Bellum Geticum, like all of Claudian's other panegyrics, contains a wealth of historical information. When trying to assess the reliability of such information and to understand the historical context in which it was recited, however, a major problem is offered by the scarcity of contemporary historical sources: the account of Ammianus' *Res Gestae* ends shortly after the battle of Adrianople and the only continuous narrative history that covers the subsequent years is Zosimus' *Historia Nova*, a work that was written almost a century after the death of Claudian and that presents specific idiosyncrasies.¹⁰⁰ In fact, Zosimus seems to have blindly followed his sources – Eunapius until 404 and Olympiodorus from 406/7 – without filling the gaps between them or trying to harmonise their different approaches; this caused him to contradict himself and even to articulate contrasting judgements on the main protagonists of his history. A case in point is the treatment of Stilicho, whom Zosimus greatly praises after reporting the story of his death (5.34.5–6), despite having harshly criticised him at the beginning of the same book (5.1.1–3): in the two passages, Zosimus uncritically reflects the two different attitudes of, respectively, Olympiodorus and Eunapius.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Almost nothing is known about Zosimus himself, apart from the fact that he was a functionary of the imperial treasury, a piece of information that is recorded by Photius in his *Bibliotheca* (Cod. 98) and in the incipit of the MS Vat. Gr. 156, the only witness of Zosimus' work. The *Historia Nova* covers, with increasing details, the period from the reign of Augustus to that of Arcadius and Honorius. From his own work, it is obvious that Zosimus had a pagan stance. For the dating of the *Historia Nova* to the turn of the sixth century, see Cameron (1969a), who argues precisely for the years 498–502; cf. Paschoud (2000), xii–xvii, who propends more cautiously for 498–518. Cf. also Liebeschuetz (2003), 206–15.

¹⁰¹ See Paschoud (1971), xxxiii–xxxiv and (1989), 191–5, 197–8; cf. also Rohrbacher (2002), 65–6 and 75.

The change in Zosimus' sources is also apparent in the switch of focus from Eastern (Eunapius) to Western (Olympiodorus) events and in his botched attempt to account for Alaric's actions between 397 and 407 by claiming that he spent the whole period waiting in Epirus (the first invasion of Italy and the battle of Pollentia are passed over in silence).¹⁰² In addition, he often appears to make wrong connections between events, to ignore geography and chronology, and to omit important facts in favour of anecdotes and secondary details. For all that, Zosimus' work still constitutes the most complete account of the years that cover Claudian's poetic production and his detailed narrative does therefore provide important and useful information, if not for specific events of the Gothic war, at least for the overall historical background.

The works of the historians ransacked by Zosimus, Eunapius and Olympiodorus, survive only in fragments.¹⁰³ The former's *Universal History*, conceived as a continuation of the Greek historiographer Dexippus, covered events from 270 to 404, whereas the latter's work – seemingly presented by its author as a collection of 'material for history' – had as its starting point the year 407 and as its end the coronation of Valentinian II in 425.¹⁰⁴ The two histories greatly differ in character: Eunapius seems to have conceived history as a source of moral exempla, marks his preference for major events and important individuals, as well as his contempt for chronological minutiae, and often embarks on anti-Christian tirades;¹⁰⁵ Olympiodorus,

¹⁰² See Matthews (1970), 81–2; Liebeschuetz (2003), 207.

¹⁰³ Fragments of Eunapius' historical work are preserved in the *Excerpta de Sententiis* and *Excerpta de Legationibus*, compiled during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905–959), and in entries of the Byzantine encyclopaedia known as *Suda* (tenth century); all we have of Olympiodorus' history is Photius' summary and the paraphrases of the later historians who used his work. The fragments of Eunapius and Olympiodorus have most recently been collected, translated and annotated in Blockley, *FCH*, II.

¹⁰⁴ Photius affirms that Olympiodorus' history began with the seventh consulship of Honorius and the second of Theodosius II in 407, but fr. 1 and 2 contain some material that predates 407 (Blockley, *FCH*, II, 152–5). It is possible, therefore, that the beginning of the first book included some background information on the career of Stilicho which was relevant to the understanding of his relations with Alaric and to the explanation of the events that led to the most important turning point and conceptual beginning of Olympiodorus' work, namely the execution of Stilicho in 408. See Matthews, (1970), 87–8; Blockley, *FCH*, I, 29; Liebeschuetz (2003), 201–2. Rohrbacher (2002), 76, notices that the first consular dates expressed by Zosimus – who starts to employ this type of dating only when Olympiodorus is his source – refers to 408. The first occurrence of a consular date in Zosimus, however, does not necessarily entail that Olympiodorus began his history from that point; in fact, it would be quite difficult to discard Photius' explicit assertion that it opened in 407 (perhaps this was indeed the first consular date inserted by Olympiodorus). However, see *contra* Paschoud (1986), 192–3.

¹⁰⁵ See Blockley, *FCH*, I, 1–26; Rohrbacher (2002), 64–72; Liebeschuetz (2003), 177–201. Eunapius himself explains the nature of his history at the beginning of the work: see fr. 1 (Blockley, *FCH*, II, 6–11).

on the other hand, seemingly sacrificed style in favour of pragmatic details (such as numbers, geographical description, transliterations of technical Latin names), did not show a particular bias – even though he shared Eunapius’ pagan approach – and expressed measured political judgements.¹⁰⁶ Even if the information they convey and the opinions they express are necessarily filtered by other writers, the relevance of these historians to the reconstruction of the period under examination cannot be underestimated: indeed, when we are able to tell whether some material derives from one or the other writer, we are better equipped to decode its meaning. Olympiodorus, in particular, is the source of the only positive appraisal of Stilicho’s actions and of a balanced portrait of Alaric: when Zosimus praises Stilicho as the most moderate man of his time (5.34.5), he reflects the ideas of Olympiodorus;¹⁰⁷ the representation of Alaric as an individual prone to anger (5.40.3–4, 49.2), but who would nevertheless repent and negotiate (5.41.4, 50.2), also seems to derive from Olympiodorus.¹⁰⁸

Jordanes’ *Getica* also provides some relevant information, in particular about Alaric and his role as leader of the Goths. This late work, however, constitutes a special and contested text. Composed between 550 and 552, during the reign of Justinian, it purports to be a loose rendition of a lost history written by Cassiodorus while at the service of king Theodoric and relates the history of the Goths from their origin to Justinian’s annihilation of their kingdom in Italy. Its author, however, admits that he has had very limited access to Cassiodorus’ work and that he has added further material, partly derived from other historiographical sources, partly from his own knowledge (*praef.* 3, *initium finemque et plura in medio mea dictione permiscens*).¹⁰⁹ Besides, having been composed more than a century after the time of Alaric, the institutional and political language it contains is at risk of reflecting later usage.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ See Matthews (1970); Blockley, *FCH*, I, 27–47; Gillett (1993); Rohrbacher (2002); 73–81; Liebeschuetz (2003), 201–6; on his lack of style, see Photius’ verdict in *Bibl. Cod.* 80, p. 56 Bekker.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. also the opinion reported by Philostorg. 12.1.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Matthews (1970), 90–91, for the treatment of Stilicho and Alaric; he suggests that Olympiodorus’ source for this part of his history could have been a Western supporter of Stilicho. Cf. also Sozomen. 9.7.5–8 for the reasonable behaviour of Alaric.

¹⁰⁹ For an assessment of the relationship between the texts of Jordanes and Cassiodorus, cf. Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2017); an edition of the fragments of Cassiodorus’ *History of the Goths* can now be found in Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2020).

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of the debated conclusions that readings of Jordanes have given rise to and their impact on modern history, as well as scholarship, see Kulikowski (2007), especially 43–70. For a different evaluation of Jordanes’ work, decidedly opposed by Kulikowski, see Heather (1991), 34–67. Before Kulikowski, Goffart (1988) had already denied that a Gothic tradition could be reconstructed

The majority of other literary sources that are important for the period under examination are either contemporary works which do not belong to the genre of historiography, or later works whose main objective is to write a particular type of history: although these texts reveal details that can help to reconstruct the historical background of Claudian's poems more sporadically, they still play a substantial role. In the first category, an important place is occupied by letter collections: the epistolary communication of influential figures like Symmachus, for example, often bears witness to political or military events, in particular as its author was personally involved in politics in virtue of his public role;¹¹¹ panegyrics, too, notwithstanding the tendentious spin they put on historical events, preserve precious information, especially on the official stance adopted by emperors and the opinion they wanted their subjects to form on certain matters;¹¹² finally, imperial funeral orations, specifically those pronounced by Ambrose of Milan for Valentinian II and Theodosius I, also contain historical information.¹¹³

The second category includes ecclesiastical histories, *consularia* and chronicles. Ecclesiastical histories constitute a specific type of historiography that developed after the example of Eusebius' innovative *Church History* and that became increasingly more practised and widespread with the diffusion and predominance of Christianity over other religions within the Roman empire. Although ecclesiastical histories have as their primary goal the history of the Christian community and focus therefore on spiritual authorities and doctrinal controversies, they also often comment on major changes and events in secular history. Particularly relevant for the reigns of Theodosius and Honorius are the works of Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen and

from the *Getica*, criticising the position of Wolfram. The same ground has been covered also by Liebeschuetz (2011), who argues instead for the inclusion of genuine Gothic tradition within the *Getica*. A comprehensive treatment can be expected in a new translation of the *Getica*, see Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof (2020). For the terminology used by Jordanes and other sources in describing the power wielded by Alaric, cf. Wolfram (1988), 143–6.

¹¹¹ For example, we know from Symmachus' letters that he travelled to Milan in the winter of 402, thus witnessing the mood of the imperial court during the first stages of Alaric's invasion and conveying important information about the atmosphere in Rome, too; cf. *infra* p. 73 and *comm. ad vv.* 36–49.

¹¹² On the characteristics of late antique panegyrics and their role in court ceremonial, see *supra* pp. 14–21. For an example of the type of information that can be derived from panegyrics, see Lenski (1997) on contemporary reactions to the outcome of the battle of Adrianople. Claudian is the only panegyrist who covers the period of the Gothic war against Alaric, but other authors such as Themistius and Pacatus provide useful background for earlier events.

¹¹³ For an introductory discussion and a translation of these oration, see Liebeschuetz and Hill (2005).

Philostorgius,¹¹⁴ to these, Orosius' *History Against the Pagans* should also be added.¹¹⁵ *Consularia* are annotated lists of consuls, where each historical event is nested under the names of those who were acting consuls when the event itself occurred, thus providing a precise dating system; these lists became increasingly widespread in the Western empire during the fourth century, they are anonymous, and their information was often based on the official dissemination of imperial events, such as imperial accessions, anniversaries, victories, and so on. Chronicles, on the other hand, are normally associated with a specific author: they record historical events according to a specific chronological framework, which might – but does not have to – coincide with the consular dating system, and each entry is characterised by extreme brevity, paratactic structure and simple language. For the Latin literature of late antiquity, this tradition has its recognised roots in Jerome's translation and continuation of the Greek *Chronicle* of Eusebius of Caesarea; besides Jerome, other authors of chronicles are Hydatius, Prosper of Aquitaine, Cassiodorus and Marcellinus comes.¹¹⁶ Both types of historical records offer a limited amount of material and sometimes omit important events;¹¹⁷ nevertheless, they provide crucial information, especially when a period is not covered by more extensive types of historical writing. For example, Alaric's invasion of Italy and the battle of Pollentia, which are omitted by Zosimus, are recorded by the tradition of the *consularia*, by Prosper and by Cassiodorus, whose texts – even if they do not provide further information about the

¹¹⁴ On the first ecclesiastic historians, see Chesnut (1977); specifically, on Socrates and Sozomen, see Van Nuffelen (2004). The case of Bidez for a *terminus ante quem* of 433 for Philostorgius is revised by Gillett (1993), 4–6, who also offers a list of other proposed dates (n. 21). For Sozomen's date of composition around 449/50 and Socrates' publication of his work soon after 439, see Gillett (1993). According to what Rufinus himself states in his preface, his translation and continuation of Eusebius' *Church History* was requested of him as a palliative against Alaric's invasion of Italy in 401/2. See *infra* p. 71.

¹¹⁵ Orosius' history differs slightly from those of the other ecclesiastic historians because, rather than placing the church at the centre of his enquiry, he interprets all history in a Christian perspective in order to correct the erroneous understanding of history harboured by pagan historiographers. See Van Nuffelen (2012) for a thorough analysis of Orosius' use of rhetorical techniques and a recent reassessment of the quality of his history.

¹¹⁶ Some chronicles, such the *Gallic chronicle of 452*, are anonymous. For a comprehensive study of the tradition of *consularia* and chronicles, the difference between these types of history writing, as well as a critical analysis and a reassessment of the terminology used by scholars to refer to these works, see Burgess and Kulikowski (2013); cf. also Muhlberger (1990), Burgess (1993) and Croke (2001b).

¹¹⁷ Crucially, if a chronicler was not able to place an historical event in the correct year, the rigid chronological structure of the chronicle would prevent him from recording it, cf. Burgess and Kulikowski (2013), 45.

course of the Gothic war – are essential witnesses for these events.¹¹⁸ The *Notitia Dignitatum*, a remarkable and unique document that consists of an illustrated list of civil and military offices and of a series of more explicative entries for each of them, could be placed next to this latter category: although its use is fraught with problems linked to the stratification of subsequent interventions to the text, it can help to retrace the organisation of the imperial army and the functioning of imperial institutions.¹¹⁹

2. STILICHO: THE GENERALISSIMO OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE

At the time of the composition and recitation of *Bellum Geticum*, in 402, Stilicho was at the height of his political and military career: he had attained the consulate – still prized as the highest honour for a male Roman citizen – only two years earlier; his daughter Maria was married to the emperor; his authority was recognised by the Senate; he controlled the army; he had just been able to check the threat posed by Alaric and his followers, presumably with hopes that the Goths would be safely repelled from Italy soon. Indeed, he had been the most prominent political figure in the Western empire since the death of Theodosius in 395 and would continue to play that role until his fall and execution in 408.

One of the main explanations for the formidable power attained by Stilicho lies in a key aspect of late antique imperial development which has its origin in the fourth century and became an idiosyncratic feature of late antique politics: the presence on the throne of an emperor who had been associated to the supreme power as a child and who – although he would eventually grow out of boyhood – would never succeed in fully taking control of the government arranged on his behalf when he was a minor.¹²⁰ This was not an isolated circumstance. Valentinian I's near death due to a severe and sudden illness led him to confront the issue of succession and to elevate his eight-year-old son Gratian to the rank of Augustus in 367.¹²¹ With this choice, Valentinian

¹¹⁸ See *infra* p. 67.

¹¹⁹ On the historical value of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, see Kulikowski (2000).

¹²⁰ This phenomenon has been long acknowledged (cf. Jones' definition of Gratian as 'sleeping partner' of his father Valentinian I in *LRE*, 1.141), but McEvoy (2013) has turned it into the focus of an analysis of late antique politics.

¹²¹ On the hypothesis that Valentinian's decision was due to his illness and the consequent rumours at court on who would be his successors, see Amm. 27.6.1–4; Zosimus claims that the appointment of a successor had been requested by those around the emperor (4.12.2). The accession of Gratian is

consciously broke for the first time a tradition that had been consolidated during centuries of imperial rule, namely the habit of investing a young successor in the first instance with the title of Caesar, before bestowing upon them the supreme authority that came with the higher rank of Augustus.¹²² His decision turned out to mark the beginning of a trend that had remarkable repercussions for the ruling of the Roman empire and a series of ‘child emperors’ succeeded one another almost without interruption on the throne of the Western empire until the death of Valentinian III in 455.¹²³ Whereas some of them – like Gratian and Theodosius II – seem to have exercised more control over the levers of the state, the dynamics of their impact on government had effectively changed from those of earlier fourth-century emperors. Gratian’s proclamation as Augustus was shortly followed by that of his younger brother Valentinian II, only four years old when declared Augustus in 375;¹²⁴ subsequently, Theodosius elevated his eldest son Arcadius to the same rank in 383, at the age of five,¹²⁵ and his second-born Honorius in 393, at the age of eight;¹²⁶ in turn,

described in Amm. 27.6.4–5 and acknowledged in Symm. *Or.* 1.3, 2.31–2, 3.1–6; Sozom. 6.10.1; Ps.-Aurel. *Vict.* 45.4; Zos. 4.14.4; Jerom. *Chron. s.a.* 367; Prosp. *s.a.* 367, *Chron. min.* 1.458; Philostorg. 8.8; Theophan. AM 5857 [55.1–3 De Boor]; Zonar. 13.15; on the date, see *Cons. Const.* and *Chron. Pasch. s.a.* 364 (*Chron. min.* 1.240); Socrat. 4.11.3.

¹²² On the possible reasons behind Valentinian’s choice to bypass the rank of Caesar and proclaim Gratian Augustus, see McEvoy (2013), 4–7. In his account, Amm. 27.6.16 shows an awareness that Valentinian’s arrangement is almost unprecedented (*In hoc tamen negotio, Valentinianus morem institutum antiquitus supergressus, non Caesares sed Augustos germanum nuncupavit et filium, benevole satis. Nec enim quisquam antehac adscivit sibi pari potestate collegam, praeter principem Marcum, qui Verum, adoptivum fratrem, absque diminutione aliqua maiestatis imperatoriae, socium fecit*); although he puts forward the example of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the latter was an adult when associated to the imperial office.

¹²³ Jones, *LRE*, 1.173, speaks of ‘a series of long minorities’ and, at 1.323, he touches on the implications of the choice of Valentinian I and of Theodosius I to proclaim their sons Augusti at a young age. The phenomenon of ‘child emperors’ is most spectacular in the Western empire, but Arcadius and Theodosius II can be numbered in this category for the Eastern empire.

¹²⁴ See Amm. 30.10.6; Socrat. 4.31; Zos. 4.19.1–2; Ruf. 22.23; Aurel. *Vict.* 45.10; Philostorg. 9.16 and Ambros. *De ob. Val.* 59.

¹²⁵ According to Socrates he was 31 years old when he died on 1 May 408 (Socrat. 6.23). As it is unlikely that his father married until his return in Spain after the elder Theodosius’ execution in the early months of 376, he must have been born in 377 (cf. the same testimony in Cedr. 334C). The acclamation of Arcadius took place in January and the young Augustus had probably not had his sixth birthday yet. Arcadius’ proclamation as Augustus is recorded in *Cons. Const.* and *Chron. Pasch. s.a.* 383 (*Chron. min.* 1.244).

¹²⁶ Honorius was born on 9 September 384 according to *Cons. Const.* and *Chron. Pasch. s.a.* 384 (*Chron. min.* 1.244), and Socrat. 5.12. On his promotion as Augustus, see Socrat. 5.25; Philostorg. 11.2; Sozom. 7.24.1; *Cons. Vindob. s.a.* 393, *Chron. min.* 1.298; Marcell. *comes s.a.* 393, *Chron. min.* 2.63. The event is described as the restoration of light, embodied in Honorius himself in *IV Hon.* 171–83. Both Dewar (1996), 107–8, and Cameron (1969b), 260, n. 25 – followed by other scholars – argue that Honorius had already been proclaimed Caesar by Theodosius during their joint visit in Rome in 389; see *contra* the convincing arguments brought forward by Kelly (2016).

Arcadius' son Theodosius II became Augustus in 402, when he was only nine months old, and Honorius was followed on the throne by his six-year-old nephew Valentinian III in 425.¹²⁷ Differing from previous occasionally young emperors, all of the reigns of these so-called 'child emperors' were fairly long, with Honorius and Valentinian III reaching the impressive length of thirty years on the throne.¹²⁸

This striking and unprecedented succession of extremely young rulers engendered the need for governments which could handle affairs without the direct involvement of the emperor during his minority, a function that they increasingly tended to perform even when the emperor in question had grown to adulthood.¹²⁹ Thus, for example, when Gratian remained sole Augustus in the West upon his father's death in 375 – and indeed grew to become a young man of twenty-four before being killed in the conflict against Maximus in 383 – he was perceived as struggling to emerge from the control of his advisors, and in particular of the general Merobaudes.¹³⁰ The latter can be considered the forerunner of the series of generals who acted as advisers of young emperors and *de facto* dictated imperial politics in the Western empire during the end of the fourth century and the whole of the fifth.¹³¹ In the wake of the confusion arisen at the death of Valentinian I in 375, he exploited his influence – derived from his military position as *magister peditum* for the West – to engineer the coronation of Valentinian II, then only a boy of five. As argued by McEvoy, this operation of emperor-making, while being ostensibly justified by a concern with the safeguard of Gratian's dynastic claim – since there was a concrete risk that the army would proclaim

¹²⁷ Unlike previous emperors listed here, Valentinian had been proclaimed Caesar (in 424) before becoming Augustus, see Olymp. fr. 43; Socrat. 7.24; Philostorg. 12.13.

¹²⁸ Precedents such as those set by Macrinus and Philip I, who associated their young sons – respectively, Diadumenianus and Philip II – to the throne, remained short lived experiments which had no impact on the subsequent development of emperorship.

¹²⁹ McEvoy (2013), 2.

¹³⁰ According to Amm. 27.6.15, Gratian showed promising signs that he could grow into a good ruler, but his yet unstable personality was ruined by those close to him (*quae [sc. virtutes] imperatorem implesset cum veterum lectissimis comparandum, si per fata proximosque licuisset, qui virtutem eius etiam tum instabilem obnubilarunt actibus pravis*); Zos. 4.19.2 also underlines the fact that neither Gratian nor Valentinian were able to govern on their own due to their young age and to the fact that all decisions were taken by those close to them.

¹³¹ Cf. O'Flynn (1983), 1–3, who moreover underscores the importance of the consulate for these generalissimos as a tangible proof and display of their authority. Merobaudes (*PLRE s.v. Flavius Merobaudes* 2, 1.598–9) was followed in the same role by Arbogast (*PLRE s.v. Arbogastes*, 1.95–97), Stilicho, Constantius (who married Gallia Placidia and even became Augustus in 421, see *PLRE s.v. Fl. Constantius* 17, 2.321–5), Aetius (*PLRE s.v. Aetius* 7, 2.21–9) and Ricimer (*PLRE s.v. Fl. Ricimer* 2, 2.942–4).

an experienced general as new emperor and disregard the rights of a yet untried young man – was essentially carried out so that Merobaudes and those close to him could negotiate their own role in the new regime from a position of strength.¹³² These circumstances highlight the crucial role played by powerful individuals who increasingly saw an advantage in pressing forward the dynastic claims of child-emperors, whom they could hope to control easily, rather than making their own bid for the throne; sometimes their choice could be also dictated by the fact that ‘barbarians’ could not become emperors.¹³³ By backing the young emperors, they ensured the longevity of this phenomenon – a longevity that led to ‘a true institutionalization of minority rule’ and to a transformation in the perception of the figure of the emperor and in the functioning of the system of governance operating around him.¹³⁴ After the elevation of Valentinian II, the presence of a child-emperor on the throne became the means by which the elites could exert their control over the source of power. In particular, given the inability of the young rulers to fulfil the military duties which traditionally appertained to the emperor, this function was monopolised by an established general and the emperor himself – whether a child or a child-turned-adult (as in the case of Honorius, who died at the age of 39) – was increasingly reduced to discharging a ceremonial and religious role, thus effectively acting merely as the legitimising figurehead for the individuals who wielded the actual power.¹³⁵ This remains true also for those emperors who tried to assert their military

¹³² McEvoy (2013), 54–61. Merobaudes is clearly presented as the main instigator behind the proclamation of Valentinian II in the account given by Amm. 30.10, who also mentions the young emperor’s maternal uncle Cerealis (a *tribunus*); Zos. 4.19.1–2 and *Epit. de Caes.* 46.10 also report the involvement of Flavius Equitius, the *Magister militum per Illyricum*. Rufinus *HE* 11.12 only gives the name of the senator Petronius Probus, the *Praefectus Praetorio Illyrici*, in connection with the event, but alludes to the involvement of other people. See Kelly (2013) for a thorough analysis of the political crisis of the years 375–6.

¹³³ Jones, *LRE*, 1.327–8. This growing tendency is particularly evident in the case of Arbogast: although he could have seized the throne for himself, he shunned this opportunity and instead raised Eugenius, a mere *magister scrinii* and ex-grammarian, to the purple (even if he was not properly speaking a ‘child-emperor’, Eugenius ultimately fulfilled the same function). Similarly, the usurper Magnus Maximus had interpreted Bauto’s decision to back Valentinian II as a way to exercise power behind the child’s back according to Ambrose, who reports his words in *Ep.* 30 [24], 4 (*ille Bauto, qui sibi regnum sub specie pueri vindicari voluit*). Cf. also McEvoy (2013), 99–102 for an assessment of the reigns of the two first child-emperors, Gratian and Valentinian II.

¹³⁴ Quote from McEvoy (2013), 8.

¹³⁵ By virtue of their belonging to the legitimate reigning houses – the Valentinian and the Theodosian – the child-emperors catalysed the loyalty of the army and of the elites and granted legitimacy to the power cliques controlled by their generals, thus contributing to forestall usurpations and civil war (Jones, *LRE*, 1.173–4).

role: Gratian did carry out military operations against the Alamanni Lentienses in 378, apparently in an attempt to manifest some degree of autonomy from his generals and to demonstrate his own superiority over his uncle – the senior emperor Valens – whom Gratian had agreed to assist against the Goths. Ammianus records the events linked to this campaign and makes it clear that it was Gratian himself who insisted on deviating the route of the army in order to fight the Lentienses, thus delaying his arrival at Adrianople.¹³⁶ This delay, together with frictions over pre-eminence tacitly established between the two emperors, was among the causes of Valens' defeat in 378.¹³⁷ Gratian's ambitions, however, were cut short in 383 when Merobaudes' betrayal in favour of the usurper Maximus caused him to lose the support of the army, thus proving that the military authority exercised by the emperor was ultimately subjected to the consent of the individuals who effectively controlled the soldiery. It is conspicuous that after Gratian's partial achievements – the campaign against the Lentienses was successful and the young emperor attracted the praise of Ammianus – no other emperor was successful in a similar bid for military autonomy; in fact, most of them did not even try.¹³⁸

Stilicho's ability to exercise the supreme power a few decades after Merobaudes should be first of all understood as a continuation of this dynamic.¹³⁹ As in the case of earlier generalissimos, the only official basis of Stilicho's power lay in a military post, in his case that of *Magister utriusque militiae praesentalis* in the West, to which Theodosius had appointed him at some point after the defeat of Eugenius in 394, and which he occupied until his death in 408.¹⁴⁰ He strengthened the function and authority

¹³⁶ Amm. 31.10.

¹³⁷ McEvoy (2013), 74–6; Lenski (2002), 365–7. On the jealousy of Valens regarding his nephew's successes, see Amm. 31.12.1 and the commentary to that passage in Den Boeft, Drijvers, Den Hengst and Teitler (2018), 196–8; Valens' aversion to sharing a potential victory with Gratian is given as one of the reasons for engaging battle with the Goths without waiting for reinforcements (Amm. 31.12.7).

¹³⁸ For Ammianus' praise of Gratian, see 31.10.18. Ambrose attests that Valentinian II – Gratian's younger brother – was eager to march to Italy with the Gallic troops in order to forestall an incursion from the Balkans, but that he paid his enthusiasm with his death, i.e. he was stopped by the *magister militum* Arbogast and either committed suicide or was killed; see *De ob. Val. 2*, Liebeschuetz and Hill (2005), 358–9. Claudian represents the child Honorius hungry for battle in *III Hon.* 356–69, an anticipation of the ideal ruler Honorius was destined to be – albeit only in fiction.

¹³⁹ Between Merobaudes and Stilicho, the same role was played by Arbogast towards Valentinian II and then towards Eugenius.

¹⁴⁰ According to the evidence adduced by Zos. 4.59.1. The early stages of Stilicho's career are difficult to pin down chronologically; it is clear, however, that he was rapidly promoted after his marriage with Serena, see Demougeot (1951), 129–39; *PLRE s.v. Flavius Stilicho*, 1.854–5; Heather (2005), 216. Late

of this position by enabling its holder to make appointments to several associated *officia*, thus tightening his grip on the military apparatus: after him, it was effectively the *Magister utriusque militiae* who exercised the supreme power in the West.¹⁴¹ Besides holding the supreme office in the military sphere, however, Stilicho had an additional key advantage that set him above previous generalissimos: his ascendancy over Honorius was guaranteed by the fact that he was a member of the imperial family.¹⁴² Indeed, not only was he married to Serena – the niece of Theodosius and a prominent member of the imperial house – but he was also Honorius’ father-in-law, as the latter had married Stilicho’s daughter – Maria – in 398.¹⁴³ The centrality of these relationships in securing Stilicho’s political position is demonstrated by the insistence with which such family ties are emphasised in honorific inscriptions and in Claudian’s poems.¹⁴⁴ In particular, Stilicho seems to have actively advertised his role of father-in-law in relation to Arcadius and Honorius through the title *parens principum*: such nomenclature – highly allusive, but also ambiguous – was aimed at reinforcing the belief that his authority did not rest solely on a temporary military office, but mainly on the undying affection that bound him to the emperor himself. Although his power did in fact derive from the position of *Magister militum*, it appears that it was kinship

antique nomenclature is not always consistent and different labels were occasionally applied to Stilicho, as to other generals.

¹⁴¹ Jones, *LRE*, 1.174–75, explains that members of the *officia* of the *comites* and *duces* – the provincial military officers – were seconded from the personal *officia* of the *magistri praesentales*; this innovation might be a consequence of the revolt of Gildo, with the aim of breaking down military power held by other military authorities in order to avoid the insurgence of the same dangerous situation. Cf. also Jones, *LRE*, 1.341–2 and 344. On Gildo, see *infra* pp. 54–7.

¹⁴² As remarked by Jones, the fact that much of the power that allowed certain generals to dominate late antique politics ultimately depended on their ascendancy on the emperor is demonstrated, for example, by Arbogast’s decision to eliminate Valentinian II in favour of a more compliant figure (Eugenius) and by Stilicho’s quiet submission to execution once his influence over Honorius had been irremediably undermined; see Jones, *LRE* 1.342.

¹⁴³ For Stilicho’s marriage to Serena, see Zos. 4.57.2, 5.4.1; Olympiodor. fr. 2; *Stil.* 1.69–4, *Carm. min.* 30.177–85. On the basis of several claims by Claudian, Serena has been considered the adoptive daughter of Theodosius, but this view has been successfully refuted by Cameron (2016). For the union of Honorius with Maria, see Zos. 5.4.1–2, 12. The marriage should be dated to the beginning of 398, that is the period between the departure of the expedition against Gildo and the victory over the rebel. It was certainly a safeguard measure on the part of Stilicho in case the expedition was not successful; see Cameron (1970), 109; McEvoy (2013), 160–61.

¹⁴⁴ Inscriptions show that Stilicho highlighted his family ties with Theodosius: see *CIL* 6.1730, 1731. For Claudian, see e.g. *Epith.* 36, *Stil.* 1.71–73 and 3.176–81. The policy of fostering family relationships continued throughout Stilicho’s career: after the death of Maria, he secured the marriage of Honorius with his second daughter, Thermantia, and he may have had aspirations to wed his son Eucherius to Galla Placidia: see Cameron (1970), 46–9 – with the correction of Cameron (2016), 512, n. 21 – and 154.

that assured the legitimacy of his role in Stilicho's own eyes and perhaps also in those of his supporters.¹⁴⁵

These family ties were bolstered by the authority over the young Honorius that Theodosius himself had conferred on Stilicho either on his death bed or a few months before.¹⁴⁶ The exact extent of such authority, however, is an issue that has given rise to a certain amount of debate both in ancient sources and in modern scholarship.¹⁴⁷ The case rests mainly on the testimony of Claudian, whose point of view undoubtedly reflects that of Stilicho, and on a later assertion by Zosimus. Stilicho claimed that he had been charged with the protection of both of Theodosius' sons from the dying emperor himself and tried to exploit this assertion in order to take control over the Eastern empire as well as the Western.¹⁴⁸ The first unambiguous mention of Stilicho's role towards *both* of Theodosius' sons, the Eastern emperor Arcadius and the Western emperor Honorius, appears in the panegyric that Claudian wrote to celebrate the third consulship of Honorius. This was the second public performance of the poet and by the time the panegyric was recited at the beginning of 396, roughly a year after the death of Theodosius, the fact that Stilicho held the supreme power in the Western

¹⁴⁵ Mazarino (1942), 106–13; Straub (1952), 222, 229–33; O'Flynn (1983), 23. In this sense, Stilicho inaugurated a new way to intend and use the term *parens principum* which was followed by his successors during the fifth century.

¹⁴⁶ Zos. 4.59.1; Oros. 7.37.1; Eun. fr. 62; Joh. Ant. fr. 188 Müller / 281 Roberto / 213 Mariev. The last three sources attribute the same role, in relation to Arcadius, to the *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis* Rufinus. Although the ancient sources place Theodosius' decision at the time of his death, Cameron (1969b) argues that Theodosius had already taken and made public this decision a few months earlier (towards the end of 394), in order to reinforce Stilicho's position in the West, where he was still admittedly unknown. According to Cameron, the ancient sources refer in fact to 'two settlements', substantially identical: that of 394, announced to the Senate in Rome or to a delegation in Milan, and that of 395, on the emperor's death bed. Both 'settlements' entrusted the guardianship of Honorius to Stilicho and confirmed the latter's military position. Cameron has later retracted his arguments and subscribed to the version that preserves only one settlement and denies Theodosius' journey to Rome after his victory at the Frigidus; see Cameron (2011), 47 and n. 58; Ensslin (1953) and Döpp (1975), 73–83. It remains, however, likely that Theodosius had given some thoughts to the settlement of the Western situation, especially given the promotion of Stilicho to *Magister utriusque militiae* in the aftermath of Eugenius' defeat. Since it seems credible that he would have returned to the East after summoning Honorius, it is not unreasonable to think therefore that he had entrusted his younger son to his relative Stilicho, at least informally, even before dying.

¹⁴⁷ O'Flynn (1983), 15, for example, accepts the guardianship, but later specifies that – as a guardian – Stilicho had no power to influence Honorius' actions as emperor and, at pp. 45–7, underlines the fact that there were no legal provisions for a 'regency' in case all emperors should be minor or unable to rule. Cf. also Demougeot (1951), 99–102.

¹⁴⁸ As put by Paschoud (1967), 134–5: 'Le noyau de la propagande stiliconienne qui s'exprime dans le vers de Claudien est donc le thème de l'unité impériale sous préséance occidentale' ('The core of the Stilichonian propaganda which expresses itself in the verses of Claudian is the theme of imperial unity under a Western precedence').

empire, but that he had failed to exert his control over the Eastern part, must have looked like an established fact. However, Claudian exploits the panegyric – albeit ostensibly dedicated to Honorius – to speak out in favour of Stilicho by reporting an episode which would otherwise be quite irrelevant in the praises of the young emperor, namely Theodosius’ investiture of Stilicho as guardian of his children. In his reconstruction of the words of the dying emperor, Claudian is quite explicit on the role envisaged for Stilicho: he is called upon to care for, support and protect both Arcadius and Honorius as his father would have done (*III Hon.* 152–4, *tu curis succede meis, tu pignora solus / nostra fove: geminos dextra tu protege fratres*, ‘you take my place in my worries, you alone assist my children: you protect the twin brothers with your right hand’).¹⁴⁹ Crucially, the unique position of Stilicho is emphasised: he alone (v. 152, *solus*) is entrusted with the custody of Theodosius’ sons. The following lines ground the emperor’s decision on the family relationship which ties him to Stilicho and are thus intended to make the latter’s role unassailable, since no one was in a position to challenge Stilicho’s kinship to the two emperors by virtue of his marriage to Serena (vv. 154–8).¹⁵⁰ Finally, with his last words, Theodosius explicitly establishes Stilicho as the guardian of his sons (vv. 158–9, *Iamiam securus ad astra / te custode ferar*, ‘Already, with you as protector, I will ascend untroubled to the stars’). No matter how well fashioned, however, Claudian’s enticing story had a weakness, namely that the alleged dialogue between Theodosius and Stilicho and the emperor’s dying wish that Stilicho be the guardian of Arcadius and Honorius had no other witnesses. This is proved, first of all, by the very fact that Claudian himself has to admit as much when he dramatically represents the dying emperor bidding everyone else away before revealing his will (vv. 142–3). This detail suggests that at least part of the narrative was tendentious: why would Claudian make Theodosius ask everyone to leave if it was known and verifiable that he had meant for Stilicho to assume power on behalf of his children? The obvious answer would be that he did not quite intend things to go that way and that, although he might in fact have appealed to Stilicho to watch over his children as to a member of his own family, he had not authorised Stilicho to seize

¹⁴⁹ In fact, Stilicho’s fatherly relation towards both emperors is often underlined. The adjective *geminos* attributed to the brothers, who were not actual twins, is another recurrent element in Claudian’s poetry, designed to underline the ideal harmony which should inspire the actions of the two emperors.

¹⁵⁰ Claudian had introduced Stilicho as *gener*, ‘son-in-law’, of Theodosius already in v. 143.

power.¹⁵¹ Theodosius had not conferred on Stilicho any formal power; otherwise he would have proclaimed the fact quite openly and perhaps broadened the remit of Stilicho's military power; at least, he must have not openly bestowed any authority over Arcadius upon his *Magister militum*, and the Eastern officers continued to challenge this notion. In fact, while Honorius – who had only just been brought to the West from Constantinople – was indeed very young and presumably needed an adult to take matters in their hands on his behalf, Arcadius was already seventeen at the time of his father's death and, at least theoretically, must have been expected to be able to govern on his own.¹⁵²

There is one contemporary source that has sometime been interpreted as an endorsement of Stilicho's authority over both emperors, but the same source also confirms the need for caution regarding Claudian's narrative. In his funerary oration for Theodosius, recited in the cathedral of Milan in February 395 during a public service for the deceased emperor, Ambrose does make the smallest concession to the power Stilicho held, even though he does not mention him by name. He affirms that, when he died, Theodosius had nothing left to arrange in his affairs and did not need to produce a written will because he had left everything to his children, while entrusting them to a close relative who was present (i.e. at the time of his death, albeit also presumably at the delivery of the oration itself; *De obit. 5, Gloriosius in eo Theodosius, qui non communi iure testatus est; de filiis enim nihil habebat novum quod conderet, quibus totum dederat nisi ut eos praesenti commendaret parenti*).¹⁵³ Ambrose is clearly referring to both sons, since he uses the plural, and the *parens* must be Stilicho. He is also alluded to a few lines later, when Ambrose praises the loyalty (*fides*) of the soldiers: the reference to the army must also allude to the loyalty of their general

¹⁵¹ This is the position of Cameron (1970), 38–40 and 42–4. Cf. Zos. 5.4.3, who presents the guardianship as something claimed by Stilicho himself (ἐλέγε γάρ); Straub (1952), 228–9; O'Flynn (1983), 49.

¹⁵² Arcadius had also married Aelia Eudoxia within a few months of Theodosius' death.

¹⁵³ 'Theodosius is more glorious in this also, that he did not make a will in accordance with public law; he had nothing further to determine as regards his sons, to whom he had given everything, except to place them under the protection of a close relative who was present' (translation by Liebeschuetz). Liebeschuetz and Hill (2005), 174, assert that Ambrose endorsed Stilicho's claim, but it seems that the bishop only paid the slightest homage to the person who, as it must have already been evident few days after Theodosius' demise, held the most power in the West. Also for Matthews (1975), 249 and 257–8, Ambrose's remark constitutes a public acceptance of Stilicho's guardianship. On the presence of Stilicho at the funeral, see Cameron (1969b), 274–80; McLynn (1994), 357–58, n. 3; Liebeschuetz and Hill (2005), 180, n. 3.

Stilicho.¹⁵⁴ Although Ambrose's statement seems to sanction Stilicho's version, he did not do so openly; rather, he decided to tread cautiously, probably because at that early moment it was not sure that Stilicho's power base was strong enough and that he represented the legitimate interests of the sovereigns.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, although Stilicho did manage to impose his own ascendancy over the Western empire, his position seems to have been at best quasi-legal and one with no genuine constitutional grounding.¹⁵⁶ Claudian continued to uphold Stilicho's version of the testament of Theodosius and to broadcast his role of guardian of *both* emperors at least until the composition of *Bellum Geticum* from which, for the first time, such assertion is absent; finally, a couple of years later, in the panegyric for the sixth consulate of Honorius, only one child is mentioned.¹⁵⁷

Whether or not he had received any specific additional role, Stilicho was still *Magister militum* and indeed the only surviving adult male relative of the young emperors Arcadius and Honorius, when Theodosius died in January 395. In theory, his military office only gave him direct control over the Western army. However, due to the fact that the Eastern troops were still stationed in Italy since the repression of Eugenius' rebellion a few months earlier, Stilicho found himself *de facto* master of virtually all the Roman army. Confident in his military supremacy, he claimed control over the joint affairs of the Western and Eastern Empire, but his aspirations were repeatedly foiled by determined opponents at the Eastern court.

¹⁵⁴ Liebeschuetz and Hill (2005), 180, n. 6.

¹⁵⁵ McEvoy (2013), 143–5, remarks on the dubious position of Stilicho at the time. Cf. Cameron (1969), 274–5.

¹⁵⁶ See the analysis of the terms 'regent' and 'guardian' offered by McEvoy (2013), 10–12; cf. Matthews (1975), 258.

¹⁵⁷ See *Ruf.* 2.4–6, *IV Hon.* 432–3, *Epith.* 307–8, *Eutr.* 2.599–600, *Stil.* 2.53–5. Crucially, in *VI Hon.* 583, (*infantem genitor moriens commisit alendum*, 'on the point of death, the father entrusted the care of his child'), only one child is mentioned. It is worth mentioning that at the time of composition of this last panegyric, in late 403, not only was Arcadius an adult even by modern standards, but he also had a son who had been proclaimed Augustus the year before. Cf. Cameron (1970), 38–45 and 49–51.

3. FRICTIONS BETWEEN WEST AND EAST: STILICHO'S OPPONENTS

The first such opponent was Flavius Rufinus, a civilian rather than a military man. He seems to have been one of Theodosius' close collaborators in Constantinople and had been honoured with the consulship in 392; Theodosius had left him as *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis* and entrusted him with the care of government in the name of Arcadius.¹⁵⁸ Crucially, Rufinus did not accept Stilicho's claim that Theodosius had left him as only guardian of both his sons, and consequently tried to curb Stilicho's power, at least in the East – the portion of empire that was under his direct control. Rufinus' stance marks the beginning of a series of tensions between, on the one hand, Stilicho – who for several years continued to profess his authority over both halves of the empire – and, on the other hand, the ministers who followed one another in Constantinople. The first occasion for an open disagreement was offered by the unrest sparked off by Alaric in Thrace, Macedonia and Greece during the first months of 395;¹⁵⁹ almost at the same time, the eastern borders of the empire were under pressure from groups of Huns.¹⁶⁰ Rufinus could not respond effectively to any of these acts of aggression, as the core of the Eastern army was still in the West and now under the control of Stilicho. The latter, confident in his claim over Arcadius, trespassed on Eastern ground with the whole of the Roman army, presumably with the intention of taking credit for wiping Alaric out; in all likelihood, he thought such a victory would strengthen his claim.¹⁶¹ For many of the events of the years between 395 and 402,

¹⁵⁸ Zos. 4.57.4; *PLRE s.v. Flavius Rufinus* 18, 1.778–9. Rufinus was considered the ἐπίτροπος of Arcadius, just as Stilicho was considered ἐπίτροπος of Honorius in Joh. Ant. fr. 188 Müller / 281 Roberto / 213 Mariev and fr. 190 Müller / 282 Roberto / 215 Mariev; cf. Eun. fr. 62, 63; Oros. 7.37.1; Philostorg. 11.3.

¹⁵⁹ Zos. 5.5.4 and Socrat. 7.10 explain Alaric's action with his dissatisfaction for the secondary role Theodosius had entrusted him with at the battle of the Frigidus. See Demougeot (1951), 108–9, 117; O'Flynn (1983), 54.

¹⁶⁰ Sozomen. 8.1; Socrat. 6.1; Philostorg. 11.8. Both Sozomen and Socrates affirm that Rufinus himself had invited the Huns to bring destruction within the empire because he aspired to the throne, but the allegation does not make much sense, as it is impossible to see how a Hunnic invasion would facilitate Rufinus' designs. Zos. 5.5.4 accuses him of exploiting Alaric for the same reasons, cf. also *Ruf.* 2.15–22, 69–76, 91; Joh. Ant. fr. 190 Müller / 282 Roberto / 215 Mariev; Marcell. *comes s.a.* 395, *Chron. min.* 2.64 (= Jord. *Rom.* 319); indeed, Rufinus himself must have hoped that Alaric would be effectively defeated. See Demougeot (1951), 113; Cameron (1970), 71–4; O'Flynn (1983), 31–2.

¹⁶¹ Especially given that at this stage Stilicho does not seem to have had a particularly remarkable military background: see Cameron (1970), 55–6.

Claudian's panegyrics constitute our main source of information.¹⁶² In the circumstance of the first military encounter between Stilicho and Alaric, he depicts Stilicho on the verge of crushing Alaric, when an order issued by Arcadius commands him to return the Eastern troops. Stilicho decides to bow to imperial authority and to comply with the order, even though this means allowing Alaric to escape not only with his life, but also with his army intact.¹⁶³ Cameron has most convincingly demonstrated the danger of taking such allegations by Claudian at face value and how his insistence on the perfect harmony existing among Stilicho's ranks seems to hint precisely at the opposite situation: these were the armies that had faced each other on opposite sides of the battlefield only a few months earlier, and it actually appears that one of the main reasons for Stilicho to return them to Arcadius was precisely because they were creating more problems than they were solving.¹⁶⁴ Thus, the Eastern army was sent back to Constantinople and Alaric was allowed to retire to Epirus, where he seems to have remained undisturbed until 397. Although successful in his attempt to prevent Stilicho from taking control of the Eastern court, Rufinus did not long outlive his diplomatic victory: he was assassinated by those same troops reluctantly returned by Stilicho. According to Zosimus and other sources, Stilicho had been the instigator of the murder, whereas the main perpetrator is at times identified with Gainas, the Gothic *comes rei militaris* who was at the head of the returning troops, at times collectively with the troops themselves (as in Claudian's description).¹⁶⁵ Regardless of the material

¹⁶² Zos. 5.7 and Joh. Ant. fr. 190 also refer to Stilicho's actions against Alaric, but they both collapse this first expedition with the one undertaken in 397, cf. Cameron (1970), 159.

¹⁶³ The episode is narrated in *Ruf.* 2.130–256. Claudian exonerates Arcadius by representing him as an unwilling actor in the incident and puts all the blame on Rufinus, whose fear of Stilicho allegedly prompted him to force the hand of the emperor.

¹⁶⁴ Zos. 5.4.2 reports that it was indeed Stilicho who decided to return part of the army to the Eastern empire, choosing the best men for himself and sending away the weakest units. See Cameron (1970), 159–68 for a careful and convincing analysis of the sequence of events as recounted by Claudian; accepted by O'Flynn (1983), 28–33 and Heather (1991), 201–2. Later concerns on Stilicho's part about increasing the ranks seem to indicate that Stilicho was in some way not happy with the troops he already had, cf. the law on deserters in *Cod. Theod.* 7.18.9 (26 April 396) and those on provisions for the troops in *Cod. Theod.* 7.4.22 (30 May 396), 7.4.23 (16 June 396). The expedition in Germany which Stilicho undertook in 396, before marching against Alaric again in 397, might have been aimed at recruiting more soldiers for the Western army, cf. *Claud. IV Hon.* 439–59, *Eutr.* 2.377–83, recalled also in *Stil.* 1.188–240.

¹⁶⁵ Zos. 5.7.4–6; Joh. Ant. fr. 190 Müller / 282 Roberto / 215 Mariev; Marcell. *comes s.a.* 395, *Chron. min.* 2.64 (= *Jord. Rom.* 319); Philost. 11.8 does not mention Gainas in connection with the murder, but stresses that the troops had been instructed by Stilicho; Socrat. 61. and Sozomen. 8.1 only cite the troops as the slayers of Rufinus. In Claudian's account, the Eastern troops, compelled to part from their general against their will, take upon themselves to settle the score with Rufinus, thus clearing Stilicho of responsibility over his murder (*Ruf.* 2.257–77). On Gainas, see *PLRE s.v. Gainas*, 1.379–80.

executor of Rufinus' fate, certainly the main and immediate beneficiary of his disappearance from the scene was Eutropius, the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, who turned out to be as – if not more – hostile to Stilicho's policies as Rufinus had been.¹⁶⁶ His position as grand chamberlain entailed an intimate proximity with the imperial family and allowed him to control access to the emperor himself.¹⁶⁷ He was able to exploit his influence on the emperor to secure his position at court and to keep affairs firmly in his hands, to the point that Zosimus compares his domination over Arcadius to the control exercised over a tame animal.¹⁶⁸

After the failed expedition of Stilicho in 395, Alaric and his Goths had remained a thorn in the flank of the Eastern empire and had begun to plunder Greece largely unopposed.¹⁶⁹ Probably as a consequence of Eastern inaction and because he still aimed at extending his authority over the court of Constantinople, Stilicho set out on a new expedition against Alaric in 397 and managed to besiege him on Mount Pholoe.¹⁷⁰ As already observed, Claudian is the only source that clearly distinguishes this second expedition from the earlier one in 395, whereas other authors collapse this campaign with the previous one. As on the former occasion, Stilicho did not manage to crush Alaric's rebellion and left the Goths perhaps weakened, but not subjugated.¹⁷¹ Zosimus and John of Antioch blamed Stilicho's earlier failure on his lack of control on the troops;¹⁷² Cameron believes that this explanation fits well also with the events of 397 on the basis of an alleged attempt at bribing Roman units by Alaric, reported

¹⁶⁶ Jones, *LRE*, 1.177–8. Zos. 5.8.1 underlines that Eutropius cooperated with Stilicho in bringing about Rufinus' downfall. Apart from possibly being aware of the plan to eliminate Rufinus, Eutropius had already successfully foiled the latter's plan to marry his daughter to Arcadius by convincing the emperor to marry Eudoxia instead (Zos. 5.3.1–6). On Eutropius and his career, see *PLRE s.v. Eutropius* 1, 2.440–44. Cf. Claudian's depiction of Eutropius as Rufinus' successor in *Eutr.* 2.550 (*Rufini castratus prosilit heres*).

¹⁶⁷ On the office of the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, see Jones, *LRE*, 2.566–70; on the power attained by eunuchs in court, see Hopkins (1978), 172–96.

¹⁶⁸ Zos. 12.1. Zosimus underlines Eutropius' immense power also in 5.11.1. Cf. the criticism of Arcadius' subjection to Eutropius in Synes. *De regno* 15A-B and comments in Cameron and Long (1993), 107–8.

¹⁶⁹ Zos. 5.6.4–6.

¹⁷⁰ Zos. 5.7.1–2. On the hope of Stilicho, see for example the wish of Aurora – who personifies the Eastern Empire – to be governed by Stilicho in *Eutr.* 2.543–5.

¹⁷¹ Claudian repeatedly claims that Stilicho obtained a resounding victory over the Goths (*Ruf. 2 pr.* 1–12, *IV Hon.* 459–83, *Stil.* 1.18–87, *Get.* 513–14), but this is only rhetoric.

¹⁷² Zos. 5.7.1–2 and Joh. Ant. fr. 190 Müller / 282 Roberto / 215 Mariev.

by Claudian in *Bellum Geticum* (vv. 87–8).¹⁷³ On top of that, Stilicho must have felt that he could not legitimately conduct military operations in the Eastern empire and interfere with affairs in Constantinople without the formal approval of Arcadius. In fact, precisely his intervention in Greece prompted Eutropius to declare him *hostis publicus*, presumably because he perceived him as a menace.¹⁷⁴ Other reasons have been suggested for Stilicho's withdrawal: in particular Stilicho has been suspected to have been in collusion with Alaric. However, this hypothesis seems to be informed by the criticism that was directed at Stilicho after his downfall in 408.¹⁷⁵ The situation in 397, however, was very different to that of the years leading to the death of Stilicho and there is no reason to believe Stilicho had intention of allying himself with Alaric, who continued to constitute a danger for the empire. In fact, it is Eutropius who decided to solve the impasse by appointing Alaric as *Magister militum per Illyricum*, thus solving two problems at once: securing the support of Alaric and filling a vacant post in a key area.¹⁷⁶ Modern scholars have conjectured yet other reasons for Stilicho's decision to leave Greece without having reached his goal, namely that Alaric was protected by the Eastern court or that Stilicho had received news about Gildo's defection.¹⁷⁷

Gildo was a local prince who had helped Theodosius the elder – father of the emperor Theodosius I – to put down the rebellion led by his own brother Firmus in Africa Proconsularis; as a reward for his service he had been appointed to the post of *Magister utriusque militiae per Africam* sometime before 393.¹⁷⁸ At the end of 397,

¹⁷³ Cameron (1970), 168–71. Cf. Matthews (1975), 271–2, for the same position. On the allegations that Alaric attempted to corrupt the Roman army with the riches accumulated in more than a year spent looting the Eastern Empire, see *comm. ad vv. 87–8* and *infra* p. 75, with n. 248.

¹⁷⁴ Zos. 5.11.2. Understandably, Claudian never brings this up in his poems. Cf. Cameron (1970), 86 and 176.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. the allegation of Oros. 7.37.19. See Cesa (1994), 72, with a reiteration of the persuasiveness of the arguments of Cameron (1970), 172–3; cf. Janßen (2004), 142–3 for the same accusation after Alaric's expulsion from Italy in 402. Historians have sometimes interpreted the expression *icti foederis* in *Get.* 496–7 to mean that there had been a non-aggression compact between Alaric and Stilicho, cf. Mazzarino (1942), 69, n. 2; Grumel (1951), 36, n. 3; Garuti (1979), 26. The *foedus* Claudian refers to, however, is probably that established between Alaric and Eutropius: see also *infra* p. 63, n. 210. Seeck (1913), 5.273–4, implies that Stilicho gave Alaric free rein within the Eastern boundaries only to make himself indispensable to Arcadius.

¹⁷⁶ The office had been left vacant by Eutropius: see Cameron and Long (1993), 7. Claudian voices the bitter resentment of his Western patrons at the appointment of Alaric in *Eutr.* 2.214–18. On Alaric's Eastern command, see *Get.* 535–9; Cameron (1970), 172–3; Dewar (1996), xxix–xxx. Cf. *infra* p. 57.

¹⁷⁷ The positions of previous historians are summarised and discussed in Cameron (1970), 173–5.

¹⁷⁸ On the career of Gildo, see *PLRE s.v. Gildo*, 1.395–6. The social and political environment of the province of Africa Proconsularis fostered strong factionalism: a great part of the land was owned by

Gildo decided to shift his allegiance from the Western to the Eastern court, probably for hope of personal gain and at the instigation of Eutropius, thus bringing to an halt the supplying of corn on which the city of Rome heavily relied.¹⁷⁹ The situation was very serious: not only had shortages of grain always sparked grave unrest and sedition in Rome, but Stilicho, having been declared *hostis publicus* by the Senate in Constantinople, was in an embarrassing position.¹⁸⁰ He found an ally and a scapegoat in the Senate of Rome. Although essentially deprived of effective power and cheapened by the extension of its membership to holders of many offices during the fourth century, the Roman Senate was a venerable institution which included the members of the elite of the Western Empire: revered Roman families, whose roots allegedly went back for many generations, even to the times of the Republic; wealthy *curiales*, who were representatives of the provincial upper classes; palatine officer and other men of lower status whose profession required a good level of culture (lawyers, doctors, rhetoricians, the upper echelons of the army etc.).¹⁸¹ On the one hand, the Senate and the emperor appear to have tightened their ties during the end of the fourth century and under the regime of Stilicho: this tendency could be interpreted partly as the continuation of Gratian's policy, which was aimed at broadening the consensus towards his own rule in order to counteract the proclamation of his brother Valentinian II as Augustus without his prior authorisation.¹⁸² On the other hand, the status of its

absentee landowners (the senators and the Emperor), local kings or chieftains had access to manpower that was not assimilated to the imperial structure and a deep religious schism had engendered the development of two opposed Christian hierarchies; on this, on the insurrection of Firmus and on the intervention of the elder Theodosius, see Kulikowski (2019), 60–64 (chapter 3). On the rebellion of Gildo, see Kulikowski (2019), 129–30 (chapter 6); cf. also Seeck (1913), 282–91; Mazzarino (1942), 264–8; Demougeot (1951), 173–88; Cameron (1970), 93–123.

¹⁷⁹ Cameron (1969b), 272, n. 52, suggests that Eutropius might have used as a pretext a previous settlement by Theodosius, who had kept this area under his direct control when he had restored Valentinian II on the Western throne after defeating Magnus Maximus. Zos. 5.11.2 clearly states that Eutropius took the initiative, managing to annex Africa through Gildo; Oros. 7.36 typically blames Gildo's treachery on his paganism; Marcell. *comes s.a.* 398 limits Gildo's ambitions to Africa. There is no doubt that Claudian lays the blame at Eutropius' feet, at least retrospectively, cf. *Stil.* 1.271–81. It seems that Gildo's loyalty to Rome had been questioned before 397: see Matthews (1975), 272–3.

¹⁸⁰ Claudian powerfully highlights the importance of the corn supply and the dire consequence of the shortage in Rome's speech at the beginning of his poem against Gildo: see *Gild.* 49–112; the goddess even concludes her remonstrance wishing to have perished by the hands of her past enemies (vv. 121–6), rather than starving to death (v. 127, *cuncta fame leviora mihi*).

¹⁸¹ Jones also remarks that imperial ministers themselves would be drawn from senatorial circles or at any rate assimilated to them after their appointment: see Jones, *LRE*, 1.364–5.

¹⁸² Kelly (2013), 376–7. Another reason for the increased engagement of the emperor with the Senate was the regular presence of the emperor in Italy: with Honorius, the imperial court started to behave more like the government of Italy and to be thus more exposed to the political pressure that the wealthy

members – in particular that of the great Roman families – meant that the Senate could exercise some pressure over the government and a series of laws concerning the raising of levies for the war against Gildo testifies to the tension that could arise between the two authorities.¹⁸³ From the political point of view, however, Stilicho scored a significant point by convincing the Senate to take the initiative and to declare Gildo *hostis publicus*, probably helped by the fact that the vested interests of the Roman aristocracy in North Africa had been put at stake by the rebellion.¹⁸⁴ In his poem for the consulate of Stilicho – recited in 400, a year after the crisis had been solved – Claudian does not waste the opportunity to celebrate the intervention of the Senate and to stress its conformity with the ancient tradition of pre-eminence of that body (*Stil.* 1.325–7), explicitly praising Stilicho for reviving the neglected custom according to which the Senate had the power to declare war (*Stil.* 1.328–31) and hailing the return of ‘the laws of Romulus’ (*Stil.* 1.331–2).¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Stilicho’s decision was

senatorial families could exercise. This development will ultimately lead to the disaffection of the provincial classes – favouring usurpations such as that of Constantine which contributed to the fall of Stilicho – and eventually result into the fragmentation of the empire into independent kingdoms.

¹⁸³ For the laws that witness a change of legislation after senatorial pressure, see Jones, *LRE*, 3.73, n. 96; Matthews (1975), 268–9 and 277–8; on this basis, Mazzarino (1942), 238–9, argues for a secret but strong conflict between Stilicho and the Senate, whereas McLynn (1994), 368, explicitly recognises the crisis of 397 as the beginning of the rift which will eventually lead to Stilicho’s execution in 408.

¹⁸⁴ For senatorial interests in North Africa, see Matthews (1975), 27–30. There is no consensus on the correct sequence of the declarations of Stilicho and Gildo as *hostes publici* by, respectively, the Senate of Constantinople and that of Rome. Cameron (1970), 176 and 242, argues that the declaration of Stilicho as *hostis publicus* by the Eastern Senate was a direct consequence of his unwelcome intervention in Greece and of Eutropius’ subsequent suspicion of a collusion between him and Alaric. His position is consistent with that of Mazzarino (1942), 262, n. 3, and Demougeot (1951), 172–4; it is followed, among others, by Matthews (1975), 272, by Long (1996), 11 and *passim* (but see 236–7, where she seems to support the opposite view) and by Janßen (2004), 69. Heather (1988), 167–8, and (1991), 204, n. 30, agrees with Cameron, but believes that Eutropius’ decision developed from the knowledge of Stilicho’s claim over the Eastern half of the empire and from consequent fear of his approach to Constantinople; cf. also Baynes (1955), 334–5. All these hypotheses ultimately derive from Zosimus’ explicit assertion that Eutropius reached out to Gildo only **after** the declaration of Stilicho as *hostis publicus* (5.11.2). An alternative view sees the branding of Stilicho as *hostis publicus* as a reaction to the corresponding condemnation of Gildo by the Western Senate: see Seeck (1913), 286; Paschoud (1989), 113–15.

¹⁸⁵ *Stil.* 1.328–32, *neglectum Stilicho per tot iam saecula morem / rettulit, ut ducibus mandarent proelia patres / decretoque togae felix legionibus iret / tessera. Romuleas leges rediisse fatemur, / cum procerum iussis famulantia cernimus arma*, ‘Stilicho restored a custom that had already been neglected for centuries, according to which the fathers should enjoin war on generals and the propitious token should be passed among the legions by decree of those wearing the toga. We profess that the laws of Romulus have now returned, since we see armies attend to the commands of the leading men’; the *tessera* in Claudian’s text probably signifies the summon to war, cf. Virg. *Aen.* 7.637 (*it bello tessera signum*) and the explanation of this lemma in Horsfall (2000), *comm. ad v. 637*. Cf. Symm. *Ep.* 4.5 for the description of the meeting of the Senate during which the decision was taken; for Claudian’s relationship with the Senate, see Paschoud (1967), 146–9.

dictated by more than simple fondness for an old custom: he was now able to blame any potential setback on the Senate and therefore shield himself from further attacks to his position.¹⁸⁶

The Gildonic crisis was eventually solved by the intervention of Mascezel, a sibling of Gildo who led a victorious expedition against his rebel brother. The man who had facilitated the crisis, on the other hand, remained in power in Constantinople and even attained the consulate in 399, attracting the vitriol of Claudian.¹⁸⁷ The pre-eminence of Eutropius at the Eastern court lasted approximately for four years, until a military coup initiated by the disgruntled Gainas – in the meantime promoted to the position of *Magister militum per Orientem* – in cahoots with the barbarian leader Tribigild caused Eutropius' fall from power in the summer of 399 and ultimately his execution later in the same year.¹⁸⁸ During the period of his supremacy, Eutropius had contributed to the widening of the rift between the two halves of the Roman empire, opposing Stilicho's further initiatives on Eastern territory and trying to curb his power even in the West. He had endeavoured to do so by attaching two key political players – Alaric and Gildo – to the Eastern court. Rivalries between East and West can be also understood within the dynamics engendered by the phenomenon of the rule of child-emperors. Whereas previously there had always been at least one adult emperor on the throne, after 395, for the first time, two 'child-emperors' – Arcadius and Honorius – reigned at the same time.¹⁸⁹ Even when former senior emperors had had misunderstandings with their younger colleagues, they had clearly demonstrated an interest in solving these frictions and in maintaining good relations, cooperating with their co-rulers and with their courts in order to forestall usurpations and to defend the borders from external attacks; the ministers that ruled on behalf of child-emperors, on the contrary, had a more immediate interest in safeguarding their own power, and therefore tended to vie with each other for their own advantage. According to some

¹⁸⁶ The same dynamic can be detected in Stilicho's relations with the Senate when he was being blackmailed by Alaric: see Jones, *LRE*, 1.329–30.

¹⁸⁷ On the two invectives Claudian wrote against Eutropius, see Long (1996); more broadly on Claudian's depiction of Constantinople, see Kelly (2012).

¹⁸⁸ All the properties of Eutropius were seized, his effigies destroyed, and his measures annulled (*Cod. Theod.* 9.40.17). Presumably, the declaration of Stilicho as *hostis publicus* was also revoked in this circumstance; this in turn might account for Stilicho's tenure of the consulship the following year.

¹⁸⁹ Admittedly, Arcadius was not a child anymore; nevertheless, he never managed – or indeed never aspired – to take matters into his hands.

reconstructions, Stilicho's aspiration to preserve the unity of the empire under his guidance (together with the firm belief that it was the wish of Theodosius that he did so) was the factor that ultimately did not allow a rapprochement between the two halves of the empire.¹⁹⁰ In fact, Stilicho's active enmity towards the ministers of Arcadius contributed to provoke their hostility, as there would have been no place for them in a unified empire under him.¹⁹¹

4. THE CAREER OF ALARIC

In the winter of 401, Alaric and his followers penetrated the Alpine passes and entered the Italian peninsula: for the first time since the invasion of the Iuthungi more than a century earlier, a barbarian army was waging war on Italian soil.¹⁹² The group that had coalesced around the charismatic figure of Alaric had been a thorn in the side of both Stilicho and the ministers of the Eastern court for quite a few years. Already before rising up in open rebellion in 395, Alaric seems to have been involved with the rebels who ambushed Theodosius near the river Hebrus in 391, when the emperor was returning to Constantinople after overthrowing the usurper Magnus Maximus and re-organising Western affairs.¹⁹³ The only source for this attack is Claudian: in *Get.* 524, Alaric boasts that he has already defeated an emperor in the past (*tot Augustos Hebro qui teste fugavi*, 'I, who have put to flight so many emperors – Hebrus is my witness');¹⁹⁴ the same event seems to be alluded to in the later panegyric for the sixth

¹⁹⁰ O'Flynn (1983), 51.

¹⁹¹ Besides these considerations, it is important to acknowledge the social and economic differences that existed between the two halves of the Empire: these differences increasingly became starker during the fourth and fifth century, ultimately leading to divergent developments also in the political and institutional sphere; see Kulikowski (2019), 51–4 (chapter 3).

¹⁹² The Germanic tribe of the Iuthungi had inflicted a heavy defeat on Aurelian at Placentia in 270 before being stopped on the Adriatic coast near the city of Fano and finally being routed at Pavia. It was precisely after this critical moment that the emperor began the construction of the city walls of Rome. Although the actual defence of the city might not have been the only, or even the primary, motive behind the resolution to erect a wall, the time of its building is nonetheless not a coincidence; see Dey (2011), 111–13. It is also not a coincidence that the wall was repaired and refurbished in the context of Alaric's invasion of Italy in 401–2; see *comm. ad vv.* 36–49.

¹⁹³ The river Hebrus corresponds to the modern Maritsa, which runs through an area that today mostly comprehends modern Bulgaria; for part of its course, it marks the boundary between modern Greece and Turkey.

¹⁹⁴ The fictional Alaric probably chooses the plural as a hyperbole to emphasise his achievement. The expression *Hebro teste* on his lips turns upside down Claudian's own statement about Stilicho's successful actions in *Stil.* 1.21–2 (*aut gelidam Thracen decertatosque labores / Hebro teste canam?*, 'or shall I sing of freezing Thrace and overcome hardships with Hebrus as witness?'), probably referred to

consulship of Honorius, where a military encounter near the same river is implied.¹⁹⁵ The episode brought up by Claudian has been linked with Zosimus' information on the treacherous behaviour of a group of barbarians bribed by Magnus Maximus in order to harass Theodosius and with reports of subsequent unrest in Macedonia and Thessaly.¹⁹⁶

In 394, Alaric followed Theodosius in his march towards Italy to fight against the usurper Eugenius and had the command of a military unit at the Battle of the Frigidus;¹⁹⁷ he and his men were probably among the troops Theodosius dismissed immediately after the battle. Possibly dissatisfied with the emperor's treatment during and after the conflict, Alaric may have begun to cause trouble already during his journey back eastwards, in the winter of 394/5. This unrest would find an echo in Claudian's description of Honorius' progress to join his father in Milan as perilous in *III Hon.* 111–13 (especially at v. 112, *inter barbaricas ausus transire cohortes*, 'you dared to pass through barbarian armies') and *VI Hon.* 96–7 (*illo sub cardine rerum / sedula servatum per tot discrimina pignus*, 'in those circumstances, she [i.e. Serena] diligently kept the child [i.e. Honorius] unharmed through so many dangers'). Alaric even went as far as camping outside the walls of Constantinople in order to force the Eastern court to come to terms with him. Since at this point the Eastern army was still in Italy under the command of Stilicho – Theodosius had died at the beginning of 395 – the praetorian prefect Rufinus must have had no other option but reaching some sort of agreement with the Gothic forces, thus triggering the reaction of Stilicho, who crossed the Eastern border to deal, or so he intended, with both Alaric and Rufinus. As we have already seen, he indirectly succeeded in bringing down Rufinus, but Alaric

the period in which Stilicho was operating in Thrace as – perhaps – *Magister utriusque militiae* after the death of Promotus (*PLRE s.v. Stilicho*, 1.854).

¹⁹⁵ *VI Hon.* 104–8, *Maurusius Atlas / Gildonis Furias, Alaricum barbara Peuce / nutrierat, qui saepe tuum sprevere profana / mente patrem. / Thracum venientem e finibus alter / Hebrus clausit aquis*, 'Maurusian Atlas had nourished the madness of Gildo and savage Peuce had nourished Alaric, both of whom often scorned your father [i.e. Theodosius] with wicked intentions. One [i.e. Alaric] trapped him with the waters of the Hebrus while he was coming from the land of Thrace'; cf. Dewar (1996), 132–4, *comm. ad v.* 107–8.

¹⁹⁶ *Zos.* 4.45.3, 48–9. Cf. *PLRE s.v. Alaricus* 1, 2.44.

¹⁹⁷ Alaric is described as allied to Theodosius in this battle in Socrat. 7.10 (according to whom, he even received a Roman command in this circumstance) and *Zos.* 5.5.4. The barbarian troops as a whole were effectively under the command of Gainas according to *Zos.* 4.57.2–3; for barbarian allies at the Battle of the Frigidus, cf. also Eun. fr. 60; Joh. Ant. fr. 187 Müller / 280 Roberto / 212 Mariev; Jord. *Get.* 145.

remained a threat until he finally settled in Macedonia for a few years, enjoying the Roman title awarded him by Eutropius.¹⁹⁸

The position of barbarian bands within the Roman empire, the character of their members and the role of Alaric in relation to them, deserve further analysis. In 376, large groups of Goths asked the Romans for permission to cross the river Danube, after being pushed away from their homes by fear of other populations, including the Huns. The Roman empire had long-reaching relationships outside its borders and movements of people across them were therefore fairly common, but the size of the group seeking asylum in 376 was extraordinary.¹⁹⁹ Maladministration on the part of the Roman officers in charge of the management of the crossing and ill-advised decisions taken by the emperor Valens led to the disastrous defeat of Adrianople, in which the Eastern Roman army was basically wiped out, together with several members of the high military command and with the emperor Valens himself.²⁰⁰ Hastily intervening to fix the situation in the wake of the catastrophe, the new emperor Theodosius patched together a new army and managed to score a few modest victories. Finally, in 382, he reached an agreement with the Gothic bands who were still roaming through the Balkans: these groups became a permanent element in the region and largely maintained some degree of autonomy, living according to their customs and obeying their own chieftains, who could choose between following a Roman military career and leading their own tribal army, sometimes in support to the Romans, sometimes for their own personal gains.²⁰¹ In fact, the collapse of the Eastern field army forced Theodosius to look for recruits among those same barbarians whom the Romans had been fighting: many Goths became Roman soldiers and even attained the highest rank, as in the case of Gainas, who led the barbarian troops at the battle of the Frigidus, became *comes rei militaris* under Stilicho, and ultimately obtained the position of

¹⁹⁸ See *supra* pp. 51–4 and *infra* p. 63.

¹⁹⁹ On the dynamics of change among steppe populations and their impact on the Persian and Roman empires, see Kulikowski (2019), 72–80 (chapter 4).

²⁰⁰ On the events that led to the battle of Adrianople, the battle itself and its aftermath, see Kulikowski (2019), 83–90 (chapter 4); Lenski (2002), 320–67; Heather (1991), 122–57.

²⁰¹ Traditionally, historians have understood this agreement as a ‘treaty’ and have therefore identified the Goths with which it was stipulated as ‘the foederates of 382’; this position is exemplified by the treatment of Peter Heather in Heather (1991), 158–65 and 193–5. Other historians, however, have drawn a more complex picture and believe that Theodosius did not draw up a single treaty with all the Goths, but rather that he settled differently with the different groups: see Cesa (1994), 36–45.

Magister utriusque militiae in the Eastern empire in 399.²⁰² This development is embedded in a series of changes that transformed society at large, causing military service to be less attractive to Roman citizens and thus pressuring Roman emperors into enlisting mercenaries in order to defend the empire's borders and wage battles. Therefore, while some of the Goths who had entered the empire in 376 were settled under their own leaders and given land to cultivate with the obligation of defending the frontiers where they lived, others were probably billeted as soldiers in the field army and kept at the ready should war broke out. Traditionally, Alaric's men have been identified as belonging to the first group, namely those Goths settled inside the Roman empire after the peace of 382: as a consequence, they have been seen as a nation of uprooted peasants and their wanderings interpreted as a bid to obtain better land to cultivate from the Romans. This view is ultimately induced by the fact that the remaining of Alaric's followers finally settled in Gaul and gave rise to the Visigothic kingdom in 418, but it is not by all means certain that this was their initial aim; indeed, the core of the band was probably formed by Gothic soldiers formerly on the payroll of the Roman state, and Alaric himself might have started off his career in the same way. The warlike nature of such groups – of which Alaric's was only the first – leads one to think that these men were really more similar to a group of mercenary soldiers than to a nation in search of a home.²⁰³ Even though tribal connections might have initially played a role in the coming together of such groups, the number of Alaric's followers was probably constantly swollen by crowds of outcasts from different walks of life, such as poverty-stricken farmers, impoverished citizens and runaway slaves. In fact, as suggested by Liebeschuetz, this circumstance might explain why roaming armies like that of Alaric could maintain relatively large numbers even after being defeated and also why they could never be totally annihilated.²⁰⁴ The two occasions in which Claudian claims that Stilicho crushed the Goths are a case in point: even though Claudian undoubtedly exaggerated Stilicho's performance in those episodes, it is likely that the number of his enemies had been reduced but that Alaric managed to reinforce his numbers with new levies.

²⁰² On Gainas alleged participation in Rufinus' murder, see *supra* p. 52, n. 165.

²⁰³ Cf. Liebeschuetz (1990), 48–85.

²⁰⁴ Liebeschuetz (1990), 17.

The figure of Alaric is crucial in the subsequent development of barbarian kingdoms inside the Roman empire. As argued by Michael Kulikowski, his career demonstrated that it was possible to live inside the boundaries of the empire and influence Roman politics without ever being completely absorbed into its institutions.²⁰⁵ Through the various Roman commands he held and the diplomatic relationships he established with the courts of both halves of the empire, he was the only link between his men and the Roman establishment: thanks to this vital role, he fostered a new sense of community and indeed of Gothic identity among his followers, which eventually led to the foundation of the first barbarian kingdom in Roman territory. Even though these ‘Goths’ were now radically different from those who had crossed the Danube in 378, Romans continued to identify them with those groups, as exemplified by Claudian in *Get.* 610–15.²⁰⁶ To impress more deeply the imagination of his audience, the poet fancies that the barbarians, while breaking away and fleeing the battlefield of Pollentia, strewed the treasures they had snatched from the Romans all over the ground in order to check the unrelenting pressure of their triumphant pursuers. In the hoard – Claudian claims – the Romans even sighted the purple-dyed garb and spoils snatched from the emperor Valens at the battle of Adrianople (*Get.* 610, *purpureos cultus absumptique igne Valentis / exuvias*, ‘the purple-dyed gowns and the spoils of Valens, who was taken by fire’).²⁰⁷ In fact, Claudian had implicitly established this connection earlier in the poem, when he had calculated the years that had elapsed between the crossing of the Danube and the Gothic depredations in Thrace, Macedonia and Greece, thus implying that the protagonists of both events were the same.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Kulikowski (2007), 157.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Kulikowski (2007), 158; Heather (1991), 194–5.

²⁰⁷ One of the two accounts of the mysterious death of Valens and surely the version favoured by the ancient sources, since in this way the gruesome demise of the emperor could be interpreted as a divine punishment; see Lenski (1997), 152–5; (2002), 339–41. The name of the emperor is not present in the manuscript tradition. The genitive *Valentis* is a conjecture based on the reading *valentes* preserved by some manuscripts; Hall prints *absumptique ... Valentis exuvias*, whereas the last editor, Garuti, prints *absumptasque ... calentes exuvias*. The adjective *calentes* is more likely to be a corruption crept into the manuscript tradition in connection with *igne* in the line above, since copyists were probably not aware of the legend according to which the emperor Valens had died in a fire and tried therefore to make sense of the verses in another way.

²⁰⁸ The years are counted by reckoning the seasons – winters and springs – that have elapsed between the two events: *Get.* 166–71, *frigida ter deciens nudatum frondibus Haemum / tendit hiems vestire gelu totiensque solutis / ver nivibus viridem monti reparavit amictum, / ex quo iam patrios gens haec oblita Triones / atque Histrum transvecta semel vestigia fixit / Threicio funesta solo*, ‘already three times ten

Alaric's circumstances after his military encounter with Stilicho in 397 are covered only by Claudian.²⁰⁹ According to the poet, after wreaking havoc on Greece and Epirus, he passed to the service of the Eastern court and was given control over Eastern Illyricum (*Eutr.* 2.214–16). The post Claudian alludes to is probably that *Magister militum per Illyricum* granted by Eutropius and it is likely that Alaric remained stationed in the area with his men until his invasion of Italy. Claudian suggests that much when one of the few speaking characters in *Bellum Geticum*, an authoritative old member of a sort of 'Gothic Senate', chides Alaric by reminding him how many times already he had warned him to remain safely in Eastern Illyricum and that he should abide by the treaty he had reached with the Romans (*Get.* 496–8).²¹⁰ In his rebuke to him, Alaric boasts that he has lorded over the region and controlled the armouries of Thrace (*Get.* 535–539). He repeatedly gives emphasis to the fact that he has exercised this power rightfully: *at nunc Illyrici postquam mihi tradita iura / meque suum fecere ducem* (vv. 535–6, 'but now, since I have been handed over legal power over Illyricum and since they have made me their own commander') and *legitimo iussu* (v. 539, 'with legal command'). It is in these circumstances that Alaric made an unexpected move and marched westwards towards Italy in the winter of 401.

5. THE INVASION OF ITALY AND THE BATTLE OF POLLENTIA

Given the favourable situation Alaric seems to have found himself in, it is not surprising that historians have wondered why he eventually decided to leave a region lawfully subjected to him and what he was hoping to achieve by invading Italy. The

years the winter season has endeavoured to clothe with frost the Balkan range stripped of leaves and as many times spring has repaired the green cloak of the mountain after the snow has melted, since this race [i.e. the Goths], having forgotten its native constellations and crossed the Danube, has planted its deadly steps on the soil of Thrace'. Cf. the computation of the old Goth in *Get.* 488–9 ("*Si numero non fallor*" ait "*tricesima currit / bruma fere, rapidum postquam transnavimus Histrum*", "If I am not mistaken about the number" he said "it is nearly the thirtieth winter since we swam across the Danube"), which matches the earlier calculation. The years elapsed since 376 were in fact about twenty-five, but Claudian has rounded the number up to thirty.

²⁰⁹ Zosimus passes over the entire period between 397 and 407; the invasion of Italy and the battle of Pollentia are briefly recorded in the tradition of the *consularia* and in some chronicles. See *infra* p. 67.

²¹⁰ I agree with Cameron (1970), 178, n. 1, *contra* Mazzarino (1942), 69, n. 2: given the poetic context, the old Goth could easily refer to Eastern Illyricum through the synecdoche *Emathia tellus*, the central plain of Macedonia, which was included in the prefecture of Eastern Illyricum. The treaty is defined with the words *icti foederis*, which suggests a formal agreement between the parts involved.

answers that have been given to the first issue can be grouped into two main strands: on the one hand, the majority of historians believe that Alaric took the decision to move westwards on his own accord – either because he felt threatened by the Eastern court or because he saw an opportunity – on the other hand, a few historians support the theory according to which Alaric was following orders given by Constantinople. After the disappearance of Eutropius, the most powerful man at the Eastern court was, for a short time, the barbarian *Magister utriusque militiae* Gainas, who had made a compact with his fellow-Goth Tribigild and engineered Eutropius' fall. In 400, however, the Goths stationed in the city of Constantinople had been massacred and Gainas himself defeated and killed by the Hunnic leader Uldin. Tensions between the population of Constantinople and the Goths lodged within the city were exacerbated by religious differences, since the latter were Arians.²¹¹ It is possible that these events – the fall of Eutropius, the political reshuffling that followed the Gothic massacre and the religious strain – prompted Alaric, whose office rested on a deal struck with the deceased Eutropius and whose position had some resemblance with that of the rebel Gainas, to pre-empt any form of retaliation from Constantinople by leaving Eastern Illyricum of his own accord. The presence of the hostile Hunnic bands led by Uldin might have contributed to impress upon Alaric the urgency of leaving the Eastern empire.²¹² This hypothesis does not clash with the possibility that Alaric's departure was a consequence of the withdrawal of Roman subsidies, as stated by Jordanes in his *Getica*;²¹³ indeed, the two explanations can be easily put together: given the climate of uncertainty and the smouldering hostile attitude of the Eastern government, the interruption of the payment of subsidies might have been a clear cue for Alaric to take his leave.²¹⁴ A few historians support the idea that the Eastern court deliberately whipped up Alaric against the Western Empire on the basis of Claudian's claim that the Goths found the best time to strike thanks to treachery (*Get.* 279, *si perfidia nacti*

²¹¹ Cameron and Long (1993) provide a detailed account of the Gothic rebellion and massacre through the analysis of the writings of Synesius of Cirene, a crucial eyewitness of these events.

²¹² Cesa and Sivan (1990), 367 and 373; Cameron and Long (1993), 329–32; Cesa (1994), 92.

²¹³ Jord. *Get.* 106; cf. Liebeschuetz (1990), 60–61.

²¹⁴ Mazzarino (1942), 67–8, speaks of outright military action from Constantinople sparked by Aurelian, but this is hardly plausible, as convincingly argued by Cameron and Long (1993), 330. Janßen (2004), 127–31, offers a detailed outline of all the arguments discussed; he supports the idea that Alaric's decision was due to fear of the Huns, to the suspension of the subsidies, or to the interaction of these two factors.

penetrabile tempus).²¹⁵ This hypothesis, however, has been rejected on the ground that Stilicho recognised the Eastern consul of 401 and that the following year Arcadius and Honorius held a joint consulship, clear signs of good will and cooperation between the two halves of the empire.²¹⁶ Claudian in fact alludes elsewhere in the poem to the dishonesty of the barbarians: in vv. 566–7 – the final speech of Stilicho before the battle of Pollentia – Alaric is described as a ‘deceitful’ enemy (*fallax*) who ‘makes fun of treaties’ (*foedera ludit*) and who ‘trades perjuries alternatively to one court and the other’ (*alternae periuria venditat aulae*).²¹⁷ Indeed, his conduct had always been far from reliable and he had already turned on pillaging Roman territory after being an ally of the Empire on several occasions; it is therefore safe to read *Get.* 279 as a reference to another instance of this shifty behaviour.²¹⁸ A few lines below, the claim that Alaric had been kept unharmed by the treachery of the Eastern court is likely to be yet another reference to Eutropius’ decision to grant Alaric a Roman command; given Claudian’s partisan support for Stilicho, it is indeed only natural that he would interpret Eutropius’ compromise as an act of treason.²¹⁹

Having determined the reasons that are likely to have induced Alaric to leave Eastern Illyricum, it remains to establish what he hoped to achieve by invading Italy. Claudian’s insistence that he yearned to conquer Rome is unrealistic: the threat to attack Rome was Alaric’s bargaining chip in negotiations and, as demonstrated by later events, he repeatedly used it in the attempt to extort concessions from the court of Honorius; when he finally did seize and sack the city in 410, it was more out of desperation and as a last resort, than as part of a long-term strategy.²²⁰ The insistence

²¹⁵ Demougeot (1951), 267 and 269, esp. n. 194; as pointed out by Cameron, Demougeot mistakenly believes that a sermon delivered in front of the tomb of Saint Thomas at Edessa in 402 (*PG* 59.497–500) is directed at Stilicho, whereas the real target of the invective is Alaric, cf. Cameron and Long (1993), 332, with n. 106. According to Grumel (1951), 38–9, the Eastern Empire persuaded Alaric to break the alleged treaty with Stilicho with the promise of new territories in the Western empire and with gold, but the treaty never existed in the first place.

²¹⁶ Bayless (1976), 65–7 (arguments already anticipated in his PhD thesis, cf. Bayless [1972], 26–8).

²¹⁷ *Get.* 566–7, *non sua vis tutata diu, dum foedera fallax / ludit et alternae periuria venditat aulae*. Liebeschuetz (1990), 62, n. 106, suggests that this could be read as an indication that Alaric approached the Western court with an offer before the invasion.

²¹⁸ Cf. *Hon. VI* 204, *rursus dum pacta movet*, referred to Alaric’s alleged disregard of the pact struck with Stilicho after the defeat of Pollentia. According to this pact, mentioned only by Claudian, Stilicho agreed on allowing Alaric to leave Italy without further military action.

²¹⁹ *Get.* 516–17, *extinctusque fores, ni te sub nomine legum / proditio regnique favor texisset Eoi*.

²²⁰ Cameron (1970), 183–4; Garuti (1979), 66–7, n. 42. See Kulikowski (2006), 173–7, for an outline of Alaric’s negotiations with the court of Honorius after the death of Stilicho in 408; cf. also the more

that the target of the Goths was Rome is in fact an overarching theme of *Bellum Geticum* and a fabrication that Claudian exploits to justify some of Stilicho's actions during the war.²²¹ Unfortunately, no other ancient source sheds light on Alaric's motives and we are therefore left in the dark as to his real intentions. Given the recent developments in Constantinople, it is possible that he had simply nowhere else to go. As the episode of Gainas had recently shown, even if Alaric – and at least some of his followers – were Gothic by birth, they could not simply turn around and make their way across the Danube to rejoin their erstwhile community. Years of dwelling within the Roman empire had probably severed any personal and familiar connections they might have originally had, as well as transforming their way of life and their identity too radically; moreover, the group Alaric led was, as we have seen, extremely diverse and – as far as we can tell – quite changeable: they might have not even considered leaving the Empire altogether, rather seeing their only chance in carving some space for themselves within its boundaries.²²² Indeed, Claudian himself gives credit to this hypothesis when he affirms that after his first defeat, Alaric did not lose hope of crossing the Alps in a new direction instead of turning back where he had come from.²²³ This is exactly what Alaric's followers would finally manage to do in 418, when they obtained a settlement in southern Gaul.²²⁴ This conclusion to the group's wanderings might have influenced the understanding of Alaric's initial objectives, but it remains likely that he would seek a solution similar to that which he had obtained from Eutropius a few years earlier: a legitimate Roman rank – which would in turn guarantee recognition for his followers – the payment of subsidies and land to inhabit.²²⁵ According to Jordanes, Alaric was elected king just before invading Italy.

extensive narrative in Heather (1994), 213–18, according to whom 'the fall of the Empire's capital city actually represents a Gothic failure'.

²²¹ See *comm. ad. vv.* 78–82.

²²² Cameron and Long (1993), 330–31, link the situation of Gainas with that of Silvanus, Frankish *magister militum*, whose story is related by Ammianus (15.5). Similarly, after the death of Valentinian II in 392, Arbogast had resorted to a puppet emperor, his only chance to save his life from the vengeance of Theodosius.

²²³ *VI Hon.* 230–32, *Non tamen ingenium tantis se cladibus atrox / deicit: occulto temptabat tramite montes, / si qua per scopulos subitas exquirere posset / in Raetos Gallosque vias.*

²²⁴ Heather (1991), 219–24. Cf. *Jord. Get.* 152–3, where the events are collapsed, and which therefore does not necessarily apply to the situation of 401/2.

²²⁵ According to Zosimus, Alaric's demands to Honorius in 409/10 initially amounted to the yearly payment of gold and corn and to lands to inhabit (5.48.3); they were subsequently reduced to the granting of a quantity of corn, a more contained portion of land and an alliance (5.50.3), but they substantially remained the same. Assumptions on whether the land Alaric had in mind was Italy or

Even though Jordanes is notoriously unreliable and his claim might reflect later events, his account demonstrates that Alaric's breach of the treaty with the Roman empire had been perceived as a bold claim of independence from Roman authority and the beginning of a different phase in Gothic history already by ancient historians.²²⁶

Surprisingly – given the apparent magnitude of the event – Zosimus overlooks Alaric's descent into Italy altogether. Instead, the invasion is recorded by the tradition of the *consularia* – it appears in the *Consularia Vindobonensia priora* and in the related *Consularia Hafniensia* – and by that of the late antique chronicles – it is mentioned by Prosper of Aquitaine and by Cassiodorus, from whom it might have passed into the text of Jordanes.²²⁷ These sources do not agree on the date of the invasion: the *consularia* place it under the consulship of Vincentius and Fravitta (401) and record the day and month in which the invasion took place, even though they are not consistent with one another;²²⁸ the chroniclers and Jordanes claim that Alaric entered Italy during the consulship of Stilicho and Aurelianus (400) and that he led this expedition together with another Gothic king, Radagaisus (both leaders are called either *duces* or *reges* in the sources).²²⁹

The date that should be accepted as the most likely is that given by the *Consularia Vindobonensia priora*, namely 18 November 401. As already demonstrated by Seeck, this is in fact the only date that matches the information contained in *Bellum Geticum*.²³⁰ In the middle section of the poem, Claudian inserts

another region north of the Alps again depend on later demands or actions; see Garuti (1979), 66–7, n. 42, for an overview of some such positions. Cesa and Sivan (1990), 367, argue for Gaul. Cf. also Janßen (2004), 131.

²²⁶ Jord. *Get.* 147 *mox ergo antefatus Halaricus creatus est rex, cum suis deliberans suasit eos suo labore quaerere regna quam alienis per otium subiacere*; cf. Liebeschuetz (1990), 62, followed by Janßen (2004), 131.

²²⁷ I follow Burgess and Kulikowski (2013) in adopting the collective name *Consularia Hafniensia* for the *Additamenta ad Prosperum Hauniensia*, *Auctuarium Prosperi Hauniense*, and *Continuatio Havniensis Prosperi*.

²²⁸ *Cons. Vind. pr.*, *Chron. min.* 1.299, *s.a.* 401 (= consuls Vincentius and Fravittas) *et intravit Alaricus in Italiam xiiii kl Decembri*; *Cons. Hafn.* (= *Additamenta ad Prosperum Hauniensia*, *Auctuarium Prosperi Hauniense*, and *Continuatio Havniensis Prosperi*), *Chron. min.* 1.299, *s.a.* 401 *Gotti cum totius robore exercitus Alaric duce Alpes Iulias transgressi in Italiam ruunt x kal. Sept.*

²²⁹ *Prosp.*, *Chron. min.* 1.464, *s.a.* 400 (= consuls Stilicho and Aurelianus), *Gothi Italiam Alarico et Radagaiso ducibus ingressi*; Cassiod., *Chron. min.* 2.154, *s.a.* 400 (= consuls Stilicho and Aurelianus), *Gothi Halarico et Radagaiso regibus ingrediuntur Italiam*; Jord. *Get.* 147 *Halaricus ... sumpto exercito per Pannonias Stilicone et Aureliano consulibus (= 400) et per Sirmium dextroque latere quasi viris vacuum intravit Italiam*. On Radagaisus, who led an invasion of Italy in 405/6, see *PLRE s.v. Radagaisus*, 2.934.

²³⁰ Seeck (1913) 5.7.329. The date is accepted, for example, by Cesa and Sivan (1990), 371, and is preferred also by Dewar (1996), xxxii.

the narration of Stilicho's journey north of the Alps in order to gather new recruits for the war against Alaric (*Get.* vv. 319–63). As usual for Claudian, the storyline is simple and most of the narration is taken up by metaphors (Stilicho is compared to a lion in vv. 323–9) and digressions (vv. 329–48 contain a description of the Alpine region). The action is limited to the crossing of a lake (probably Lake Garda, vv. 319–21), Stilicho's endurance of extreme physical conditions (i.e. lack of food and of shelter) and the hospitality offered by local peasants (vv. 356–63). Not only does the poet explicitly affirm that 'Stilicho marched through such regions in the middle of the cold season' (vv. 348–9, *per talia tendit / frigoribus mediis Stilicho loca*), but he continues to stress this fact throughout his account: Stilicho undertakes the journey even though the mountains are inaccessible in winter (vv. 322–3, *scandit inaccessos brumali sidere montes / nil hiems caelive memor*); the lion in the metaphor hunts in the winter night (*hiberna sub nocte*) and pads through the high snow (*per altas incedit ... nives*), its mane and fur are frozen (*stant colla pruinis aspera; flaventes adstringit stiria saetas*) and it is not wary of clouds or chill (*nec meminit leti nimbosve aut frigora curat*); the description of the Alps contains a depiction of the dangers the mountains can pose in winter (*multi ... obriguere gelu, multos hausere profundae vasta mole nives ... interdum subitam glacie labente ruinam mons dedit*); Stilicho is burdened by his soaked cloak (*madido ... oneratus amictu*), spurs a freezing horse (*algentem pulsabat equum*) and sleeps surrounded by snow (*illi sub nivibus somni*). Claudian of course stresses all these details in order to extol Stilicho's achievements and to emphasise how he would put the protection of Rome before his personal safety, but, in order for this praise to hit the mark, it had to be based on true facts. He claims again that the invasion had taken place in winter in his last panegyric, namely in the speech the emperor Honorius addresses to the goddess Roma. In that poem, Honorius affirms that the Goths had attacked the cities of Liguria aided by the cold season, which the emperor believes to have favoured the northern populations used to such climate (*VI Hon.* 443–5, *iam Ligurum trepidis admoverat agmina muris / tutior auxilio brumae (quo gentibus illis / sidere consueti favet inclementia caeli)*). All these elements point to reject the date of 23 August reported in the margin of the *Consularia Hafniensia*, since Stilicho could have hardly waited until winter to look for new recruits given the danger Alaric posed; in fact, the same day and month are later offered as the date in

which Radagaisus – another Gothic invader and Alaric’s alleged fellow-invader according to the chronicle tradition – was defeated in 405, thus suggesting a possible interpolation or mere confusion.²³¹

Whether by chance or by device, Alaric had chosen a convenient moment for the invasion, when part of the Roman army was engaged in repressing an incursion made by groups of Vandals in Raetia. In *Bellum Geticum*, this circumstance is underlined by Stilicho in his speech to the fearful population of Milan (vv. 279–80, *nostras dum Raetia vires / occupat atque alio desudant Marte cohortes*) and justifies the hero’s journey across the Alps to pacify the region and to look for reinforcements by withdrawing the military resources employed there. The ethnicity of the invaders is specified later in the poem, when Claudian hyperbolically relates that legions from the farthest frontiers of the Western Empire flocked to protect Italy against the Goths and to fight alongside Stilicho (vv. 414–15, *adcurrit vicina manus quam Raetia nuper / Vandalicis auctam spoliis defensa probabit*). The troops mentioned are those stationed along the Roman *limes* and the poet associates them with the barbaric populations they have subdued, which become an essential part of their identity (*Get.* 416–22): the contingent from Britain has kept guard against Scots and Picts; the army from the Rhineland has kept Sygambri, Chatti and Cherusci subjugated; the units from Raetia had defended the region from the Vandals.²³² Claudian exploits this exotic and partly outdated list of ethnic groups to extol the strength of Rome, whose mere name instils fear in the barbarians who live along the Empire’s borders and maintains peace in the whole of Germany, where nobody would dare to rebel even when the Roman garrisons are lifted from their guarding duties.²³³ This might be an exaggeration: troops could hardly be drafted from, say, Hadrian’s Wall to join battle with Alaric at such a short notice. In fact, Claudian weaves yet other implausible connections between the events: even though Alaric arrives in Italy when the Roman forces are apparently already

²³¹ *Cons. Hafn. s.a.* 405 (= consuls Stilicho II and Anthemius) *Radagaisus in Tuscia multis Gothorum milibus caesis ducente exercitum Stilichone superatus et captus est apud Florentiam urbem ante portas x kal. Sept.*

²³² The names of some of these populations, i.e. Sygambri, Chatti and Cherusci, are taken from the historical and poetic tradition of the early Empire and do not reflect the actual polities that lived across the Roman border at the time of Claudian; cf. Tac. *Germ.* 30–31 and 36, Juv. 4.147–8 (*tamquam de Chattis aliquid torvisque Sygambris / dicturus*), Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.27, Mart. 2.2.6. This usage was widespread in late antiquity and continued well after Claudian: see for example Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 2.31.10, where Saint Remigius labels Clovis I ‘Sygamber’.

²³³ *Get.* 422–9. This topos is exploited also by Sidonius, *e.g. Avit.* 388–402.

engaged with the rebels in Raetia, Stilicho's speech to the mutineers implies that the latter had taken advantage of Alaric's invasion to strike (vv. 380–81, "*Tantane vos inquit "Getici fiducia belli / erigit?"*").²³⁴ This is a warning of the inherent risk of taking Claudian's information at face value and a reminder that Claudian was a poet, not a reporter: such incongruences were clearly not deemed to weaken the overall effectiveness of the poem and would have likely been overlooked during an oral performance in favour of the core notions which would have made an impression on the audience and been retained, namely that Rome's authority had eventually prevailed and that Stilicho had been instrumental in achieving that final outcome.

The route from Illyricum to Italy was well-known to Alaric and to some of his followers: it was probably the same ground they had covered when they had marched in the train of the emperor Theodosius I, fighting for him against Eugenius and Arbogast; indeed, the final battle of that civil war had taken place on the river Frigidus – identified with the modern-day Vipava – in the Julian Alps, not too far from the theatre of the first military encounters of 401. Claudian himself draws attention to this circumstance. Immediately after remarking on the absence of the army in his speech to the citizens of Milan, Stilicho drily blames civil strife for showing to Alaric the way to Italy (vv. 281–8): the recent defeat of two usurpers – Maximus in 388 and Eugenius in 394 – had made the road known to all (v. 285, *famosum vulgavit iter*) and 'instructed' the enemy (v. 286, *praestructum bellis civilibus hostem*); the Goths had come by a path that had become 'usual' and civil wars had opened the way for them (vv. 287–8, *per solitas venere vias, aditusque sequendos / barbarico Romana dedit discordia bello*). Ironically, it had really been Theodosius who had travelled along that road, thus in a way disclosing it to Alaric, but Claudian omits this detail.

Possibly aided by the lack of an adequate number of regular units in northern Italy, Alaric does not seem to have met with much resistance during the first stages of the invasion.²³⁵ Claudian mentions a military encounter near the river Timavus, a

²³⁴ In Stilicho's speech, Claudian gives a short lesson in Roman history and calls attention to the episode of Philip V of Macedonia, who vainly tried to extend his influence westwards while Rome's attention and resources were focussed on Hannibal (*Get.* 384–99).

²³⁵ The so-called *claustra Alpium Iuliarum* (cf. Amm. 31.11.3, who – using a subjective genitive – might have actually employed the expression merely to indicate the Alps themselves), a series of military defences – walls, turrets and forts – strewn across the passes of the Julian Alps and built towards the end of the fourth century, seem to have been abandoned at this stage, possibly even as a result of the invasion itself. The function of this system was not probably to defend Italy from military attacks –

karstic stream in the modern region of Friuli Venezia Giulia in north-eastern Italy (vv. 562–63, *deploratumque Timavo / vulnus*).²³⁶ The river – modern Timavo – originates in Croatia and makes its course underground through a system of caves until it suddenly appears in the coastal town of San Giovanni di Duino, where it flows into the Gulf of Trieste. A town called *Fonte Timavi* appears on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, very close to San Giovanni di Duino and not far from Aquileia.²³⁷ We know from other sources that Alaric besieged the city of Aquileia: in his *Apology against Rufinus*, written in 402, Jerome teases his rival, the presbyter Rufinus, for choosing to suffer the Gothic siege, rather than going to Rome to clear his name from the accusation of heresy due to his defence of Origen (*Adv. Ruf.* 3.21, *et tantum Romanae urbis iudicium fugis ut magis obsidionem barbaricam quam pacatae urbis velis sententiam sustinere*); in the preface to his translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Rufinus himself declares that he took up the writing of history at the request of his patron, Bishop Chromatius of Aquileia, who thus provided a palliative against the misery caused by Alaric's invasion (ll. 7–8, *tempore, quo diruptis Italiae claustris Alarico duce Gothorum se pestifer morbus infudit et agros armenta uiros longe lateque uastauit*). There is no reason to believe that the city was effectively taken: on the one hand, despite the pitfalls of an argument from silence, the capture of such an important centre would have probably left a mark in the sources or would have at least been capitalised on by Claudian in *Bellum Geticum*; on the other hand, Alaric's men presumably lacked the necessary equipment to overcome the defences of a walled city.²³⁸

According to the sources, while the Goths advanced past Aquileia and towards the plains of the Po river, panic spread across the whole peninsula. Claudian describes the terror sparked by Alaric three times in *Bellum Geticum*. In vv. 41–9, he compares the terrified citizens who watch the devastation brought on their land from behind the

indeed they would not have been capable of repelling an invading army – but to exert a more general control over the area; see Poulter (2013) and Sarantis and Christie (2013), 283–8, for further bibliography. On the absence of significant defensive troops in Italy at the time, cf. Jord. *Get.* 29, [*Alaricus*] *quasi viribus vacuum intravit Italiam*. Cf. Janßen (2004), 138–9, for conclusions that can be drawn from the testimony of the *Notitia Dignitatum* on the not insignificant number of troops stationed in Italy at the time.

²³⁶ The Timavus is mentioned again in *VI Hon.* 197 (*inque novem consurgens ora Timavus*) among the river-gods summoned by the god Eridanus to witness the humiliation of Alaric; see Dewar (1966), *comm. ad loc.*

²³⁷ The town has been identified with modern-day Monfalcone.

²³⁸ Some historians believe that the city was captured, cf. e.g. Demougeot (1951), 269–70; *contra* Janßen (2004), 135.

city wall to defenceless livestock; they would scan the horizon with apprehension, praying for floods and storms to hinder the advance of the enemy. Later in the poem, he recalls the widespread feeling that no fortification was stout enough to withstand the Gothic assault: the city walls would seem fragile and be beaten down (vv. 213–14), the iron doors would open as if spontaneously (v. 215), ramparts set with palisades would not be able to hold off the leaping cavalry of the Goths (vv. 216–17). The inhabitants of Italy perceived putting the seas between themselves and the invaders as their only hope of safety, to the point that Claudian flamboyantly claims that – whereas Sardinia and Corsica seemed far enough to give sanctuary to the fleeing Romans (vv. 217–19) – Sicily herself felt too close to the mainland and would have liked to widen the rift between her coast and that of the tip of Italy, if only nature could allow it (vv. 220–22). Wealthy people would have traded their lavish palaces for a bleak cave if that would have meant their survival (vv. 223–4), but they were not the only ones to watch the invasion with concern: in the speech to the people of Milan, Stilicho reproaches some individuals for mulling over the option of leaving Italy for Gaul (vv. 296–8); he alludes to the fact that in this way the empire would settle on the Rhône and the body (i.e. the empire) would be allowed to survive without the head (i.e. Rome), thus suggesting that he is addressing members of the court (vv. 299–301, *scilicet Arctoïis concessa gentibus urbe / considet regnum Rhodano capitique superstes / truncus erit?*). Even if we cannot ascertain whether this last detail reflected a real debate among members of the court or was rather a poetic exaggeration, this allegation is interesting for two aspects: first, it reveals that – even if the people involved were not physically in Rome – leaving Italian soil could be interpreted as a betrayal of the tradition still embodied in the symbolic capital of the empire; second, it adumbrates the fact that Milan was not deemed safe, an admission with lasting impact on the geography of the Western Empire. Milan had increasingly risen to importance during the fourth century thanks to its strategic position at the crossroads of the main arteries of the Western Empire: it gave access to Italy and it connected the latter with Gaul, the Rhine and Danube frontiers, and the Balkans. At some point after the entrance of Alaric in Italy – likely after the breaking of the Gothic siege of Milan – Honorius temporarily moved to Ravenna, where he issued laws and where Claudian places him before embarking on the journey to Rome to celebrate his sixth consulship in 404 (*VI*

Hon. 494–5, *dixit et antiquae muros egressa Ravennae / signa movet*).²³⁹ This move was probably due to the presence of the army there and to the easing of maritime exchanges and communications with Constantinople, thus inaugurating a new phase in the relationship between the two capital cities and their courts.²⁴⁰ Anxiety was felt at Rome, too, and Symmachus travelled to the imperial court on behalf of the Senate to secure provisions for the capital; he arrived at Milan towards the end of February 402 and returned to Rome in March (*Ep.* 4.9; 5.94–6; 7.13–14), where he died soon afterwards.²⁴¹

Alaric moved towards Milan, the seat of the imperial court.²⁴² Prudentius echoes some of the distress expressed by Claudian by describing the Gothic hordes set loose in the north of Italy, devastating the countryside as they went (*Symm.* 2.700–702, *iamque ruens Venetos turmis protriverat agros / et Ligurum vastarat opes et amoena profundi / rura Padi Tuscumque solum victo amne premebat*). This might refer to foraging raids carried out by the Goths while they were blockading Milan or to the movements of Alaric’s army after the city was relieved. If Alaric had hoped to force the hand of Honorius by besieging Milan, he was disappointed by the emperor’s defiance and by the arrival of Stilicho with the reinforcing troops from Raetia.²⁴³ By this point, the Goths had probably already lost some advantage: although they had showed they could be a match for the Italian garrisons, they could not live off a hostile land indefinitely, especially so when finally confronted by an opposing army.

Claudian narrates two different versions of the arrival of Stilicho. In *Bellum Geticum*, he seeks a dramatic effect: first the city rings with the news that Stilicho is about to arrive, even though nobody knows who the author of such intelligence is (vv. 450–54); then people scramble to the battlements and keep their eyes peeled to catch

²³⁹ Cf. Roma’s complaint that Honorius spent too much time between Milan (*VI Hon.* 362–3, *quonam usque tenebit / praelatus mea vota Ligus?*) and Ravenna (*VI Hon.* 363–4, *vetitumque propinqua / luce frui, spatiis discernens gaudia parvis, / torquebit Rubicon vicino numine Thybrim?*).

²⁴⁰ Although this change became more evident some years later, when Honorius moved again to Ravenna in 405; see Gillett (2001).

²⁴¹ See *comm. ad vv.* 36–49.

²⁴² Cf. the reference to the siege in *Get.* 561–2 (*obsessi principis armis / excusate nefas*).

²⁴³ Cf. *VI Hon.* 446–50, [*Alaricus*] *meque minabatur calcato obsidere vallo / spem vano terrore fovens, si forte, remotis / praesidiis, urgente metu, qua vellet obire / condicione fidem; nec me timor impulit ullus / et duce venturo fretum*. Symmachus, too, was blocked in Milan at the time, but it is clear from his letters that he also expected the city to be relieved soon (*Ep.* 7.13, *mox cum praesidiis validissimis adfore*). Since Symmachus had arrived in Milan at the end of February, Alaric must have begun his blockade soon afterwards.

a glimpse of the approaching general, still uncertain whether the cloud of dust they see indicates ally or foe (vv. 455–7); finally, while the onlookers are suspended with expectation and apprehension, a ray of light is reflected by the helm of Stilicho and the whole city rejoices with an unanimous cheer of recognition – *ipse venit*, ‘it is indeed him’ – rushing out to welcome their saviour (vv. 457–62). The second version of Stilicho’s arrival is more elaborate and includes also a description of the military manoeuvres that might have taken place outside the gate of Milan. It is narrated by the emperor Honorius in his speech to the goddess Roma in Claudian’s last panegyric. The scene takes place at night, under the light of the stars and in sight of the enemy’s campfires, at the time of the first watch (vv. 453–4).²⁴⁴ Stilicho arrives from the north, but the Goths held the road and the bridge that separated him from the city of Milan (vv. 455–8).²⁴⁵ Confronted with a difficult decision – according to Honorius’ account, Stilicho had moved ahead of the bulk of his troops to come to the aid of the emperor more quickly – he decides to press onwards and to shoot through the enemy’s camp (vv. 459–69). The conclusion of the narration is studded with literary analogies, in which both Alaric and Stilicho consistently prove respectively more deadly and more courageous than any exemplary character drawn from Greek epic and Roman history; the only historical detail contained in this last passage is the alleged position of Alaric on the western side of the river (vv. 470–90).²⁴⁶

After failing to bring the imperial court to terms and to prevent the entrance of Stilicho in the city of Milan, the Goths passed south of the river Po. It is not possible to say for certain whether they intended to leave Italy for Gaul, but they do appear to have moved in a south-westerly diagonal line from Milan towards the present-day Italian region of Liguria and in the general direction of Gaul. Claudian mentions the city of Hasta – modern Asti, in Piedmont – in a comparison between the main

²⁴⁴ On the basis of this difference between the two versions of the story, Cameron argues that Claudian was not present at the siege of Milan and that he ‘corrected’ the mistake he had made in *Bellum Geticum* by giving the right temporal coordinates in the *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*. In fact, it is possible to assume that some night skirmish might have preceded the departure of Alaric’s army and the arrival of the main column of the Roman troops to Milan during the day. In any case, both scenes described by Claudian have the merit of lending themselves to poetical embellishments.

²⁴⁵ The road crossed the river Adda, which flows east of Milan between that city and the town of Bergamo.

²⁴⁶ This detail is given away by the fact that Honorius describes Stilicho swimming (!) across the river while facing the enemy (vv. 488–90, *celer Addua nostro / sulcatus socero: sed, cum transnaret, Etruscis / ille dabat tergum, Geticis hic pectora bellis*).

battlefields of the war (*VI Hon.* 201–3, *Tu quoque non parvum Getico, Verona, triumpho / adiungis cumulum, nec plus Pollentia rebus / contulit Ausoniis aut moenia vindicis Hastae*). If the three locations are listed in reverse order – Verona being the theatre of the final military encounter between Alaric and Stilicho – this would indicate that a battle near Hasta took place before that of Pollentia.²⁴⁷ It has been presumed that there have been dubious contacts between the Goths and the mercenary troops levied by Stilicho in the weeks preceding the battle of Pollentia. Not only does Claudian accuse Alaric of having attempted to bribe Roman soldiers with gold in *Get.* 87–8 (*nostri quondam qui militis auro / adgressus temptare fidem*), but his explanation of the eagerness of the leader of the Alanic cavalry to engage the enemy during the final battle rests on the man’s desire to cleanse his name from the suspicion of betrayal (*Get.* 590–93, *qui male suspectam nobis impensius arsit / vel leto purgare fidem; qui iudice ferro / diluit inmeritum laudato sanguine crimen*), a rumour which must therefore have circulated to some degree in the ranks. At the end, despite the daring action of their chief, the Alans break ranks, thus forcing Stilicho to patch up the situation with the support of the infantry (*Get.* 594–7).²⁴⁸

Probably pressed by the Roman troops, Alaric stopped at a place called Pollentia, located near the confluence of the river Stura di Demonte and the river Tanaro, in view of the gently sloping hills of Barolo and of the Langhe, in present-day Piedmont.²⁴⁹ Here Stilicho reached him with his army. According to the testimony of Orosius, the battle was engaged on Easter Day by initiative of the pagan Saul, identified with the Alan commander at whom also Claudian points the finger as responsible for igniting

²⁴⁷ The majority of historians place the battle at Hasta before that of Pollentia: see Baynes (1922), 208; Mazzarino (1942), 271–2; Demougeot (1951), 275; Garuti (1979), 72. Döpp (1980), 205 leaves open the sequence of battles. *Contra* Janßen (2004), 140–42, who argues that the fight at Hasta must have occurred just before the battle of Verona because Claudian enumerates it after Pollentia and because it does not mention it in *Bellum Geticum*. As I have argued, Claudian might have listed the battles in reverse order, in which case placing Hasta after Verona and Pollentia would make perfect sense; furthermore, as just demonstrated for example by the different versions of the episode of the relief of Milan in two subsequent poems (albeit recited more than a year apart from one another), the fact that Claudian fails to mention anything is not a guarantee, especially if it was a relatively modest skirmish.

²⁴⁸ Cameron (1970), 171, argues that the attempt at corruption revealed by Claudian in *Get.* 87–8 refers to previous encounters between Goths and Romans and most likely to 397, when Stilicho had faced Alaric in Greece, but had not been able to defeat him completely.

²⁴⁹ The existence of a stream called Orba – about 70 km from Pollentia – has given Claudian the idea for a pun with the name of Rome (*Urbem – Orbam*) and a false prophecy to the detriment of Alaric; see *comm. ad v.* 61.

of the conflict.²⁵⁰ For this reason, Orosius continues, the Goths were forced to fight even though they were devout Christians and, despite having caught the enemy unprepared and winning the battle, the Romans saw their success turn into a failure.²⁵¹ Other critical voices that attribute the victory to the Goths are those of Cassiodorus and Jordanes.²⁵² The version of the latter is particularly confused and tendentious. Jordanes places the battle of Pollentia between negotiations with the court of Honorius at Ravenna and the sack of Rome, therefore clearly at a later date than 402; he claims moreover that Stilicho attacked Alaric unexpectedly near Pollentia – in fact, going against an imperial decision to allow the Goths to settle beyond the Alps – and that, victorious and understandably enraged, Alaric descended on Rome laying waste to central Italy on the way. These events are clearly not related in the way Jordanes would want us to believe; however, Jordanes agree with Orosius on the fact that the Goths were surprised by the attack, even if not for the same reasons, and on the outcome of the fight.²⁵³ The tradition of the *Consularia* and Prosper of Aquitaine essentially call the battle a draw.²⁵⁴ On the opposite camp are of course Claudian – who hails Pollentia as *virtutis fatale solum* (‘ground destined to victory’) and *memorable bustum barbariae* (‘memorable funeral pyre of barbarity’) in *Get.* 637–8 – and Prudentius, who attributes the merit of the Gothic defeat mainly to the Christian God.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ The day would be 6 April 402. Cf. Oros. 7.37.2, *taceo de infelicibus illis apud Pollentiam gestis, cum barbaro et pagano duci, hoc est Sauli, belli summa commissa est, cuius inprobitate reuerentissimi dies et sanctum pascha uiolatum est cedentique hosti propter religionem, ut pugnaret, extortum est*; cf. also *Get.* 590–97 and especially VI *Hon.* 223–5, *ipsum te caperet letoque, Alarice, dedisset, / ni calor incauti male festinatus Alani / dispositum turbasset opus*. On Saul, possibly to be identified with the commander of the barbarian troops in Theodosius’ army against Eugenius, see *PLRE* s.v. *Saul*, 2.981 and cf. *PLRE* s.v. *Saul*, 1.809.

²⁵¹ Oros. 7.37.2 (*cum quidem, ostendente in breui iudicio Dei et quid fauor eius possit et quid ultio exigeret, pugnantes uicimus, uictores uicti sumus*). Orosius clearly refers to the fact that the Romans let Alaric escape and thus ultimately brought upon themselves the sack of Rome.

²⁵² Cassiod., *Chron. min.* 2.154, s.a. 402 (= consuls Arcadius V and Honorius V), *Pollentiae Stilichonem cum exercitu Romano Gothi victum acie fugaverunt*.

²⁵³ Jord. *Get.* 154, *hic ergo Stilico ad Polentiam civitatem in Alpes Cottiarum locatam dolose accedens, nihilque male suspicantibus Gothis ad necem totius Italiae suamque deformitatem ruit in bello. Quem ex inproviso Gothi cernentes primum perterriti sunt, sed mox recollectis animis et, ut solebant, hortatibus excitati omnem pene exercitum Stiliconis in fuga conversum usque ad internicionem deiciunt*.

²⁵⁴ *Cons. Hafn.*, *Chron. min.* 1.299, s.a. 402 (= consuls Arcadius V and Honorius V), *qui [sc. Alaricus et Radagaisus] cum per biennium Italiam vastarent et apud Pollentiam Liguriaie residerent, contractis exercitibus adversus eos pugna initur, sed cum utriusque exercitus multa clades existeret, nox finem dedit*; Prosp. *Chron. min.* 1.465 s.a. 402 (= consuls Arcadius V and Honorius V), *Pollentiae adversum Gothos vehementer [utriusque partis clade] pugnatum*.

²⁵⁵ C. *Symm.* 2.696–744. At the end of *Bellum Geticum*, Claudian equates the victory of Pollentia with the defeat of the Cimbri at the Battle of the Raudine Plain (traditionally placed near modern Vercelli) on 30 July 101 BC. The poem ends with an epitaph that assimilates the two battles and the two victorious

Alaric might have been blocked by the river Tanarus, but managed to slip away, even though, according to Claudian, he left all the baggage, prisoners and families.²⁵⁶ The poet alludes several times to the fact that the Goths were travelling with their wives and children, as well as with the booty they had accumulated in years of plundering, both in *Bellum Geticum* and in the panegyric for the sixth consulship of Honorius.²⁵⁷ On the basis of these claims and in order to reconcile the testimony of Prosper of Aquitaine, Cassiodorus and Jordanes – who say Alaric entered Italy in 400 – with that of the *consularia* – whose tradition allocates the invasion to 401, Barrie Hall has argued for a ‘long march’ of Alaric and his men: a vanguard of armed men would have thus arrived in Italy in 400, whereas the main column, which included the properties and the families of the Goths, would have arrived in 401. His argument starts from the fact that Claudian, in his last panegyric, presents Honorius’ sixth consulship in close connection with the Roman success in the Gothic War, suggesting that this victory had been celebrated recently (*VI Hon.* 123–4, *arma Getarum; / nuper* [=lately] *apud socerum plectro celebrata recenti*); he contrasts this statement with that regarding the celebration of the defeat of Gildo, described in the two previous lines as taking place a long time before (*VI Hon.* 122–3, *Sed mihi iam pridem* [=long ago] *captum Parnasia Maurum / Pieriis egit fidibus chelys*). Since Honorius held his sixth consulship in 404, Hall contends that it would make more sense to assign the battles of the Gothic War to 403, rather than to 402, and to suppose that celebrations of the victory would not have been postponed for almost two years. The chronology set by Hall entails that Alaric and his men stayed in northern Italy during the whole of 402, arriving to besiege Milan only in the winter 402/3; during this time, the Aurelian walls would have been repaired and the Roman legions Claudian mentions in *Get.* 416–22 summoned from the northern frontiers. Other elements in support of Hall’s theory, such as a remark by Claudian over celestial phenomena (*Get.* 139), the restoration of the Aurelian Wall, the choice of consul for 403 and the claim that imperial constitutions cannot be used to determine the location of the emperor, have all been

Roman generals, Stilicho and Marius (*Get.* 645–7, “*hic Cimbro fortisque Getas, Stilichone peremptos / et Mario claris ducibus, tegit Itala tellus. / Discite, vesanae, Romam non temnere, gentes*”).

²⁵⁶ *VI Hon.* 238–40 (*frondesque licet depastus amaras / arboreo figat sonipes in cortice morsus*) has been interpreted as evidence that Alaric had preserved his cavalry.

²⁵⁷ *Get.* 84–5, 605–15, 624–8; *VI Hon.* 243, 281–2, 297–299.

convincingly refuted by Maria Cesa and Hagith Sivan. In particular, they reject Hall's idea that emperors tend to take on the consulate in conjunction with important victories, adducing the evidence of emperors both from the Valentinian and the Theodosian house who did not conform to this usage, and argue instead that Honorius waited until Alaric had definitely left Italy before celebrating a consulate.²⁵⁸ They also demonstrate that the decrees mentioned by Hall – which were aimed at reinforcing the army and at punishing deserters – would fit better with circumstances linked to the aftermath of the war and that they must indeed have been issued by the emperor.²⁵⁹

The battle of Pollentia is the last event mentioned in *Bellum Geticum*: the poem was written precisely to celebrate that victory over the Goths and to extol Stilicho's role in effecting the salvation of Rome. It was recited in Rome, in front of the Senate and in the presence of Stilicho himself, who must have travelled to the city not long after the battle, in spring 402.²⁶⁰ It appears that some sort of accord was reached between Stilicho and Alaric and that allowed Stilicho to leave the area for a while, even if he might have had to face accusations regarding his partial success.²⁶¹ The agreement probably amounted to a safe-conduct out of Italy for Alaric and his followers; it is possible that some minor skirmish due to indiscipline or food shortage in the Gothic camp gave Stilicho an opportunity to bounce back on the enemy in the attempt to vanquish them altogether.²⁶² Alaric was brought to battle once again, this time near the city of Verona, during the summer of 402;²⁶³ once again, he was defeated, but not annihilated and managed to withdraw with his troops, ultimately leaving Italy from the direction he had come in 401.

²⁵⁸ Together with Cameron (1970), 180–81; see Cesa and Sivan (1990), 363–5.

²⁵⁹ Cesa and Sivan (1990), 369–71.

²⁶⁰ For the setting of the recitation of *Bellum Geticum*, see *comm. ad pr. v. 3*. The presence of Stilicho at the delivery of that poem is witnessed in *VI Hon. 122–4*, *sed mihi iam pridem captum Parnasia Maurum / Pieriis egit fidibus chelys; arma Getarum / nuper apud socerum plectro celebrata recenti*.

²⁶¹ Cf. *comm. ad vv. 90–103*.

²⁶² Claud. *VI Hon. 204–5*, *hic, rursus dum pacta movet damnisque coactus / extremo mutare parat praesentia casu*. Cameron (1970), 186–6; Janßen (2004), 141.

²⁶³ Barnes (1976), 375–6 dates the battle of Verona to 403 in order to allow Stilicho to travel from northern Italy to Rome and then back again. See *contra* Cesa and Sivan (1990), 361, n. 2.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

BELLUM GETICUM*

PRAEFATIO

Post resides annos longo velut excita somno
 Romanis fruitur nostra Thalia choris.
optatos renovant eadem mihi culmina coetus
 personat et noto Pythia vate domus.
consulis hic fasces cecini Libyamque receptam, 5
 hic mihi prostratis bella canenda Getis.
sed prior effigiem tribuit successus aenam,
 oraque patricius nostra dicavit honos.
adnuit hunc princeps titulum poscente senatu;
 respice iudicium quam grave, Musa, subis! 10
ingenio minuit merces properata favorem:
 carminibus veniam praemia tanta negant,
et magis intento studium censore laborat
 quod legimur medio conspicimurque foro.
materies tamen ipsa iuvat solitumque timorem 15
 dicturo magna sedula parte levat,
nam mihi conciliat gratas inpensius aures
 vel meritum belli vel Stilichonis amor.

* I present a text without apparatus, as readers can easily turn to that offered by Hall's critical edition. I differ from the text established by Hall only at v. 85, where I print *mente profundas* instead of Hall's *mente profunda*. The translation is intended primarily as an aid to understanding the text and a first step in interpretation. It has no claim to literary merit.

THE GOTHIC WAR

PREFACE

After some idling years, as if awoken from a long sleep, my Thalia enjoys Roman songs and Roman audiences. The same ceiling restores to me a dear assembly and the Pythian house resounds with the poet it knows well. Here I have sung of the consul's rods and of Libya reconquered, here I shall sing of wars, now that the Getae have been cast down.

Previous success awarded me a bronze effigy and an honour from the patricians consecrated my likeness. The emperor approved this recognition at the request of the Senate. Muse, look what eminent judgment you undergo! A quick reward weakens the approbation of talent, but such distinction denies indulgence to my poems and my endeavour is more troubled by an eager critic, given that we are read and gazed at in the middle of the forum.

The subject matter itself, however, comes to the rescue and, solicitous, eases considerably the customary apprehension, as I prepare myself to speak. Indeed, the importance of the war, or else the love of Stilicho, will grant me exceedingly approving ears.

CARMEN

Intacti cum claustra freti, coëuntibus aequor
armatum scopulis, audax inrumperet Argo
Aetam Colchosque petens, propiore periclo
omnibus attonitis, solus post numina Tiphys
incolumem tenui damno servasse carinam 5
fertur et ancipitem montis vitasse ruinam
deceptoque vagae concursu rupis in altum
victricem duxisse ratem; stupuere superbae
arte viri domitae Symplegades et nova passae
iura soli cunctis faciles iam puppibus haerent, 10
ut vinci didicere semel. quodsi ardua Tiphyn
navis ob innocuae meritum sic gloria vexit,
quae tibi pro tanti pulso discrimine regni
sufficient laudes, Stilicho? licet omnia vates
in maius celebrata ferant ipsamque secandis 15
Argois trabibus iactent sudasse Minervam
nec nemoris muti iunxisse carentia sensu
robora, sed caeso Tmarii Iovis augure luco
arbore praesaga tabulas animasse loquaces.
plurima sed quamvis variis miracula monstris 20
ingement, teneras vincturi carmine mentes,
Harpyiasque truces insopitisque refusum
tractibus aurati custodem velleris anguem
et iuga taurorum rapidis ambusta favillis
et virides galeis sulcos fetasque novales 25
Martis et in segetem crescentis semina belli:
nil veris aequale dabunt. prohibere rapaces
scilicet Harpyias unaque excludere mensa
nobilior titulus, quam tot potuisse paratas
in Latii praedam Geticas avertere fauces? 30

POEM

When the bold Argo – rushing towards Aeetes and the people of Colchis – burst the bolts of the untried strait – where the surface of the sea was armed with colliding cliffs – and everybody was thunderstruck at the approaching danger, they say that Tiphys alone, with the help of the gods, (5) kept the boat unharmed with little damage, avoided the descent of the twofold cliff, and led the victorious ship towards the open sea after deceiving the clashing of the shifting rocks. Overcome by the man's skill, the proud Symplegades stood still in wonder and, enduring the new laws of solid ground, (10) they now sit fast, yielding to all vessels, as soon as they had learned just once to be subdued. But if such a lofty fame has carried Tiphys by virtue of an unharmed ship, what praise will be sufficient for you, Stilicho, in return for having driven away the crisis of so great a kingdom? (15) Poets may exaggerate the subjects they praise: they may boast that Minerva spilt her sweat to cut the beams of the Argo and that she did not join together oak trees without understanding from a speechless wood, but – having cut the prophetic sacred grove of Jupiter Tmarius – she quickened the chattering planks from the prescient trees; (20) but, however much they increase their many wonders with various monsters so that their song would beguile immature minds – ferocious Harpies, a snake that guards the Golden Fleece, stretched out in sleepless coils, yokes scorched by bulls' fierce sparks, (25) furrows blooming with helmets, ploughed land breeding soldiers and seeds of war growing into a crop – they will not deliver anything corresponding to the truth. Is keeping away the Harpies and driving them off one single table really a nobler title of honour than having been able to (30) turn away so many Gothic jaws, ready to plunder Latium?

anne ego terrigenas potius mirabor in ipsis
procubuisse satis, vitae quibus attulit idem
principium finemque dies, quam caesa Getarum
agmina, quos tantis aluit Bellona tropaeis
totaque sub galeis Mavortia canuit aetas? 35
Per te namque unum mediis exuta tenebris
imperio sua forma redit, claustrisque solutae
tristibus exangues audent procedere leges.
iamque potestates priscus discriminat ordo
iustitiae, quas ante pares effecerat una 40
nube timor. tua nos urgenti dextera leto
eripuit, tectisque suis redduntur et agris
damnati fato populi, virtute renati.
iam non in pecorum morem formidine clausi
prospicimus saevos campis ardentibus ignes 45
alta nec incertis metimur flumina votis
excidio latura moram nec poscimus amnes
undosam servare fidem nubesque fugaces
aut coniuratum querimur splendere serenum.
Ipsa quoque internis furiis exercita plebis 50
securas iam Roma levat tranquillior arces;
surge, precor, veneranda parens, et certa secundis
fide deis, humilemque metum depone senectae.
urbs aequaeva polo, tum demum ferrea sumet
ius in te Lachesis, cum sic mutaverit axem 55
foederibus natura novis, ut flumine verso
inriget Aegyptum Tanais, Maeotida Nilus,
Eurus ab occasu, Zephyrus se promat ab Indis
Caucasiisque iugis calido nigrantibus Austro
Gaetulas Aquilo glacie constringat harenas. 60

Or will I marvel more at the earth-born troops who sank down in those very same crops, for whom the same day brought the beginning and the end of their life, rather than at the slain armies of Goths, whom Bellona fed with so many trophies (35) and whose lifetime, all dedicated to war, became grey under their helmets?

For thanks to you only, its proper appearance, freed from darkness, has returned to the empire and the lifeless laws, released from their gloomy locks, dare to move forward. Already the old course of justice allocates powers (40) that fear had previously made equal under a single storm cloud. Your right hand has snatched us from pressing death and the people are restored to their roofs and lands, condemned by fate but revived by virtue. No longer, hiding in dread like sheep, (45) do we look at fields blazing with wild fires; we do not with doubtful prayers measure the rivers that could bring a delay to destruction; we do not beg the streams and the swift clouds to preserve the protection of the waves nor we bewail the shining of the conspiring bright sky.

(50) You too, Rome, tossed by internal bursts of rage of the populace, now more peacefully lift up your citadels in safety. Arise – I pray – revered mother, trust the favour of the gods and put aside the humble apprehension of old age. City as old as the sky, (55) hard-hearted Lachesis will claim authority over you only when nature will have altered the axis of the earth with new laws to the point that, having turned its flow, Tanais would irrigate Egypt, Nile would flow into Lake Maeotis, Eurus would blow from the west, Zephyrus from India and, while the Caucasian range was blackened by the clouds of the hot south wind, (60) the north wind would bind the African sands with frost.

Fatales hucusque manus, crebrisque notatae
 prodigiis abiere minae. nec sidera pacem
 semper habent, ipsumque Iovem turbante Typhoeo,
 si fas est, tremuisse ferunt, cum brachia centum
 montibus armaret totidem spiramque retorquens 65
 lamberet attonitas erectis anguibus Arctos.
 quid mirum, si regna labor mortalia vexat,
 cum gemini fratres, genuit quos asper Aloeus,
 Martem subdiderint vinclis et in astra negatas
 temptarint munire vias steteritque revulsis 70
 paene tribus scopulis caelesti machina bello?
 sed caret eventu nimius furor; improba numquam
 spes laetata diu, nec pervenere iuventae
 robur Aloidae, dum vellere Pelion Otus
 nititur, occubuit Phoebo, moriensque Ephialtes 75
 in latus obliquam proiecit languidus Ossam.
 Adspice, Roma, tuum iam vertice celsior hostem,
 adspice quam rarum referens inglorius agmen
 Italia detrusus eat quantumque priori
 dissimilis, qui cuncta sibi cessura ruenti 80
 pollicitus patrii numen iuraverat Histri
 non nisi calcatis loricam ponere rostris.
 o rerum fatigue vices! qui foeda parabat
 Romanas ad supra nurus, sua pignora vidit
 coniugibus permixta trahi; qui mente profundas 85
 hauserat urbis opes, ultro victoribus ipse
 praeda fuit; nostri quondam qui militis auro
 adgressus temptare fidem, desertus ab omni
 gente sua manibusque redit truncatus et armis.

Thus far reached the fatal armies and the perils marked by frequent prodigies have now gone away. Not even the stars are always in peace, and they said that even Jupiter himself – if that is indeed possible – trembled, when Typhoeus wreaked havoc and equipped his hundred arms (65) with as many mountains and, twisting his spires, licked the astonished constellations of the Great and Little Bear with stretched snakes. What wonder if hardship troubles the kingdoms of the mortals, when the twin brothers – whom harsh Aloeus begat – brought Mars under fetters (70) and tried to open a forbidden road to the stars, and when the fabric of the world stood still, the three cliffs almost torn away in the celestial fight. But excessive fury goes without success; wicked hope never rejoices for long; nor did the youth of the Aloids ever reached full vigour: while striving to pull out Pelion, (75) Otos fell by the hands of Phoebus and, while dying, the faint Ephialtes threw Ossa obliquely to his side.

Now, with your head lifted, behold your enemy, Rome, behold how he goes, leading back without glory a dispersed army and having been driven away from Italy, (80) and how different from before, when – having promised that everything would yield to him in his descent – had sworn by the god Danube of his forefathers that he would not put down his armour unless he had trampled upon the Rostra. Oh, alternate succession of events and of destiny! He, who was preparing disgraceful acts of rape for the young women of Rome, saw his children been carried away (85) together with his spouses; he, who in his mind had sapped the vast wealth of the city, became easy prey of the victors; he, who once undertook to put to the test the loyalty of our soldiers with gold, now goes back abandoned by all his own people and deprived of manpower and weapons.

Hoc quoque, quod veniam leti valere mereri, 90
 si positis pendas odiis, ignoscere pulchrum
 iam misero poenaeque genus vidisse precantem.
 quae vindicta prior quam cum formido superbos
 flectit et adsuetum spoliis adfligit egestas?
 sed magis ex aliis fluxit clementia causis, 95
 consulitur dum, Roma, tibi. tua cura coëgit
 inclusis aperire fugam, ne peior in arto
 saeviret rabies venturae conscia mortis;
 nec tanti nomen stirpemque abolere Getarum,
 ut propius peterere, fuit. procul arceat altus 100
 Iuppiter, ut delubra Numae sedesque Quirini
 barbaries oculis saltem temerare profanis
 possit et arcanum tanti deprendere regni.
 Quamquam, si veterum certamina rite recordor,
 tunc etiam, pulchra cum libertate vigerent 105
 et proprio late florent milite patres,
 semper ab his famae petiere insignia bellis,
 quae diversa procul tuto trans aequora vires
 exercere dabant: currus regumque catenae
 inter abundantis fati ludibria ductae. 110
 at vero Italiam quotiens circumstetit atrox
 tempestas ipsumque caput laesura pependit,
 non illis vani ratio ventosa favoris,
 sed graviter spectata salus ductorque placebat,
 non qui praecipiti traheret semel omnia casu, 115
 sed qui maturo vel laeta vel aspera rerum
 consilio momenta regens, nec tristibus impar
 nec pro successu nimius, spatiumque morandi
 vincendique modum mutatis nosset habenis.

(90) If, leaving hatred aside, you consider also this, namely that they [the Goths] were in a condition to deserve forbearance, then it is honourable to practice forgiveness of the wretched: in fact, to see them begging is a kind of punishment. What punishment is indeed greater than when fear bends the arrogant and extreme poverty prostrates one used to plunder? (95) But mercy arose more from other reasons, as long as we take care of you, Rome: the concern for you urged to open a way out to those who were hemmed in, to prevent a worse frenzy, aware of their approaching death, from rampaging in a more confined space. And destroying the name and the race of the Goths was not to be prized so much, (100) as to let you be attacked from closer quarters. May the high Jupiter forbid the barbarians from violating the shrines of Numa and the abode of the Romans with profane eyes and from snatching the secret of so great a realm.

Admittedly, if I rightly remember the battles of the ancients, (105) even then – when our forefathers used to take strength from fair liberty and to flourish far and wide with their armies – they would always seek a token of fame in those wars which allowed the exercise of strength safely beyond the distant seas: chariots and chained kings (110) were led in the midst of mockery by an overflowing fate. And truly, every time a frightful storm besieged Italy and stood hanging, about to bring damage to its very capital, they would not find the fickle consideration of vain approbation acceptable, but they preferred safety sought in earnest and a leader (115) who would not drag everything down in a single headlong chance, but who – managing the changes of circumstances, in prosperity and through adversities, with mature judgement, neither unable to cope with sorrows nor immoderate because of success – knew the time to wait and the way to win by changing his lead. (120)

cautius ingentes morbos et proxima cordi 120
ulcera Paeoniae tractat sollertia curae
parcendoque secat, ferro ne largius acto
inrevocandus eat sectis vitalibus error.

The ingenuity of healing skills handles more carefully severe illnesses and sores which are close to the heart, and cuts sparingly, lest an error turns out to be irreversible, if the knife has pierced too deep and the vital organs are severed.

COMMENTARY

THE PREFACE

Claudian supplied *Bellum Geticum* with a poetic preface in elegiac couplets. This is not exceptional, since there are twelve extant poetic prefaces in Claudian's *corpus*, each preserved together with the poem it introduces and each given a conventional book number. Prefaces are one of the most commonly employed form of paratext, an umbrella definition used by Gérard Genette to describe anything that does not constitute the text itself, but appears with it and contributes to present it (for example, title, name of the author, illustrations, footnotes, chapter headings). Specifically, Genette defines a preface as 'un discours produit à propos du texte qui suite or qui précède' (Genette 1982, 150) and observes that its appearance is intrinsically connected to specific occurrences of the text (Genette 1982, 150–1), that is – the same text can be equipped with different prefaces every time that it is performed in a different context or published in a new edition. In the ancient world, the Homeric hymns can be considered one of the first examples of a preface, as they would originally have been recited just before an epic poem at a rhapsodic contest and the invocation they contained would have been aimed at securing the divinity's assistance for the specific performance of the poem that would follow. Early prose prefaces in Greek, on the other hand, appear for the first time in the scientific works of Archimedes and show a tendency to overlap with the dedication, often written in the form of a letter; in fact, the letter format had a great success for prefaces both in later Greek and Latin literature and was employed also to introduce works of poetry (for a diachronic overview of the development of prefaces, see Felgentreu, 1999, 39–57; for the influence of rhetorical practice, see Viljamaa 1968, 68).

In Latin literature, an important prototype for the use of prefaces can be identified in the prologues to ancient comedies: by introducing himself and his play through the voice of an actor who is temporarily removed from the theatrical fiction, the author exploits this space in order to give the spectators some crucial background information for the understanding of the play. This device, already present in the

comedies of Plautus, was further developed with Terence into a space for discussion and polemics, independent and clearly distinct from the actual play. The prologue ultimately evolved in a proper character of the same name whose only role in the play was to deliver its introduction. Subsequently, several poets also chose to begin their works with a preface. Catullus' first poem, which opens the poetic collection with a dedication and a declaration of poetics, can be viewed as an early instance of this use; other examples are the epigram added by Ovid to his second edition of the *Amores*, the prefatory epigrams or epistles that open some of Martial's books, and Statius's prose prefaces to each volume of the *Silvae*.

Despite their widespread use in Latin and Greek literature, changes in late antique practice – introduced by Claudian and Prudentius, and gradually imitated by later authors – mark an important stage of development in the use of poetic prefaces. First of all, Claudian clearly sets apart his prefaces from the poems they introduce by writing them in elegiac couplets, rather than in hexameters. Prudentius too exploits metre to differentiate his prefaces from the main text, and this use was generally to be adopted by later Latin poets. Its only previous occurrence in the surviving Latin literature is the programmatic poem in scazons placed at the beginning of Persius' collection of *Satires*; in the Greek world, however, prefaces in a different metre are more commonly attested. Secondly, Claudian's prefaces, as well as Prudentius' ones, introduce single publications, often consisting in one poem, rather than a whole collection or individual books that gather several compositions; an early example of this usage can be found in Catullus' poem 65, which introduces the translation of Callimachus' composition on the lock of Berenice (Cat. 66). Finally, from the point of view of the content, prefaces increasingly began to incorporate allegorical material, a practice which seems to have no precedents.

The overall consistency of Claudian's prefaces with regards to the form has led scholars to describe and classify them on the basis of the content. The most recent such classification is that used by Felgentreu in his study entirely dedicated to Claudian's prefaces. Felgentreu distinguishes three typologies of preface: those that make use of allegories and similes – in particular, taken from myth, but also drawn from history and from the natural world; those that refer to the circumstances of the performance or the reasons that have prompted him to write; finally, the preface to the second book of

the invective against Eutropius, which constitutes a category in itself by reason of its length. Felgentreu considers it to be a ‘formal experiment’ (for a different classification of Claudian’s prefaces, see Perrelli 1992; for an attempt at explaining the long preface to *Eutr.* 2, see Cameron, 1970, 136–8).

1–6. Claudian begins the preface to *Bellum Geticum* by introducing several details about the circumstances of its performance and about his own poetical achievements. This predominance of personal details sets it apart from other prefaces, as the only other occurrence of such topics is found in the preface to the *Epithalamium of Palladius and Celerina*, composed in 399, only a few years before *Bellum Geticum* (a peculiarity already remarked upon in Parravicini 1914, 184). Claudian’s last public performance before *Bellum Geticum* had been the third book of *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, recited in Rome in February 400.

The current poem was performed mainly as a celebration of Stilicho’s victory over Alaric’s Goths at the battle of Pollentia, but possibly also as a response to more or less widespread criticism of Stilicho’s management of that military campaign. As discussed above (pp. 63–78), the events of 401–3 have been interpreted by scholars in divergent ways, and the battles of Pollentia and Verona ascribed to different years, but general consensus places the performance of *Bellum Geticum* in the year 402.

1. Post resides annos: This is the only instance in which Claudian explicitly acknowledges a gap in the otherwise continuous sequence of his panegyric poems and for this reason Cameron 1970, 409–14, assigns to the years that precede *Bellum Geticum* – 400 to 402 – Claudian’s journey to Africa and his marriage. The only evidence for these events in the life of Claudian rests on *Carm. min.* 30 and 31, respectively an incomplete panegyric for Serena (the so-called *Laus Serenae*) and a letter of thanks for the latter’s intervention in securing a good marriage for the poet. From Claudian’s regret that Serena cannot attend his wedding because they are separated by the sea, we infer that he is spending a period of time away from Italy – namely in the Libyan region (*Carm. min.* 31.55–6, *nunc medium quoniam votis maioribus aequor / invidet et Libycae dissidet ora plagae*). Gesner xli, n. 59, Jeep *praef.* x, and Birt *praef.* xlvi all interpret *Libya* in v. 56 as Egypt because of the later mention of the south-eastern wind Eurus that should assist the poet in returning safely

to Italy after the wedding (v. 59, *terrarum tu pande vias, tu mitibus Euris / aequora pacari prosperiora iube*). Seeck, 1895–1921, 558 (followed by Fargues 1933, 29) argues against this explanation on the ground that, as Egypt at that time was not under the control of the Western empire anymore, Serena’s influence would not have been so decisive in safeguarding Claudian’s interests; to this, he adds that the term *Libya* is never used by Claudian to identify Egypt. That Claudian used the term *Libya* to indicate the diocese of Africa, on the other hand, is confirmed, for example, by *Get. pr.* 5.

Cameron maintains that *Carm. min.* 31 must have been composed after February 398, as Honorius figures in the poem as Serena’s son-in-law (v. 50, *generi*), having married Stilicho and Serena’s first daughter – Maria – in February 398. He suggests moreover that the eulogy that Claudian promises to Serena at the end of the poem in case of his safe return to Italy (vv. 61–2, *ut tibi Pierides doctumque fluens Aganippe / debita servato vota cliente canant*), is precisely the incomplete *Carm. min.* 30, at the beginning of which similar themes are evoked (the Muse Calliope at v. 1, the Pierian garland at v. 2, and Aganippe’s spring at v. 8; the same arguments are brought forward by Fargues 1933, 29). Since the poem is incomplete, it is very difficult to date it precisely; nevertheless, the absence of any mention of Maria and her wedding to Honorius, which would constitute an ideal and obvious topic of praise for Serena (cf. for example the praise of Stilicho at *Stil.* 2.231–4), does not seem to corroborate Cameron’s solution. Fargues 1933, 29–31 suggests that the *Laus Serenae* is among the last poems tackled by Claudian and that the poet’s marriage was arranged by Serena in acknowledgement of his contribution to her husband’s cause.

longo velut excita somno: the expression *longo somno* appears also in *Rapt. pr.* 2.51, where Florentinus – the addressee of the poem – is said to disturb the cavern where the poet’s Muses are dozing off (*antraque Musarum longo torpentia somno / excutis et placidos ducis in orbe choros*). Cameron 1970, 414, sees this parallel as confirming his hypothesis that the second book of *De Raptu Proserpinae* was completed around the same time of *Bellum Geticum* and that, given the normally quite fast pace at which Claudian wrote his poems, the matching references to the long sleep must be explained by the same period of poetical inactivity, that between 400 and 402 (for a discussion on the dating of *De Raptu Proserpinae* – initiated by Birt, xiv–xviii

– see Hall 1969, 93–105; Cameron 1970, 452–66; Fo 1979; Charlet 1991, xx–xxxiii; Gruzelier 1993, xvii–xx; Duc 1994, 151–86; Felgentreu 1999, 157–60).

The expression *excita somno* could also allude to Cat. 64.56 (*utpote fallaci quae tum primum excita somno / desertam in sola miseram se cernet harena*), where it is also placed at the end of the verse. In the passage by Catullus, Ariadne wakes up from a deceitful sleep to find herself abandoned by Theseus on an island. It is suggestive to read this allusion as a link between the preface and the main poem, where other allusions to Catullus 64 can be detected in the proemial comparison between Stilicho and Tiphys, the helmsman of the ship Argo.

2. Romanis fruitur ... choris: the word *chorus* is ambiguous. *TLL s.v. chorus* 1, 3.0.1023.35 records this passage by Claudian as pertaining to the primary meaning of the word *chorus* – that of a dance accompanied by singing; however, it is also possible to intend it in its secondary meaning of a group of individuals. In this sense, *chorus* would indicate the circle of the senators gathered to listen to Claudian’s poem, his audience. Cf. Dewar’s choice of this latter connotation for *VI Hon. pr.* 16 (*et circumfusi sacra corona chori*).

The expression *Romanus chorus* is recorded only twice in Latin literature. The only other instance is Stat. *Silv.* 2.7 – a poem dedicated to Lucan’s widow Polla Argentaria on the day of her deceased husband’s birthday – where Lucan is called the ‘priest of the Roman choir’ (v. 23, *Romani colitur chori sacerdos*).

nostra Thalia: the locution *nostra Thalia* – and indeed the name *Thalia* itself – appears for the first time in surviving Latin literature in Virg. *Ecl.* 6.1–5 (*prima Syracosio dignata est ludere versu / nostra nec erubuit silvas habitare Thalea. / cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthia aurem / vellit et admonuit: “pastorem, Tityre, pinguis / pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen*). Virgil links his own bucolic production to the poetry of Theocritus, and Servius’ commentary to this passage shows that this was the prevailing interpretation (*Serv. Ecl.* 6.1–2, *Romana, [sc. Vergilius] inquit, musa non erubuit se silvis ante committere, id est imitari Theocritum Syracusanum et bucolica*). Transliterating the Greek name for the Muse gives further emphasis to the foreign origin of the poetry Virgil is going to tackle, whereas the adjective *nostra* strongly underlines Virgil’s own appropriation and proud imitation of the Greek model. Claudian had already played on this Virgilian allusion in the preface

to the panegyric of Mallius Theodorus, where his Muse had been represented as gaining confidence by constantly dwelling in the military camps and thus – as opposed to Virgil’s one – daring to sing of *reges et proelia* (*Theod. pr.* 1–2, *Audebisne, precor, tantae subiecta catervae, inter tot proceres, nostra Thalia, loqui?*; 5–6, *An tibi continuis crevit fiducia castris / totaque iam vatis pectora miles habet?*). Indeed, the pugnacious nature of Claudian’s poetic inspiration is confirmed not only by the constant presence of martial themes throughout his poetry, but especially by his self-identification with the poet Ennius who used to compose his poetry when following Scipio in his military campaigns (*Stil pr.* 3; see Ware 2004a, 189–92).

The general term *Musa*, as well as the name of a specific Muse, is often used by poets as a metonymy for their poetic talent and their works; cf. for example Virgil *Ecl.* 3.84 (*Pollio amat nostram, quamvis est rustica, Musam*). Although the allocation of spheres of influence to the Muses seems to have remained fluid in antiquity, Ovid’s choice of individual Muses according to the different modes of speech that inform his composite works shows that by that time their functions had become more specialised (as observed by Barchiesi 1991, 10–11). Thalia, in particular, is thus identified by Ovid as the Muse of elegy in *Ars* 1.263–4 (*hactenus, unde legas quod ames, ubi retia ponas, / praecipit imparibus vecta Thalea rotis*), and specifically as his elegiac production in *Trist.* 4.10.56–7 (*notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est / carmina cum primum populo iuvenalia legi*); by Statius (*Silv.* 2.1.116, 5.3.98), two epigrams in the *Anthologia Palatina* (AP 9.504, 9.505) and three in the *Anthologia Latina* (AL 88, 664a, 664) as the Muse of comedy; by Martial (4.23.4) as the Muse of epigram. From these examples, Thalia emerges as the Muse of light poetry (pastoral and comic). Martial, like Claudian, also uses *Thalia* in conjunction with the possessive pronoun *nostra* (8.73.3, 9.26.8, 12.94.3), and *mea* (10.20[19]).

The word *Musa* – or the name of a particular Muse – can often be determined by a geographical indication (*TLL s.v. Musa*, 8.0.1693.60–70). Claudian specifies in *Carm. min.* 41, a letter to Probinus, that his Thalia is Greek, but that she has yielded to the Latin toga when the addressee was consul and the poet drank for the first time from a Roman spring (v. 13–14, *Romanos bibimus primum te consule fontes / et Latiae cessit Graia Thalia togae*). Out of metaphor, Claudian is referring to his first major Latin poem, performed in Rome and dedicated to the addressee of the letter, the panegyric

for the consuls Olybrius and Probinus. In this way, he singles out precisely that occasion as the moment in which his poetry moved from being Greek to being Latin. In the metaphor, the terms *fons* and *toga* might stand respectively for ‘poetic inspiration’ and ‘external form’ (i.e. the language) of his poem. The word *toga*, in particular, might have a double function: alluding to *togata* – the term that designates comedies with a Roman setting as opposed to those that had a Greek content – as well as pointing to the object of Claudian’s praise – the consuls – since only consuls would wear a *toga*.

Another possible reading of the short poem consists in interpreting the Greek Muse as standing for mythological poetry, whereas the Latin *toga* would symbolise poetry with an historical and political subject matter; according to this approach, Claudian would be referring here to a transition from the composition of mythological to that of historical poetry, thus from *De Raptu Proserpinae* to his *carmina maiora* (see the discussion in Felgentreu 1999, 158–9, with further bibliography, and *comm. ad pr.* v. 1, for bibliography on the dating of *De Raptu Proserpinae*). Despite Statius’ similar use of the term in *Silv.* 2.7.52–3 (*tu cretus Latio memorque gentis / carmen fortior exseres togatum*) – where *carmen togatum* comes to represent the historical content of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, as opposed to mythological themes – I believe that this interpretation imposes an unlikely division of Claudian’s poetical production on the basis of the content: it is hard to believe that Claudian had only written mythological poems until 395 and that he saw his passage to writing panegyrics as the crucial rift of his literary experience, especially given that the two subjects often appear combined together in his works. Indeed, the same Muse, Thalia, far from being identified solely with mythology, is addressed by Claudian in the prefaces to political and historical poems alike, as in this verse of the preface to *Bellum Geticum*. It is therefore more convincing to identify this decisive break in his literary experience in the linguistic passage from composing in his mother tongue, Greek, to his language of adoption, Latin.

Birt reads *accessit* instead of *cessit* in *Carm. min.* 41.14 with the mss. *Ambrosianus* and V. Consequently, he believes that the Latin *toga* has nothing to do with poetry: in his reading, the inspiration of the poet ‘approached’ the Roman *toga*; that is, the Greek poet reached Italy and established himself in Rome. Fargues 1933,

12–13, n. 4, rejects the variant *accessit* on the basis not only that the word would lead to a rare elision for Claudian in a pentameter, but especially that Claudian must have arrived in Rome *before* the consulate of Probinus.

3. optatos ... coetus: Garuti translates as ‘le medesime sommità rinnovano per me i desiderati incontri’, thus rendering *coetus* as ‘meetings’. However, Felgentreu 1999, 132, n. 223, draws attention to two parallels in Claudian’s *corpus* for the use of the word *coetus* to indicate precisely the Senate: *Theod. pr. 20* (*hoc video coetus quidquid ubique micat*) and *VI Hon. 599* (*patricii ... coetus*). It is correct, in my opinion, to translate this sentence with a clear reference to the assembled Senate, of which Claudian, as *tribunus et notarius*, was a member (see *comm. ad pr. vv. 7–9*).

eadem culmina: the current poem is presented as a renewal of previous occasions in which Claudian had performed in the same space and in front of the same public, the members of the Senate. Claudian had recited in Rome at least twice before: on occasion of his very first performance in the Western empire – the *Panegyricus dictus Olybrio et Probino consulibus* (395) – and of the third book of *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, only a few years before *Bellum Geticum* itself was declaimed.

4. noto ... vate: with the adjective *notus* Claudian stresses once again that he is not new on the stage of public performances in Rome. *Vates* seems to have an ambiguous place in his poetry, cf. *Get. 16* where the same term has a strong negative connotation.

Pythia ... domus: the majority of scholars believes that the building in which Claudian recited *Bellum Geticum* is to be identified with the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, where public recitations and Senate sessions were sometimes held (thus, for example, Gesner; Birt; Cameron 1970, 414; Felgentreu 1999, 132; Zarini 1999, 44). According to Ammianus 23.3.3, however, this temple burned down (Ammianus uses the verb *conflagravit*) in 363 and we do not have any information about a subsequent restoration or reconstruction.

5. consulis hic fasces cecini Libyamque receptam: Claudian quotes the topics of his previous panegyrics delivered in Rome. The role of the poet is strongly emphasised by the conspicuous position of the verb *cecini* in the middle of v. 5 and the memory of past performances is made vivid by the repetition of the adverb *hic*, referred to the very space in which he is standing. During 400 Claudian had composed a panegyric in three books in order to celebrate the consulship of Stilicho, *De Consulatu Stilichonis*. The

first two books were delivered at the beginning of the year in Milan, whereas the third was recited a little later in Rome. The reference in this line is to this last panegyric, the second performed by Claudian in Rome, after that dedicated to the brothers Olybrius and Probinus; all the other consular panegyrics – those for Honorius and the one for Theodorus – were performed in Milan.

The *fasces* were bundles of rods with an axe and constituted the tangible symbol of the power held by the consuls; the word also came to identify the offices that it accompanied, principal among them that of the consulship. Claudian uses this term several times – mainly in the consular panegyrics and in the invective against Eutropius (as the focal point of the latter is the indecent occurrence of a eunuch holding the consulate) – both in its proper sense, connected with the name of the office (as in this line of the preface), or as a metonymy for the office itself. The number of occurrences in the three books of *De Consulatu Stilichonis* is remarkably high.

Libyamque receptam: the recovering of Libya refers to the resolution of the conflict against the African dynast, Gildo (who had been awarded the title of *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Africam* in 386, see above pp. 54–7). Although the context of the sentence could be interpreted as suggesting the fact that *De Bello Gildonico* – the only poem entirely dedicated to this event – was delivered in Rome, another passage seems to contradict this point. When introducing the third book of *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, Claudian declares: *noster Sciapiades, Stilicho, ... / te mihi post quintos annorum Roma recursus / reddidit* (*Stil. pr.* 3.21–4). Reading *Stilicho* at v. 21 as nominative, *Roma* at v. 24 as vocative and the pronoun *te* as accusative referring to the city (with Brocca 2002, 34, n. 5), Claudian seems indeed to indicate a gap of five years since his last visit to the city. As the third book of *De Consulatu Stilichonis* was recited in Rome in 400, we infer therefore that Claudian had not been in Rome – or at least performed there – since 395, precisely the date of his debut with the panegyric for Olybrius and Probinus. If this is the case, *De Bello Gildonico* – composed in 398 – cannot have been performed in Rome. Jeep, on the other hand, interprets *Stilicho* as vocative, *te* as the accusative referring to the general and *Roma* as nominative: thus, he concludes that it is the city itself that has given Stilicho back to Claudian, who had consequently remained in Rome in the meanwhile. This is not a likely explanation, however, since Claudian’s personal acquaintance with Stilicho did not yet go back five

years in 400; besides, in the first part of the preface, the poet has just identified himself with Ennius, who would follow Scipio in all his campaigns, rather than stay behind (vv. 7–12; see Fargues 1933, 14, n. 3). Siegmund Döpp (*contra* Cameron) believes that *De Bello Gildonico* was actually never performed and tries to solve the dilemma by arguing that both *Get. pr.* 5 and a further passage in *VI Hon.* 122–3 (*sed mihi iam pridem captum Parnasia Maurum / Pieriis egit fidibus chelys*) do not refer to *De Bello Gildonico* at all, but rather to *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, where Gildo's defeat is equally celebrated (see Döpp 1980, 136–7, especially n. 16).

Supposing that *Get. pr.* 5 actually looks back to one poem – the more recent *De Consulatu Stilichonis* – rather than two, it is possible to observe that the two exploits are closely linked together within one line and that the repetition of *hic* at v. 5 and v. 6 could have indeed been used by Claudian to emphasise that the elements of the remembrance are two, each represented by one of the two lines. That Stilicho's achievements concerning the consulate and the war against Gildo could be read as a unit would perhaps be reinforced by the fact that this juxtaposition closely echoes the words pronounced by Rome in *Stil.* 2.385 (*unius auxilio fasces Libyamque recepi*), where the goddess proclaims that, thanks to Stilicho, she has recovered both the consulate – after it had been violated by Eutropius – and the province of Africa. This remainder of the Gildonic war plays two roles at the same time: on the one hand, together with the expression *noto vate* in the previous line, it reiterates and thus consolidates the position of Claudian as official poet of the court; on the other hand – as underlined by Brocca 2002 – it contributes to trigger in the audience a first association between the two conflicts. Such association can then be exploited during the actual representation of the campaign against the Goths in order to put the political position of Stilicho in a favourable light.

6. *hic mihi prostratis bella canenda Getis*: Claudian explicitly reveals the main topic of the poem that he is going to deliver. According to Perrelli 1992, 125–6, *Bellum Geticum* presents for the first time an inversion between the subject matter of the preface and that of the proem: in fact, differently from what happens in the other poems, this preface contains the *propositio* of the topic, whereas the proem tackles a mythological and allegorical theme (cf. also Brocca 2002, 40–41). Felgentreu 1999, 11–12 criticises this approach and cites other prefaces that contain references to the

content of the main poem.

7–9. Claudian proudly mentions the statue that had been erected for him in the forum of Trajan. It became common for poets to be bestowed such honour: both Merobaudes and Sidonius – two of the most influential successors of Claudian in the art of panegyrics – were dedicated statues (for Merobaudes, see *CIL* 6.1724 = *ILS* 2950, attested by Sidonius in *Carm.* 9.300–301; Sidonius refers to his statue in *Carm.* 8.8 and in *Ep.* 9.16.3, vv. 25–8, see Gillett 2012).

The inscription of Claudian’s statue (*CIL* 6.1710) was carved on the base of the statue placed in the middle of the Forum of Trajan and it is now preserved at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples. Its text, partly written in Latin and partly in Greek, contains valuable information on the social status of Claudian and on the appreciation of his poetry on the part of the Senate.

*[Cl.] Claudiani v(iri) c(larissimi) | [Cla]udio Claudiano v(iro)
c(larissimo) tri | [bu]no et notario, inter ceteras | [de]centes artes
praegloriosissimo | poetarum, licet ad memoriam sem | piternam
carmina ab eodem | scripta sufficiant, adtamen | testimonii gratia ob
iudicii sui | [fi]dem, d(omini) n(ostri) Arcadius et Honorius | [fe-
]llicissimi et doctissimi | imperatores senatu petente | statuam in foro divi
Traiani | erigi collocarique iusserunt.*

Εἰν ἐνὶ Βιργιλίῳ νόον | καὶ Μοῦσαν Ὅμηρου | Κλαυδιανὸν Ῥώμη καὶ |
βασιλῆς ἔθεσαν.

‘To Claudius Claudianus, vir clarissimus, tribune and notarius, among other noble arts the most renowned of poets, although his poems suffice for eternal memory, nevertheless as testimonial and proof of their judgment, our lords Arcadius and Honorius, the most blessed and renowned emperors, at the request of the senate, have ordered a statue to be erected and placed in the forum of the divine Trajan. Rome and the emperors placed Claudian here, in a single man, the mind of Virgil and the inspiration of Homer’ (transl. Ware 2012, 1).

The title *vir clarissimus* – which had become a standard epithet for senators during the

Roman empire – and that of *tribunus et notarius* give clear indication of Claudian’s social standing. *Vir clarissimus* had come to designate the members of the lower of three ranks of senators (above it, there were the *illustres* and *spectabiles*) from the fourth century onwards, as a consequence of the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine. Since this honorary title was extended to the members of the family, people could be born as *viri clarissimi*; they could also, however, be elevated to such position through the process of *adlectio*, that is, ‘admission into a defined social group’ (see Jones, *LRE*, 1.528–32). The words *tribunus et notarius*, on the other hand, indicate that Claudian ‘was a high-ranking imperial functionary whose title connotated honour and prestige’ (Teitler 1985, 16); in fact, it was precisely in virtue of this title that Claudian held the rank of *vir clarissimus* (Teitler 1985, 17; for more details on the evolution of the *schola notariorum* and the changes in the role and rank of *tribuni et notarii* during the fourth century, see Teitler 1985, 54–72; Jones, *LRE*, 1.573–4. On the basis of *Carm. min.* 22.51–2 (*eripe calcatis non prospera cingula Musis, / eripe militiam, comitem me pelle sodalis*), where *militia* stands for *dignitas, officium* (see *TLL s.v. militia*, 8.0.963.15–30), the bestowal of this honour is dated to 397 (see Cameron 1970, 396–400, and *PLRE s.v. Claudius Claudianus* 5, 2.299–300). Whereas the Latin section of the inscription records the official titles of the poet and celebrates his poetical achievements in general terms, the final epigram in Greek focuses on Claudian’s specific poetic identity and reveals in which light his audience perceived his works (for a careful study of this phenomenon, see Ware 2012).

7. sed prior ... successus: the honour of a statue had been granted to Claudian after his delivery of the poems dedicated to the consulate of Stilicho (*Stil.* 1–3) in 400.

8. oraque patricius nostra dicavit honos: cf. *Carm. min.* 17.41–2 (*cur non Amphonimo, cur non tibi, fortis Anapi, / aeternum Siculus templa dicavit honos?*) as a parallel to understanding this line of the preface: *patricius honos* should be intended in the same way as *Siculus honos*, that is as ‘honour granted by the patricians’ (see Cameron 1970, 405, n. 4; Felgentreu 1999, 134; cf. also Fargues 1933, 26–7). The verb *dicare* gives to the dedication a quasi-sacred dimension (cf. Felgentreu 1999, 134). During the Roman Empire the word *patricius* had lost its original function of distinguishing the patricians from the plebeians and had come to designate the members of the Senate. Under Constantine it had transformed into the title of a person

high in office at court (*TLL s.v. patricius*, 10.1.747.7–40; cf. the use in Sidonius *Ep.* 5.16.1, *quorum in adventu fratri etiam tuo Ecdicio ... honor patricius accredit*), but here it retains its reference to the senators.

9. adnuit hunc princeps titulum poscente senatu: *titulus* refers to the inscription at the base of Claudian's statue, cf. the use of this term for the celebratory inscription which ends the poem as a glorification of Stilicho's exploits against the Goths (*Get.* 644). *Adnuo* can be used absolutely or with the accusative of object (with or without the dative of person): see *TLL s.v. adnuo*, 1.0.791.73–792.30. It is therefore possible to translate *hunc titulum* as the object of *adnuo*.

The manuscript tradition records the variants *hic*, interpreted as an adverb of place ('here'), and *hunc*. The former reading is preferred by Birt, Schroff and Garuti, whereas Hall prints *hunc*. The adverb *hic* would refer again to the place in which Claudian is standing, as the two preceding *hic* of vv. 5 and 6, thus to the temple of Apollo or – at least – to Rome. Given that the emperor had not been in Rome since he had visited the city with his father Theodosius as a child in 389, the adverb would indicate that the request of the Senate, rather than the consent of the emperor, had taken place in Rome. Felgentreu 1999, 135 finds this option 'unsatisfactory' by reason of style. *Hunc*, printed by Hall, is identified by Felgentreu as the *lectio difficilior*, but it raises further difficulties: if it is referred to *titulum* (i.e. to the inscription as part of the statue), the demonstrative would lack a physical referent during Claudian's performance, as the statue was not placed near the Temple of Apollo. In order to solve this impasse, Felgentreu suggests looking at the broader context and to reflect on the meaning of this whole sentence within the preface. He thinks it is possible to interpret the *hunc titulum* as introducing the actual content of the inscription, similarly to the two dots in English; he considers the example of Verg. *Aen.* 1.76 (*Aeolus haec contra*) and Claudian himself in *Rapt. pr.* 2.49 (*Thracius haec vates*); he also adds examples of inscriptions quoted by Latin authors (see Felgentreu 1999, 135–6). This verse, in his opinion, could then have been modelled on Ov. *Am.* 2.13.25 (*adiciam titulum: SERVATA NASO CORINNA*) and Felgentreu even suggests distinguishing it graphically as *adnuit hunc princeps titulum: POSCENTE SENATU*. *Poscente senatu* does indeed echo the actual words of the inscription (*petente senatu*) with a change of verb that could be due to metrical reasons; however, the majority of the examples put

forward by Felgentreu are in fact constructed with the neuter pronoun, rather than an adjective and noun, and overall his explanation does not seem compelling.

By underlining that it was at its request that the emperor had taken action, Claudian exploits the mention of the honours attributed to him in order to confirm the Senate's authority and thus stressing the good relationships between emperor and Senate (cf. *supra* 50–2).

10–14. In the second half of the preface, Claudian insists on the difficulty of the task he is going to undertake by performing his poem in front an audience of strict and competent judges. This emphasis on the challenges of poetic production and on the modest ability of the poet is a usual topos of prefaces (see Fargues 1933, 21, n. 2). Claudian exploits it in particular here and in the preface to the *Panegyricus dictus Mallio Theodoro consuli*: in both poems, he underlines the severe judgement his Muse is about to undergo. As observed by Felgentreu 1999, 131–2, such declarations do not only have the function of captivating the public's sympathy, but they are also a subtle reminder of the fact that Claudian is indeed a very talented and successful poet.

10. respice iudicium quam grave, Musa, subis: Cf. *Ov. Ex Pont.* 2.4.14 (*nova iudicio subdita Musa tuo est* – the poet recalls the time when he used to submit his compositions to Atticus' judgment) and 4.3.16 (*ille ego iudiciis unica Musa tuis* – in a letter to a 'faithless friend', he recalls how his poetry used to be the only one his friend would enjoy). The motif of the *iudicium* has been exploited by Claudian in the preface to the *Panegyricus de Tertio Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, where the emperor himself is judge of the poet's ability (v. 18, *Augusto iudice*).

Felgentreu 1999, 136–8, reads in this line an allusion to an oration pronounced by Symmachus during an alleged visit of Gratian to Rome in 376 in order to express his gratitude to the young emperor for having raised his father to the consulate. According to Felgentreu, Symmachus would be praising the emperor also for having inaugurated a new era of harmony in the relationships between the court and the Senate by substituting a consul hostile to the Senate – Maximinus – with a candidate that, on the contrary, was backed by the Senate. The words to which Claudian could be alluding are part of Symmachus' address to the Senators: *postulatio vestra iudicium est ... amor vester praerogativa est consulatus ... idem castris quod curiae placet. quis hoc non putet orbis terrarium esse iudicium* (*Or.* 4.4–14). Felgentreu links this allusion to the

lines that immediately precede this section of the preface, where Claudian had underlined the judging function of the Senate in petitioning for the statue dedicated to the poet, and emphasised that the emperor had agreed to the request, thus validating the Senate's position of authority.

In my opinion, the connection between Symmachus' oration and Claudian's preface is far from being compelling, as it is based on verbal echoes that are too vague and play on commonplace topoi for a panegyric. Moreover, there is nothing in Symmachus' fragments to suggest that the visit really took place (see Kelly 2013, 393–7).

11. merces properata: Birt believes that the statue was ordered at the beginning of 400, but that it did not leave the workshop before the following year (Birt xliv); nevertheless, he still thinks that *properata* refers to the actual statue and that therefore it indicates that the effigy has been collocated in the forum 'in a hurry'. However, it is more correct to interpret this expression within the context of the whole verse as part of the *captatio benevolentiae* that occupies the second part of the preface: the poet is aware that the premature reward he has received will heighten the expectations of the audience and thus submit him to a harsher judgement (see Fargues 1933, 24, n.2).

14. quod legimur medio conspicimurque foro: the verb *lego* in the passive is typically used by poets to boast about their success: see for example Ov. *Trist.* 4.0.128 (*et in toto plurimus orbe legor*), 5.9.6 (*exul in amissa si tamen urbe legor*); Martial 95.7 (*ore legor multo notumque per oppida nomen*), 5.13.3 (*sed toto legor orbe frequens et dicitur 'hic est'*), and 8.61.3 (*non iam quod orbe cantor et legor toto*). Playing on this expectation from the audience, Claudian refers here instead to the inscription in his honour.

15–18. Plainly confessing to the pressure to which he is subjected and indeed inflating the severity of the judgement that his poetic talent is going to face, ultimately allows the poet to magnify the merit of the topic he is about to tackle: despite the challenges, in fact, the subject matter itself and the love that the audience has for Stilicho – claims the poet – will be enough to give the necessary prestige to his performance. This contrast between the material for poetry and poetry itself becomes a topos in the prefaces of Sidonius: see *Maior. pr.* 17 (*res minor ingenio nobis, sed Caesare maior*) and *Avit. pr.* 36 (*materia est maior si mihi Musa minor*), and later authors (for example,

Coripp. *Iust. pr.* 38–39: *tu mihi materiam dicendi carminis aptam, / ingenium studiumque dabis; Ioh. pr.* 10–22, but the rest of the preface shows further amplification of this theme). This motif derives from the topos of the inadequacy and reverential awe of the author in front of the imperial majesty that appears as a rhetorical commonplace already in the prose panegyrics of the collection of the *XII Panegyrici Latini*.

18. Stilichonis amor: according to Felgentreu, 137–8, this expression would complete the reference to Symm. *Or.* 4.4–14, where the orator had mentioned *amor* as a fundamental requisite that a candidate should possess in order to secure an election. Applied to the context in the preface, Claudian can rely on the affection that the Senate feels for Stilicho in order to succeed in his poetic enterprise.

Amor is also the feeling that urges Claudian to write and enables him to overcome his fear when he has to perform in front of his awe-inspiring audience in *Theod. pr.* 10 (*ibimus. ah nimius consulis urget amor!*). Cf. also *Stil.* 3.193–5 (*et, quod adhuc nullo potuit terrore coacta / libertas Romana pati, Stilichonis amori detulit*) for the love that moves the Roman citizens to bestow the highest honours to Stilicho.

THE POEM

Bellum Geticum: I follow Hall in printing the title in the nominative form. Among the several titles attested in the manuscript tradition, Garuti chooses *De bello gothico*. The form *gothicus* is warranted by contemporary use, but Claudian never employs terms connected with this adjective in any of his poems and consistently writes *Getae* or *geticus* instead (see Birt's index *s.v.* *Getae*). Other variants, such as *De bello pollentino* printed by Birt, are probably derived from the content of the poem.

1–34. *Stilicho's deliverance of Rome from the Goths surpasses the achievements of Tiphys and of the Argonauts.*

The poem opens with an elaborate *synkrisis* between Stilicho and Tiphys, the helmsman of the Argo. Comparisons taken from both history and mythology are one of the most frequently used devices in panegyrics and are highly recommended by rhetorical treatises as the most effective form of amplification, in particular by Menander (for a list of relevant passages in Menander and other authors, and for an account of the different forms *synkrisis* could take, see Pernot 1993, 690–98). Claudian employs this technique throughout his poems, drawing frequent comparisons between the targets of his praise (or invective) and famous (or infamous) heroes culled from the pages of mythological sagas and of Roman history (Gualandri 2007). The juxtaposition of Stilicho in particular with outstanding figures allows the poet to focus on his virtues, cherry-picking his achievements and suppressing any controversial action. The fact that the proem to *Bellum Geticum* constitutes the only instance in which Claudian begins one of his political poems with a mythical comparison immediately points to the crucial significance of the *synkrisis* itself, which becomes programmatic (Schindler 2005, 111 and 115). With this opening, Claudian is not simply introducing an aesthetic element within the poem, but he is providing the interpretative key for the understanding of the whole panegyric: by re-modelling historical events and re-casting real people into a story-world where the protagonists are heroes, gods and monsters, he moulds the expectations of the audience from the

outset in a way that compels them to accept the political reading of the events that are presented alongside the myth (Coombe 2015, 157–9).

Although the theme of the Argonauts informs the whole poem, the comparison itself is developed only over the first fourteen lines and it consists of two steps: Claudian begins by describing the claim to fame of Tiphys, namely crossing the strait of the Symplegades, the clashing rocks located at the entrance of the Black Sea, without harming the ship Argo. The description of the crossing is deeply allusive, with echoes from Catullus, Valerius Flaccus, Seneca, and Statius, and extends for the first eleven verses (vv. 1–11). Yet, after the comparatively long depiction, Claudian surprises his audience by inserting the actual comparison and measuring against each other the fame acquired by Tiphys for protecting one ship and the glory earned by Stilicho himself on account of the salvation of Rome and of the entire empire (vv. 11–14). In the second half of the proem, Claudian introduces other episodes taken from the myth of the Argonauts: Minerva's intervention in building the Argo and inserting the talking oaks from Dodona within the planks (vv. 15–19), the Harpies (v. 22), the snake that guards the Golden Fleece (v. 23), the bulls breathing fire (v. 24), the earthborn men (vv. 25–26). Each of these mythological episodes is carefully linked with Stilicho's defeat of the Goths and protection of the empire by a series of verbal and visual cross-references (for example, the image of the Harpies stealing from Phineus' table and the bestial connotation of the Goths as a mass of *fauces* ready to devour Latium). Claudian did not choose a list of prodigies and monsters as terms of comparison by chance: indeed, by declaring that the fictional stories created by the poets are not to be trusted and yet that Stilicho's achievements surpass them all, he weaves an even greater eulogy of his protector's successes.

The choice of the story of the Argonauts and of the figure of Tiphys is not accidental. On the one hand, the image of the ship fits very well overall as a metaphor of ruling and may have influenced Claudian's preference for this myth, especially given that Tiphys and not Jason – the leader of the expedition – is the focus of the *synkrisis* (see Schroff *comm. ad v.* 14; Gualandri 1968, 66; Balzert 1974, 11; Kirsch 1989, 187; Perrelli 1992, 121–2; for the metaphor of the Ship of State, see Brock 2013, 53–67). Moreover, Stilicho will be compared to a helmsman also later in the poem, in a metaphor in which the troubled state is likened to a ship tossed in a storm (v. 271;

for similar imagery, cf. *Ruf.* 1.275, *Stil.* 1.286; on the metaphor of the Ship of State, see Dewar 1996 *comm. ad VI Hon.* 132–40). On the other hand, reading Claudian’s retelling of the story in the light of the wider context of Latin literature may suggest further and more complex readings. First of all, Claudian’s version displays great similarities with Catullus’ opening of poem 64, an epyllion dedicated to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (see *comm. ad* 1–15). Claudian’s series of allusions to Catullus cannot be accidental and can perhaps be interpreted as a form of *aemulatio* and improvement on the part of the later imitator. While pretending to reiterate Tiphys’ heroism in saving the Argo, Claudian in fact presents his own hero as more heroic still – indeed as the only one who deserves to be considered a hero. By showing that Stilicho’s triumphs over the Goths outweigh any mythological victory that other poets may put into verse, Claudian is implicitly relegating Catullus to being part of that crowd of poets who exaggerate their stories (v. 15, *in maius celebrata ferant*) and correcting the latter’s version of the myth.

As convincingly shown by Claudia Schindler (and substantially endorsed by Hinds 2013, 139, in relation to the opening of *De raptu Proserpinae*), Claudian’s echoes of Valerius Flaccus demonstrate that Stilicho is portrayed as the preserver of the divinely ordained plan of *translatio imperii* from Greece to the Roman Empire: exactly as the Argonauts, by forcing the passage of the Symplegades, had transferred power – embodied by the Golden Fleece – to Greece, so Stilicho, by defeating a population coming from a region not far from Colchis, had allowed Rome to maintain that power, which she had previously inherited from Greece (Schindler 2005, 120–22; for the new poetics inaugurated by Valerius Flaccus, see also Stover 2012, 46–50). Stilicho’s intervention is in truth a *reparatio imperii*, as Claudian will make clear immediately after the proem (vv. 36–49). The myth of Argonauts, therefore, becomes the key that reveals the poem’s core argument, namely that Stilicho’s action is the positive drive that leads to the constant re-affirmation of the imperial golden age against the external threats that would put it in jeopardy (Ware 2017, 363–4).

As will be particularly evident in the next pages, Claudian’s poetic technique consists of mixing a precise theme inspired by a specific author (or authors) with echoes drawn from a series of other poets (Gualandri 1969). The *synkrisis* with the journey of the Argonauts, in particular, does not have many precedents in Latin

literature, except from Ovid – who links it with his exile in Tomis (*Ex Ponto* 1.4.23–46) – and from Claudius Mamertinus – who, in his *gratiarum actio* to Julian, compares the emperor’s eastwards journey along the Danube to that of the Argonauts (*Pan. Lat.* III(11).8): see Gualandri 2008, 755–6; Schindler 2005, 111–12 and 118–20. Another notable example for Claudian was Valerius Flaccus, who briefly correlates Vespasian’s conquests in Britain to the myth of the Argonauts (1.7–10): see Gualandri 2008, 756–7; Schindler 2005, 120.

1-15. The complex syntax of the first lines, as well as the frequent repetition of variations of the same image – that of the clashing rocks and their hazardous crossing – mirrors the difficulty of Tiphys’ endeavour and transposes it on the textual level, so that the reader, in a way, experiences it as well. In particular, there is in these first lines a high concentration of enjambments which break the rhythm of the hexameter by forcing the reader to jump to the next line before catching the whole meaning of the verse (for example, *coeuntibus* at v. 1 should be read with *scopulis* at v. 2; *fertur* at v. 6 opens a new line, but conceptually concludes the preceding five verses; *superbae* at v. 8 goes with *Symplegades* at v. 9, and so on; see Schindler 2005, 114).

The opening closely resembles and plays with the *incipit* of Catullus’s epyllion on the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (64): both poems begin by describing the Argo, its journey towards Colchis and its construction by Athena. Both Catullus and Claudian draw attention to the fact that they are relating a specific version of the myth, as signalled by their use of the verbs *dicuntur* (Cat. 64.2) and *fertur* (*Get.* 6) respectively; through them, both poets point to the fact that their tale is in fact a *re-telling* and ask the reader to interpret their own adaptation by keeping in mind other previous versions of the same story and implicitly compare them to each other. Another strong similarity between the two openings is the accumulation of synonyms or diversified expression to indicate the same thing: Catullus, for example, has at least seven ways to signify ‘water’ – whether fresh or salty – in the first fourteen lines (*undas, fluctus, vada, aequora, Amphitriten, freti, gurgite*); Claudian, on the other hand, uses four different words for ‘ship’ (*carinam, ratem, puppibus, navis*) in the first twelve verses. Claudian alludes to Catullan lexicon throughout the proem, for example in the expression *auratum vellus*, which recalls *aurata pellis* in Cat. 64.5 (see *comm.*

ad v. 23). The passage of the Argo through the Symplegades is narrated at length by Apollonius Rhodius (2.549–606) and by Valerius Flaccus (4.637–702).

1–2. the first two verses display an alliteration of the sound ‘c’ and a repetitiveness in rhythmic structure that contribute to produce a pressing rhythm that reproduces the triumphant breaking through of the ship through the clashing rocks (*coeuntibus... scopulis*). These lines echo two passages from Valerius Flaccus’ poem on the Argonauts: Val. Fl. 4.688 (*clausum aequor*) and 4.696 (*obsessum ... scopulis aequor*).

1. intacti ... freti: the noun *fretum* shares the same root of the verb *ferveo* (‘to boil’) and it is employed to indicate the turbulent and foaming waters of a narrow channel or river, whose waves may give the impression of boiling water. With this well-defined meaning, Claudian applies it to rivers (cf. *P&O* 226) or to specific channels, such as the Sicilian Strait (cf. *Gild.* 81) and the Bosphorus (cf. *Ruf.* 1.173–4 and *Eutr.* 2.29, 2.472 – in the first two examples the word is used in close connection with the Symplegades, see *comm. ad v.* 9); in accordance with the widespread usage of the word in a more generic sense, he also uses *fretum* to indicate the sea (cf. *e.g.* *IV Hon.* 31, *Stil.* 3.326) and its waves (*Get.* 276). The sea beyond the cliffs is *intactum* (‘untouched’) because no ship has yet been able to reach it: cf. Valerius Flaccus’ assertion that the Symplegades, the rocks that guard this stretch of sea, have never seen a ship in 4.563 (*[Symplegades] necdum ullas videre rates*). Claudian employs the same adjective later in the poem to describe Mount Olympus, which is untouched by the clouds (*Get.* 180, *nubibus intactum ... Olympum*). A similar expression can be found in Hypsipyle’s narration of her encounter with the Argonauts in Stat. *Theb.* 5.336 (*intacti ... ponti*). The word *intactum*, together with the description of the ship that bursts through the defences of a narrow strait, could also constitute an allusion to the theme of virginity, which would be congenial to the theme of the Argo as the first ship (cf. *comm. ad v.* 2). For the use of the adjective in contexts where it is used to refer to virginity, cf. Catullus 62.45 (*virgo dum intacta manet, dum cara suis est*) and Verg. *Aen.* 1.345 (*cui pater intactam dederat*).

claustra: the barrier offered by the rocks is visualised as a bulwark that prevents anyone from passing through, as in *III Hon.* (*scopulis patuerunt claustra revulsis*) and already in Sen. *Med.* 342 (*duo montes claustra profundi*). The term *claustra* – found more rarely in the singular form *claustrum* – is often employed to describe natural

elements, mostly mountain ranges, that bar access to a region or a place, cf. e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 3.411 (*claustra Pelori*), Lucan. 10.509 (*claustrum pelagi ... Pharon*). Claudian chooses this word to describe mountain chains, such as the Alps (*P&O* 106, *claustraque congestis scopulis durissima tendunt*) and the Caucasus (*Ruf.* 2.28, *Caspia claustra*, the same expression is found in Lucan. 8.222), and for the Maeotian Swamp, which protects the people known as Tauri (*Eutr.* 1.249, *Cimmerias, Taurorum claustra, paludes*).

1–2. coeuntibus aequor / armatum scopulis: the sea beyond the cliffs is ‘armed with clashing rocks’, which protect it like a fortress. The expression *coeuntibus scopulis* is an approximate translation of the Greek name for the rocks, Συμπληγάδες (see *comm. ad v.* 8–9). The coming together of the cliffs is described by Pindar with the words συνδρόμων πετρᾶν in *Pyth.* 4.208–9.

2. audax ... Argo: *Argo* is the name of the ship which carried Jason and his companions to Colchis. It was believed to be the first vessel that had sailed the open sea, a tradition that goes back to Euripides (*Andr.* 865) and becomes accepted in the Latin tradition (*Cat.* 64.11, *illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten*). According to the myth, the ship was named after her builder, Argus (*Apoll. Rhod.* 1.110–23, *Apollod.* 1.9.16), even though Diodorus Siculus reports an alternative version in which the name is explained with her speed (*Diod.* 4.41); both versions were in any case known in late antiquity (cf. *Serv. Auct. Ecl.* 4.34). In its turn, the ship gave her name to the group of heroes who joined the expedition, the Argonauts.

The adjective *audax* is ambiguous and can have both a positive and a negative meaning: see *TLL s.v. audax*, 2.0.1244.80–1245.15. The notion of audacity constitutes a common thread in the tale of the myth in the Latin poetic tradition: the Argonauts’s journey begins with their daring in *Cat.* 64.6 (*ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere puppi*, see also *comm. ad vv.* 9–10), whereas for Seneca this responsibility falls partly on Tiphys (*Med.* 318–19, *ausus Tiphys pandere vasto / carbasa ponto*; cf. also the expressions *audax Tiphys* in *Med.* 347 and *audacis carinae* in *Med.* 607). The second and third chorus of Seneca’s *Medea* are imbued with an hostile characterisation of the journey of the *Argo*, which stands for seafaring in general (cf. *Med.* 301–2, *Audax nimium qui freta primus / rate tam fragili perfida rupit* and 607–15, *Quisquis audacis tetigit carinae / nobiles remos, nemorisque sacri / Pelion densa spoliavit umbra, /*

*quisquis intravit scopulos vagantes / et tot emensus pelagi labores / barbara funem
religavit ora / raptor externi rediturus auri, / exitu diro temerata ponti / iura piavit).* Seneca inherits this stance from Horace, who portrays navigation as an impious activity which humans undertake against the laws of nature in *Carm.* 1.3.23–6 (... *impiae / non tangenda rates transiliunt vada. / audax omnia perpeti / gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas*), thus engaging with Virgil’s prophecy on the appearance of a second Argo and of a second Tiphys, which would precede the inauguration of a new Golden Age (*Ecl.* 4.31–5, *Pauca tamen suberunt priscae vestigia fraudis, / quae temptare Thetim ratibus ... / alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae vehat Argo / delectos heroas*): for the influence of Horace on Seneca, see Biondi 1984, 205–6, and Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 54; for an analysis of Horace’s dialogue with Virgil’s *Eclogue* 4 and a different interpretation of the poem from that given by Nisbet and Hubbard, see Clark 2004. This reading also informs Ovid’s mention of the myth in his *Amores* (2.11.1–6) and Lucan’s presentation of the same story in a digression triggered by the arrival of Greek allies from Iolcos to the camp of Pompey in *Lucan.* 3.193–5.

Valerius Flaccus follows in this tradition: the *Argonautica* opens by focussing on the ship Argo and the tale of her wanderings marks the beginning of the Iron Age established by Jupiter. Differently from his predecessors, however, Valerius pays homage to imperial ideology and sets the journey of the Argo side by side with praise of Vespasian’s sea-crossing to conquer Caledonia (1.7–10); consequently, he wavers between the connotation of the myth as an outrageous act and a deed which deserves eternal glory: see Feeney 1991, 330–35. The proem of *Bellum Geticum* is strongly indebted to the *Argonautica*, not least because they share a common theme and both begin by focussing on the Argo’s bursting through the Symplegades (Val. Fl. 1.1–4, *Prima deum magnis canimus freta pervia natis / fatidicamque ratem, Scythici quae Phasidis oras / ausa sequi mediosque inter iuga concita cursus / rumpere ...*). Valerius’ poem constitutes an important step in stripping the myth of the Argo of its negative connotations, thus contributing to its exploitation at the service of imperial ideology and allowing Claudian to establishing a positive connection between the quest of the Argonauts and Stilicho’s achievements. In *Bellum Geticum*, Stilicho fulfils Virgil’s prophecy: he is the second Tiphys, who will succeed in protecting his ship – the empire

– during the course of an inevitable war; only after this war will the new Golden Age finally shine (see Ware 2012, 225–7).

The ambivalent semantic sphere of *audax* comes into play also in the preface to the first book of *De Raptu Proserpinae*, where the image of the first man to build a ship and to cross the treacherous sea (v. 3, *qui, dubiis ausus committere flatibus alnum*) constitutes a metaphorical representation of Claudian's poetic inspiration: for the implications of this allegory for Claudian's self-representation as poet, see Pelttari 2014, 6–7.

inrumperet: an interesting connection could be drawn between this verb and the expression *ruptas Alpes* in v. 261. The expression appears in the context of the discovery of two severed hands in the stomachs of two wolves that are killed at the feet of the emperor Honorius during a hunt. The exceptional finding concludes a series of omens and portents which are interpreted as announcing the arrival of the Goths. The severed hands, in particular, become for some a sign of the imminent fall of Rome, but Claudian reveals the true reading of the omen (vv. 260–4): as the hands had been revealed to be lively and vigorous, so Roman virtue would shine forth after the breaking of the Alps (vv. 260–1, *utque manus utero virides patuere relecto, / Romula post ruptas virtus sic emicat Alpes*). Whereas at first sight the expression *post ruptas Alpes* could be taken as a reference to the Gothic invasion, it could also point to Stilicho's crossing of the Alps to look for reinforcements. As remarked by Claudia Schindler, this long episode is placed in the middle of the poem and constitutes the turning point of the war, since Alaric's defeat at Pollentia is presented as a direct consequence of Stilicho's expedition (*Get.* 362–3, *... illae tibi, Roma, salutem / Alpinae peperere casae ...*). If this interpretation is correct, then the Alpine journey of Stilicho could be assimilated to the Argo's passage through the Symplegades: for this interpretation, see Schindler 2005, 116; Balzert 1974, 12, also compares the two expeditions, see *comm. ad v.* 6.

3. Aetam Colchosque petens: Aeteas was the king of Colchis, the mythical region lying on the eastern coast of the Black Sea (today's Western Georgia), son of Helios and father of Medea. The verb *peto* suggests the idea of quest, as well as implying an aggressive attitude: given the purpose of the expedition – stealing the Golden Fleece from Aeteas – this nuance fits the context very well. Cf. the similar language with

which the Argonauts' destination is expressed in Cat. 64.3 (*Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeeteos*).

4. omnibus attonitis: cf. Val. Flac. 4.646 (*omnibus et gelida lapsi formidine remi*), where the Argonauts are struck by fear and drop their oars. In Valerius' version of the myth, however, Jason is the first to recover his courage (4.647–8) and to take the oars (4.654–5). The difference between the two poets is that Valerius may have the emperor in mind (after all, he had praised him at the beginning of his work), whereas Claudian is celebrating the general Stilicho: see Schroff *comm. ad v.* 14, even though he erroneously holds that Jason is pre-eminent also in the retelling of Apollonius Rhodius and Seneca; Gualandri 2008, 757–58, with n. 12. Cf. the consternation of Tiphys in a different context in Stat. *Theb.* 5.412–13 (*ipse graves fluctus clavumque audire negantem / lassat agens Tiphys palletque ...*), perhaps influenced by Sen. *Med.* 346 (*palluit audax Tiphys*).

solus post numina Tiphys: the oxymoron gives particular emphasis to this expression, which is key to the understanding of the role of the proem in connection with the rest of the poem (Schindler 2005, 117). Tiphys is *solus* ('alone') because all his companions are *attoniti* (v. 3, 'stunned') and prevented from helping him by their own fear; however, according to all versions of the myth, he received the aid of the gods – whether Athena (Apoll. Rhod. 2.598–9; cf. 2.610–14, where Tiphys himself attributes the merit to the goddess), Athena and Hera (Ov. *Ex Pont.* 1.4.39; Val. Fl. 4.682–4), or only Hera (Apollod. 1.9.22). The plural *numina* ('deities') could either be an allusion to the version of Ovid and Valerius, or it could be used imprecisely to refer to the sole Minerva, who appears later in v. 16 (see Gualandri 2008, 761, n. 23). It has been suggested that the mention of the gods could hide criticism of the Christian interpretation of the battle of the Frigidus as a victory obtained through divine assistance (see Gualandri 2008, 761–62, n. 25, pushing further the arguments already presented in Gualandri 1989, 24–32). Here as elsewhere, however, reading the mention of the traditional gods as a covert objection to the Christian beliefs upheld by the court runs the risk of compromising a correct understanding of the principles at work in Claudian's poetry, whose underlying goal was to cast members of the imperial family (and Stilicho) against a traditional Roman background and thus present them as legitimate rulers (for an interpretation of Claudian's representations of the battle of the

Frigidus through Virgilian imagery, see Ware 2004b). In other words, given that Claudian consistently exploits the traditionally pagan tropes of Graeco-Roman epic as ‘a stamp of *Romanitas*’ (quotation from Ware 2004b, 157), it should not matter whether he agreed with the Christian presentation of the battle of the Frigidus or not.

The addition *post numina* acts as a sort of limitation or ‘correction’ to the adjective *solus* applied to Tiphys, thus allowing Stilicho to emerge superior in the comparison: indeed, throughout the poem, it is Stilicho who is consistently represented as the true ‘lonely hero’, since he accomplishes the salvation of Rome by repelling the attack of the Goths without assistance, either human or divine (v. 36, *per te ... unum*, ‘through you ... alone’; v. 133, *opus solo Stilichone peractum* ‘a deed executed by Stilicho alone’; v. 142, *unus in hoc Stilicho diversis artibus hoste / tres potuit complere duces*, ‘against this enemy Stilicho was able to fill the role of three generals on his own through different skills’; v. 267, *solus erat Stilicho*, ‘Stilicho was the only one’); for the image of the ‘lonely hero’ in *Bellum Geticum*, see Balzert 1974, 10–18; Kirsch 1989, 187. In Claudian’s poetic cycle, the role of the one man who is able to rule the Empire is initially played by Theodosius and is then clearly inherited by Stilicho: see Ware 2012, 81–8.

5. servasse carinam: cf. the opening line of Statius’ *protempticon* for Maecius Celer (*Silv.* 3.2.1, *Di quibus audaces amor est servare carinas*), where the expression *servare carinam* (‘to keep the boat unharmed’) appears in the same position in the verse.

tenui damno: this is a reference to the ‘slight damage’ that the Argo had suffered, even though Tiphys had managed to save it from the destructive effects of the Clashing Rocks. Apollonius specifies that the ship had lost her decorations (*Apoll. Rhod.* 2.601, ἄκρα κόρυμβα; imitated by Val. Fl. 4.691, *corymbis*; cf. Lucan. 2.717, *rapta puppe*); these match the loss of the tip of the tail of the dove that the Argonauts had let fly through the Symplegades following the advice of Phineus (*Apoll. Rhod.* 2.571–2). The damage suffered by the ship – however small and without further consequences – constitutes yet another limitation to Tiphys’ success, after the mention of the intervention of the gods. Transposed to the political situation of 402, this detail could be interpreted as reflecting on Stilicho’s own effort: indeed, at the moment of the recitation of *Bellum Geticum*, Alaric had not been decisively driven away from

Italy and Stilicho had probably had to withstand criticism on this account; Claudian might be subtly conceding to the view that Stilicho's success, as Tiphys' own, had not been unblemished (Gualandri 2005, 764–5). In view of what was already observed in relation to the expression *post numina* (see *comm. ad v.* 4), Claudian's aim was to present Tiphys as an exceptional hero, while demonstrating at the same time that Stilicho had surpassed even him. In this context, it is unlikely that Claudian would have inserted a reference to the political situation to the detriment of Stilicho in the proem (he does allude to the fact that the Goths had not been conclusively defeated later in the poem, see *comm. ad vv.* 90–103). The poetic tradition already contained the details of this slight damage to the ship and simply following his predecessors allowed Claudian to limit Tiphys' success without having to add any further element.

6. fertur: the fact that the main verb of the first long sentence only appears in the sixth line contributes to the syntactic complexity of this *incipit*. The impersonal *fertur* ('it is said') is placed in a prominent position at the beginning of the verse: it constitutes a marker with which Claudian signals to his audience that he is reporting other poets' stories and that they are supposed to recognise the allusive nature of his poetry. Catullus does exactly the same when he uses the verb *dicuntur* in 64.2. The technical term for this kind of textual markers is 'Alexandrian footnote': this definition captures the scholarly nature of this literary practice, which allows the poet to fashion his poetic persona after the erudite tradition of the academic poetry composed by the Alexandrian poets (see Ross 1975, 78; Thomas 1989, 163–4; Hinds 1998, 1–5). The indicative *fertur* is followed by a series of verbs in the subjunctive (v. 16, *iactent*; v. 21, *ingement*): their function is to mark the author's increasing distance from the sources of such stories, as will be made evident by the expression in v. 27 (*nil veris aequale dabunt*; cf. *comm. ad loc.*); see Schindler 2005, 113.

ancipitem montis vitasse ruinam: the adjective *anceps* to describe the collapsing of the Symplegades has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it refers to the fact that the rocks themselves are two and it can therefore be translated as 'twofold' (see Garuti 1991, who translates as 'la doppia caduta del monte'); in this interpretation the adjective is used in hypallage, i.e. a physical characteristic of the cliffs is transferred to their falling down, with which it agrees syntactically: cf. Sen. *Thy.* 76–7, [*quisquis*] *iamque venturi times / montis ruinam*, where the participle *venturi* agrees

with the genitive *montis*, but is conceptually referred to the fall itself (*ruinam*). On the other hand, *anceps* can also be explained as ‘dangerous’, according to a secondary meaning developed from that of ‘uncertain, ambiguous’ (see *TLL s.v. anceps*, 2.0.25.32–49; cf. the translation in Platnauer 1922, ‘the cliff threatening ruin’). In fact, it is clear that Claudian plays with both meanings of the word and that both translations are therefore correct, but incomplete. The English adjectives ‘two-edged’ and ‘double-edged’ retain the same ambiguity, but they are not suited to describe two cliffs; accordingly, the translator will have to opt for one of the two meanings.

This expression constitutes another possible prefiguration of Stilicho’s crossing of the Alps (vv. 346–7, *interdum subitam glacie labente ruinam / mons dedit ...*); see Balzert 1974, 12.

7. vagae ... rupis: cf. Sen. *Herc. O.* 1380 (*si vagae Symplegades / utraque premerent rupe, redeuntis minas / ferrem ruinae*), where the Symplegades are also called ‘wandering rocks’; Seneca describes them as *scopulos vagantes* (*Med.* 610).

in altum: the high sea beyond the strait of the Symplegades as opposed to the narrow channel protected by the two rocks, which had been described with the word *fretum* (v. 1).

8. victricem ... ratem: the noun *ratis* is often used to identify specifically the first ship (*TLL s.v. ratis*, 11.2.231.21–28) and the Argo (*TLL s.v. ratis*, 11.2.231.39–53). This expression had been employed also by the Nereids to describe Stilicho’s navy in *Epith.* 178 (*victrices nos saepe rates classemque paternam / veximus ...*). The strong caesura after *ratem* in the fourth foot, corresponds to the end of the long syntactic structure which has opened the poem and which is governed by the indicative present *fertur* in v. 6.

8–11. According to Apollonius Rhodius, the Symplegades stopped clashing together after the crossing of the Argonauts (2.604–606; but the tradition is older, cf. *Hdt.* 4.85.1); not only is this detail picked up by Ovid – who lists the Symplegades as an example of how all things change (*Met.* 15.335) – by Lucan (2.719), by Valerius Flaccus (4.707–10) and by Claudian (here and already in *Ruf.* 1.173, *instabilesque olim Symplegadas*), but it even appears in a geographical digression in Ammianus’ *Res Gestae*, where the historian reports that the Symplegades used to dash against each other (22.8.14). Pliny explains the physical reason behind the myth of these rocks: he

argues that the passage between them is so narrow that anyone approaching would see them as one or two cliffs depending on their own position, thus forming the impression that the rocks themselves were shifting (Plin. *Nat.* 4.92). The Symplegades appear frequently in Latin literature in radically different contexts: they constitute an important landmark, both in the real and in the mythical world (e.g. Ov. *Trist.* 1.10.47; Sen. *Med.* 454); they become a lewd metaphor for the space between someone's buttocks (Mart. 11.99.5, *sic constringuntur [sc. tunicae] gemina Symplegade culi*; Auson. *Epigr.* 106.9, *luteae Symplegadis antrum*); they are employed as a polemic image in a doctrinal dispute (Tert. *Adv. Marc.* 1.2.1, *duos Ponticus deos affert, tamquam duas Symplegadas naufragii sui*). In addition to this verse, Claudian mentions them to mark a crucial transition in two other passages: in *Ruf.* 1.173, the devilish Rufinus passes through the Symplegades in order to reach Constantinople from his native Gaul (even if they were beyond Constantinople on the voyage from the west); in *Eutr.* 2.29–30 (*concurrere freti fauces, radice revulsa / vitant instabilem rursum Symplegada nautae*), a series of disturbances of the natural order awaits Eutropius' consulate and the Symplegades return to their previous condition of clashing rocks.

8. stupuere: the Symplegades stand still in astonishment at the sight of a boat sailing safely past them and their astonishment is starkly emphasised through the position of the verb after the strong caesura of the verse. Claudian seems to endow the twin rocks with a human emotion. His choice was probably inspired by the example of Valerius Flaccus, who credits the same amazement to the sea beyond the cliffs, unaccustomed to being crossed (4.711–12, *tum freta, quae longis fuerant impervia saeclis, / ad subitam stupuere ratem*); this, in turn, could have been influenced by Ovid's description of the waves which marvel at seeing the Argo (*Am.* 2.11.1, *mirantibus aequoris undis*; cf. Virg. *Aen.* 8.91, *mirantur et undae*). The image of the wonder caused by the appearance of the Argo goes back to Apollonius Rhodius (1.549–51) and is present also in Catullus' poem 64 (v. 15), but it is referred in both cases to the nymphs who witness the passage of the ship and not to inanimate beings. For observations on these intertextual relations, see Gualandri 2008, 754, n. 3.

Claudian uses *stupuere* in this same position of the verse after a strong caesura also in *Stil.* 1.54 (cf. *Get.* 373, where the pause is however less marked from a

syntactical point of view). A model for this prosodic structure could have been provided by Statius (*Theb.* 6.309–10, *caeruleum deferre patrem; stupere relictā / nubila ...*, where the clouds are amazed at the speed of Arion, Adrastus' horse).

8–9. *superbae ... domitae Symplegades*: the name of the clashing rocks, which was hinted at in the expression *coeuntibus scopulis* in vv. 1–2, is finally spelled out in this line. The name Symplegades appears for the first time in Greek literature in two plays by Euripides, namely at the very beginning of *Medea* (v. 2) and in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (vv. 260 and 1389), and these cliffs were also known as *Cyaneae*, 'Dark Rocks' (cf. Hdt. 4.85.1 and Eur. *Andr.* 863–5; Euripides in fact juxtaposes both names in *Med.* 2, *κυανέας Συμπληγάδας*). Their features are very similar to those of the *Planctae*, a group of 'Wandering Rocks' near Sicily, and the two sets of cliffs can be confused with one another: according to Circe, the Argo had been the only ship to sail past these rocks unharmed thanks to the help of Hera (*Od.* 12.59–72). The name *Cyaneae* appears also in the Latin tradition: see e.g. Ov. *Trist.* 1.10.34 (*transeat instabilis strenua Cyaneas*) and Val. Fl. 4.658 (*Cyaneae iuga*). The Symplegades – already personified through the verb *stupeo* (see *comm. ad v.* 8) – are labelled as *superbae*, 'haughty, arrogant', because they dared to challenge the journey of the Argo.

9. *arte viri*: as Tiphys defeated the prodigious rocks thanks to his human ability in steering the ship, Stilicho will display an equal degree of skill in defeating the Goths. This theme recurs in vv. 120–23, where Stilicho is implicitly compared to a skilled doctor who operates on an ulcer (see *comm. ad loc.*). For *arte viri* in the first position in the verse, cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.183 (*arte viri vinclisque nova ratione paratis*). In the Ovidian passage, *arte* refers to Vulcan's 'dexterity' in crafting the net that will enmesh Venus and Mars and *viri* identifies the god as 'husband' of Venus: even though the context is different and the actions less heroic than those evoked by Claudian through the myth of the Argonaut, the passage is nevertheless relevant since the expression conveys the superhuman skill of a deity. Claudian speaks of Vulcan's *ars* also in his very first public poem: see *P&O* 95, *quem tota variarat Mulciber arte* (for the god's epithet, see *OLD s.v. Mulciber*).

9–10. *nova passae / iura soli*: after the passage of the Argo, the Symplegades must submit to a new law that forces them to stand rooted to the earth and forbids their clashing together. The notion that the sailing of the first ship subdued the sea and

imposed a new order on the natural world is expressed by Seneca in his *Medea*: see *Med.* 318–20 (*ausus Tiphys pandere vasto / carbasa ponto legesque novas / scribere ventis*) and 364–5 (*nunc iam cessit pontus et omnes / patitur leges*); this opinion recurs also in the words of Thetis in *Stat. Achill.* 1.64–5 (*ex quo iura freta maiestatemque repostam / rupit Iasonia puppis Pagasaea rapina*). In line with the pessimistic view prevailing in Seneca's *Medea*, this human violence towards nature is atoned through severe punishment: see *Med.* 336–9 (*traxit in unum Thessala pinus / iussitque pati verbera pontum / partemque metus fieri nostri / mare sepositum*); 614–5 (*exitu diro temerata ponti / iura piavit*). Even though Claudian echoes these authors, he clearly did not incorporate the negative connotation they gave to the journey of the Argo: see *comm. ad v.* 2 and Gualandri 2008, 755.

10. cunctis faciles iam puppis haerent: with the adverb *iam* Claudian signals that he is describing the current condition of the rocks, which are now fixed to the ground (*haerent*). The adjective *facilis* has here the passive meaning of 'easy' – i.e. it qualifies something that can be done or obtained without effort; this is the most frequent use of the adjective and it takes the dative to express the person or object for which something is easy, in this case the boats that attempt to cross the strait (see *TLL s.v. facilis*, 6.1.60.36–49). Not unlike the Aeschylean Erinyes, who at the end of the *Oresteia* are transformed in the benevolent Eumenides, the Symplegades exchange their proud stance for a compliant nature. Cf. *Ruf.* 1.268, where the verb *haereo* is employed to indicate that Rufinus is blocked when confronted by Stilicho.

11–14. These verses can be compared to Mamertinus' claim that the stories of the poets are inferior to his own praise of Julian: see *Pan. Lat.* III(11).8.3 (*Quid tu, si ad scribendas celebrandasque res principis nostri animum adiceris, de Iuliani lembis liburnisque factura es?*).

11–12. quod si ardua Tiphyn / ... sic gloria vexit: the strong caesura in the fourth foot of v. 11 corresponds to the end of the long opening sentence concerning the crossing of the Symplegades and marks the transition to a rhetorical question, in which the comparison between Tiphys and Stilicho is finally made explicit. The transition is further emphasised by the rare elision of the monosyllabic *si*, ending with a long vowel, before *ardua*; the only parallel, and presumably the model, for such a metrical oddity is Verg. *Aen.* 12.124 (*haud secus instructi ferro quam si aspera Martis*). The adjective

arduus describes something that is located in a high place and is therefore difficult to reach: praising Tiphys' glory as 'elevated, lofty' allows Claudian to amplify Stilicho's achievements. Ovid uses the same adjective to describe the steep and difficult path that must be taken in order to obtain glory: see. *Trist.* 4.3.74 (*ardua per praeceps gloria vadit iter*; for this topos, cf. Hes. *Op.* 289–91); in this poem, Ovid takes Tiphys as one of the examples of glory (v. 77; see *TLL s.v. arduus*, 2.0495.48–57). Claudian employs this adjective elsewhere with a positive connotation: cf. *III Hon.* 13, where it qualifies Honorius' *fortuna*. For the expression *ardua gloria*, cf. Stat. *Silv.* 2.3.77 and *Theb.* 8.706–7.

12. navis ob innocuae meritum: Tiphys' glory derives from saving the Argo from destruction. The ship is labelled *innocua* not because she does not cause damage, but because she has not suffered any. Gesner underlines the passive meaning of the adjective in this line drawing the example of Virg. *Aen.* 10.301–2 (*donec rostra tenent siccum et sedere carinae / omnes innocuae*): cf. *TLL s.v. innocuus*, 7.1.1709.75–1710.12; Gualandri 2008, 764.

13–14. quae tibi ... sufficient laudes: the panegyric intent of the poem emerges through this rhetorical question, with which Claudian makes explicit that the aim of the whole preamble – and of the poem that follows – is to praise Stilicho. He had used a similar device also in *Ruf.* 1.273 (*qua dignum te laude feram...?*), when he had introduced a eulogy of Stilicho; cf. the use of rhetorical questions in e.g. *Fescenn.* 1.4–5 (*quae digna mentis laus erit ardua ? / quae digna formae laus erit igneae?*) and *VI Hon.* 385–6 (*sedesne capacior ulla / tantae laudis erit?*). Claudian often claims that the objects of his praise are so remarkable that it is impossible to celebrate them adequately: see e.g. *Stil.* 3.133 (*nec laudem vox ulla capit*).

13. pro ... pulso discrimine: considering that it agrees with the participle *pulso* ('repelled'), *discrimen* should be understood in its figurative meaning of 'danger'. However, since this word can also more precisely indicate the turning point of a situation or of a war (see *TLL s.v. discrimen*, 5.1.1358.77–1359.37), it evokes the idea that the Gothic invasion constitutes a pivotal moment in the history of the Roman Empire; thus, the successful removal of a danger of such entity is pointedly opposed to Tiphys' protection of a mere ship in v. 12.

tanti ... regni: the genitive is governed by *discrimen* and indicates the object that is affected by it (*TLL s.v. discrimen*, 5.1.1361.80–1362.5).

14. Stilicho: the fact that Claudian addresses Stilicho directly confirms that he was present at the recitation of the poem. The prominent position of the name of the addressee between two caesurae in the middle of the verse marks another strong pause.

14–35. After the comparison between Stilicho and Tiphys, Claudian expands his use of the myth of the Argonauts. This section could be divided in two further subsections: in the first, Claudian blames poets for exaggerating the subject of their compositions and compiles a list of the fabulous details that accompany the deeds of the Argonauts (vv. 14–27); in the second, he compares such exaggerations with Stilicho's successes in a way that makes the latter stand out and connects the introduction to the main topic of the poem, namely Stilicho's salvation of Rome (vv. 27–35).

By and large, the *fabulae* narrated by poets are considered to be at best misleading, at worst outright lies (a theme that goes back at least to the words uttered by the Muses in Hes. *Th.* 27–8). The authors of prose panegyrics, in particular, would take pains to mark a clear distinction between their works and those of the poets, even though panegyrics and poetry did share many elements, starting from their common purpose of entertaining an audience. Indeed, episodes drawn from the myth or from ancient lore would often appear in prose panegyrics accompanied by disclaimers such as the expression *ut poetae ferunt*. This allowed panegyrists to embellish their works with all the fanciful imagery and stylistic tropes belonging to poetry, while distancing themselves from its falsehoods and presenting their accounts as more sincere (Ware 2017, 346–55). This technique could be compared to that exploited by Claudian in his proem: indeed, the allusive *fertur* of v. 6 corresponds to expressions such *ut poetae ferunt*, and Claudian's insistence that the stories narrated by the poets are not true (vv. 14–15, 20–21, 27) coincides with the panegyrists' outward rejection of poetic models. In this poem as in the prose panegyrics, however, while ostensibly dismissed, the outlandish stories of the poets are ultimately instrumental in the exaltation of Claudian's object of praise: Stilicho (Ware 2017, 360–67).

14–15. licet omnia vates / in maius celebrata ferant: *licet* in v. 14 opens another long syntactical structure which covers twelve whole lines and ends in the middle of v. 27, where there is the first and only indicative of the entire period.

Accompanied by the subjunctive, its meaning comes very close to that of concessive conjunctions such as *etsi* and *quamvis*; it can be therefore be interpreted in the sense of ‘although’. This acknowledgment of poetic licence is all the more conspicuous because it is introduced in an extremely allusive passage. In fact, while remarking that the poets are allowed to exaggerate their stories and implicitly dismissing their tales as fabrications, Claudian draws attention to the network of allusions with which these lines are peppered. The expression *in maius ... ferant* (‘to exaggerate’) is used also by Livy to refer to *fama* (‘rumor’): see 21.32.7, *fama ... qua incerta in maius vero ferri solent*. Claudius Mamertinus employs the similar expression *in maius extollere* in his comment on the eloquence of – specifically Greek – poetry: see *Pan. Lat.* III(11)8.1, *O facundia potens Graecia! Omnium tuorum principum gesta in maius extollere potuisti, sola factorum glorias ad verborum copiam tetendisti* (for an interpretation of this passage in the context of the relationship between prose panegyrics and poetry, see Ware 2017, 352–5); cf. the comparable *cuncta in maius attollens* (*Tac. Ann.* 15.30). Claudian makes a pretence of the same stance towards the ancient myths also in *e.g. Ruf.* 1.283 (*taceat superata vetustas*), where he claims that Stilicho should not be compared to Perseus or Hercules since his deeds are much greater, and *VI Hon.* 475 (*si qua fides audentibus omnia Musis*; for further parallels see Dewar 1996 *comm. ad loc.*).

15–16. ipsam ... Minervam: according to the myth, the goddess Minerva/Athena had contributed to the building of the Argo. For references to the construction of the Argo by Minerva/Athena or thanks to her instructions, see *Apoll. Rhod.* 1.18–19, 1.111–12, 1.226, 1.723–4, 2.612–14, 2.1187–9, 3.340; *Cat.* 64.8–10. In his *Argonautica*, Valerius Flaccus initially depicts the same goddess as the builder of the ship (1.94–5) – with the cooperation of Juno, who spreads the news of Jason’s quest in the following lines (1.96–9) – but later the Argo’s beams themselves mention that it was Juno to tear them off the woods (1.304–5). For an overview of the role of the two goddesses in the Greek tradition and in Valerius, see Zissos (2008), *comm. ad Val. Fl.* 91–106.

secandis / Argois trabibus: the detail of the goddess Athena cutting the beams of the Argo recalls the description of *Apoll. Rhod.* 2.1187–8 (τάμε χαλκῶ / δούρατα): the parallel is highlighted in Gualandri 2008, 768; cf. also *Val. Fl.* 94–5 (*demittere ferro / robora*). The adjective *Argous* (‘pertaining to the Argo’) is moulded on the Greek

equivalent Ἀργῶος and the expression *Argois trabibus* is equivalent to ἐπ' Ἀργῶου δορός in Eur. *Andr.* 794 (cf. Lyc. *Alex.* 883).

16. iactent: the form *iacto* intensifies the meaning of *iacio*. One of the meanings of this verb is 'to utter', 'to declare', which is therefore strengthened into the more charged 'to boast', 'to show off'. Accordingly, not only do poets exaggerate the themes they celebrate, but they parade the fanciful characters and flaunt the implausible details that Claudian will portray in the next lines. Claudian uses the construction of *iacto* with the accusative and the infinitive in several other poems: cf. e.g. *P&O* 136–7, *Ruf.* 2.308–9, *IV Hon.* 134, *Gild.* 70–71, *Rapt.* 3.59.

sudasse: the verb is employed figuratively to underline the manual labour of the goddess, who personally toils in the construction of the Argo. This idea is already in Apoll. Rhod. 1.111–12 with the Greek verb κάμει ('to toil'). Cf. the same figurative use of the verb with the cause of the labour in the ablative in *Ruf.* 1.202 (*sudabatque gravi consul Serranus aratro*), *IV Hon.* 655 (*crinitusque tuo sudabit fasce Suebus*), *Carm. min.* 17.1 (*adspice sudantes venerando pondere fratres*): see Gualandri 2008, 768, with n. 46.

17–18. nec nemoris muti iunxisse carentia sensu / robora: the infinitive *iunxisse* is subordinate to *licet* of v. 14 and refers to the stories reported by the poets. According to their stories, the beams of the Argo were not made of lifeless wood gathered from a silent grove. The expression *nemoris muti* turns upside down the theme of the woodland that resounds with songs, voices, or noises (see e.g. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.11, *te nemus omne canet*, alluded to in *Fesc.* 2.4–5, *omne nemus cum fluviiis, / omne canat profundum*; for other examples, see *TLL s.v. nemus*, 9.1.525.70–526.25). For the expression *carentia sensu*, cf. *carm. min.* 29.54 and *Lucr.* 2.990.

18. caeso ... augure luco: *lucus* takes on the distinct meaning of 'sacred grove', as exemplified by the distinction between the three nearly synonyms *lucus*, *nemus* and *silva* in Serv. Auct. *Aen.* 1.310 (see, in particular, the definition for *lucus*: *lucus enim est arborum multitudo cum religione*; cf. *TLL s.v. lucus*, 7.2.1751.52–63). This meaning of the word is strengthened here by the indication of the deity for whom the grove is sacred (*Tmarii Iovis*). Claudian refers to the same specialised notion of the word in an iconic episode towards the end of *Bellum Geticum*, where *lucus* ironically identifies the wood from which a voice persuades Alaric to push his way towards

Rome, claiming that he will reach the ‘the city’ (*Get.* 545–7, *nec volucres, sed clara palam vox edita luco: / “rumpe omnes, Alarice, moras; hoc impiger anno / Alpibus Italiae ruptis penetrabis ad Urbem”*). This prophecy plays on the ambiguous meaning of *urbem*: the voice did not use this word to designate Rome (the city par excellence), but a relatively unknown river in the Ligurian mountains, near the town of Pollentia, where Alaric would be defeated (cf. *supra* p. 75, with n. 249). In the fiction of the poem, therefore, the voice coming from the grove will turn out to be deceptive from Alaric’s point of view, but its divine quality is proved by the very fact that it ultimately facilitated the salvation of Rome. The noun *augur* is used in apposition with *lucus* to emphasise the prophesying quality of the sacred grove.

Tmarii: *Tomarus* is the name of the mountain which overshadows the valley where Jupiter’s oracle of Dodona was located; the adjective derived from the name of the mountain is used here as an epithet of Jupiter himself. The majority of manuscripts preserve the reading *teneri*, which is hard to understand in connection with Jupiter and his oracle, but could have been perhaps engendered by an anticipation of *teneras mentes* a few lines below (v. 21). The variant *tomari* is found in Hall’s K₄ and in the margin of Hall’s R₂₆; Giglio Gregorio Giralardi, the Italian scholar who gathered the collection of readings known as the *Excerpta Gyraldina*, introduces this variant with the expression *legunt quidam* (‘some say’), thus revealing that he had found this variant in at least one of his sources: see Hall 1986, 129, n. 1. This reading prompted Heinsius to conjecture the form *Tmarii*, following the example of Call. *Hymn* 6.51 and Verg. *Ecl.* 8.44 (cf. Call. *Aet.* fr. 23.3 Pf.), while refusing the form Τομαριάς of Orph. Arg. 266 (= v. 1156). Gesner and Hall accept the conjecture of Heinsius in their editions, whereas Birt, Schroff and Garuti print the more conservative *Tomari*. A fluctuation in the name of the mountain in Greek is confirmed by Strab. 7.7.11, but the choice of the form is not neutral from the point of view of the metre, since the α is short in Τμάρος and long in Τόμαρος: see Gualandri 2008, 765, n. 40.

The sacred oaks that grew near the oracle of Jupiter at Dodona had the gift of speaking (cf. e.g. Ov. *Met.* 13.714); the reference to Dodona alludes to the poetic tradition that narrates the construction of the Argo with their wood: see Apoll. Rhod. 1.526–7 and Val. Fl. Arg. 1.302–305. Claudian mentions the speaking oaks also in *III*

Hon. 117–8, within a geographical digression prompted by Honorius' journey to Italy in order to join his father Theodosius after the defeat of Eugenius and Arbogast.

19. arbore praesaga: the ablative indicates the matter with which Minerva gives life to the Argo ('with prophetic trees'); the timber used to build the Argo is gathered from a prophetic forest in Val. Fl. 1.304 (*fatidicis ... silvis*; cf. the same expression in Sil. 1.414 to refer to the oracle of Ammon). For the poetic use of the singular *arbor* instead of the plural, see *TLL s.v. arbor*, 2.0.419.63–73.

tabulas animasse loquaces: Apollonius Rhodius explains that the beams of the Argo speak thanks to a magical timber used by Athena in the construction of the ship: see 1.524–7 and 4.580–83 (αὐδοῖεν ... δόρυ, 'the beam speaking with human voice'); cf. the description of the ship in the late antique *Argonautica Orphica* as πολυηγόρος ('much-speaking', v. 489 and v. 1345) and λάλοος ('talkative', v. 709). Valerius Flaccus even portrays the beams urging the Argonauts to take action (1.304–5 and 5.65–6). This tradition is recalled also in Sidon. 9.65–6 (*Non vectos Minyas loquente silva / dicam*).

20–21. These two verses recall the idea already expressed at the beginning of this section and articulate it more forcefully: if vv. 14–15 suggested that poets could exaggerate the stories they related, vv. 20–21 affirm that they do it with the precise intent of enticing the weak minds of their public. The use of the plural in these lines leaves open every allusive possibility, in fact drawing attention to the plethora of different stories and actual texts Claudian alludes to: see Ware 2017, 352.

21. teneras ... mentes: 'soft minds'; cf. Verg. *Georg.* 3.3 (*cetera, quae vacuas tenuissent carmine mentes*), which has similar structure and meaning – albeit in a different context. Lucretius acknowledges the common opinion that a body that is made soft by bad habits engenders a weak mind (3.745, *scilicet in tenero tenerascere corpore mente*). This notion becomes the target of Horace's *Carm.* 3.24, an attack on Roman lax morality and greedy aptitude. In this poem, Horace praises the happiness of the Scythians, who lead a simple life, and of the Getae, who share the toil of farming and maintain incorrupt customs (vv. 9–24); he chastises the Romans, whose life is dictated by *licentia* and by a logic of profit which has weakened both their bodies and their minds (vv. 25–44 and 54–62): in order to attain that something which is missing from their lives (v. 64, *curtae nescio quid semper abest rei*), they should shut away wicked riches in the Capitolium or throw them in the sea (vv. 45–50), as well as

hardening their soft minds with tougher activities (vv. 51–4, *eradenda cupidinis / pravi sunt elementa et tenerae nimis / mentes asperioribus / firmandae studiis ...*). The same opinion is an overarching theme of *Bellum Geticum*. Claudian chides the Romans for the luxurious habits which have weakened their minds and bodies, thus inclining them to complain about trifles (vv. 160–62, *nos, terrorum expers et luxu mollior aetas / deficimus queruli, si bos abductus aratro, / si libata seges ...*): indeed, their riches become a burden – both physical and mental – when they are faced with the Gothic invasion and only fear can eventually overwhelm their greed (*Get.* 225–6, *iam oneri creduntur opes tandemque libido / haesit avaritiae gravioribus obruta curis*). Stilicho is the only one who is able to bolster them with his words and eventually lead them to victory, not only over the Goths, but over their own greed: when the Roman army pushes through Alaric’s camp, the soldiers continue their pursuit of the routed enemy, neglecting the many riches amassed by the Goths (vv. 604–15). It is safe to assume, therefore, that the soft minds of v. 21 refer to the Romans themselves, whose proclivity to believe in the fables of the poets has made them forgetful of their old customs. In fact, Claudian praises the Argonauts not for stealing the Golden Fleece – the very action that had inaugurated the iron age and thus opened the way to a logic of profit (cf. *comm. ad v.* 2) – but for driving away the Harpies and defeating the earth-born warriors (vv. 27–35): for this interpretation, see Ware 2017, 365–7.

Since the adjective *tener* defines anything that is soft or easy to mould, it is often employed to characterise children (*OLD s.v. tener* 2): in fact, Claudian uses it mostly in connection with young age, as in e.g. *III Hon.* 43 (*teneras ... vires*), *Stil.* 3.121 (*teneros ... annos*) and *Get.* 493 (*tenero ... ab aevo*; cf. *VI Hon.* 424). It is possible therefore that Claudian has also children in mind when he speaks about *teneras mentes*. The idea that the mind grows from fragile to robust along with the body is articulated by Lucretius (3.445–8). Quintilian, on the other hand, dedicates a whole chapter of his rhetorical handbook to the correct readings that should be assigned to children (1.8.4–12); since their minds are easily impressed, they should be educated with authors through which they can improve their moral, as well as their oratorical skills: thus Homer and Virgil are the best choice, whereas other genres can be chosen only after a careful selection of the passages (lyric poets) or even avoided altogether (love elegy); for the expression *tenera mens*, cf. also 1.11.2 and 2.4.5. The identification of a weak

body with a weak mind works also in the case of women. This is expressed clearly in *Ov. Her.* 19.7, where Hero herself admits that the weak body of girls harbours a feeble mind (*ut corpus, teneris ita mens infirma puellis*). Claudian occasionally plays also with this notion: cf. the effeminacy of Eutropius which is revealed by the expression *tenero pectore* in *Eutr.* 1.423–4.

vincturi: the manuscript tradition records several variants, mostly with the verbs *vincio* ('to bound') and *vinco* ('to win'). Aside from the different meanings of these verbs, the readings can be roughly divided into two categories according to a grammatical aspect: those in the plural – which thus agree with the implied subject of the verb that comes before (*ingement*), namely the poets – and those in the singular, which link the future participle with the following *carmine*. Editors have alternatively chosen one or the other reading: Garuti and Birt choose the plural and print respectively *vincturi* and *victuri* (Schroff also reports *victuri*, but signals the variant *vincturi* in his commentary); Gesner and Hall both choose the singular *vincturo*. Personally, I prefer *vincturi*: not only does the plural seem better attested in the manuscript tradition, but changing the subject would unnecessarily confuse an already complex syntax and weaken Claudian's attack against the poets; as for the choice of the verb, it would be very easy to miss some of the vertical lines that form the initial sequence *uin-* or the form *uī-* (with the abbreviation for *n*) in a manuscript and the slightly less common *vincturi* could have been more easily corrupted into *victuri*.

22–6. The various episodes of the myth of the Argonauts, narrated at length by the epic poems alluded to throughout the proem, are squeezed into these few lines. As remarked by Claudia Schindler 'die epische Breite wandelt sich zu einer geradezu epigrammatischen Kürze, in der die wesentlichen Aspekte argumentativ zugespitzt werden' (Schindler 2005, 114). The same concise accumulation of details can be found twice in Medea's words in *Ov. Met.* 7.29–31 and 35–6, where the same episodes of the myth – the fire-breathing bulls, the earth-born warriors and the sleepless dragon – are increasingly condensed: cf. Gualandri (2008b), 769; to this list Claudian adds the episodes of the Harpies.

22. Harpyiasque truces: for the Harpies, see *comm. ad v.* 28. The adjective *trux* ('ferocious') is used later in the poem to qualify the *Scotti* in v. 417 and Claudian employs it elsewhere to describe the enemies of Rome: cf. *Ruf.* 2.110 (*Galli*) and *IV*

Hon. 450 (*Bastarnae*). Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 3.212, which has *Harpyiaequae* at the beginning of the verse.

22–23. insopitisque refusum / tractibus ... anguem: the snake – or dragon – that guards the Golden Fleece is described as both immortal and sleepless in Apoll. Rhod. 2.1208–9 (ὄφις ... / ἀθάνατος καὶ ἄυπνος). Claudian uses the adjective *insopitus* in hypallage: although it agrees with *tractibus*, it is obviously the snake itself and not its coils to be sleepless. For the hypallage, cf. Lucan. 4.552–3 (*insomni dente creati / terrigenae*), where the synonym *insomnus* is referred to the dragon's teeth: see Gualandri 2008, 770, n. 52; for *insopitus*, cf. Ov. *Met.* 7.36 (*insopitumque draconem*): see Gualandri 2008, 769, n. 49. Claudian chooses the word *tractus* to signify the snake's coils also in *Ruf.* 1 *pr.* 7 (*spatiosis tractibus*); cf. Stat. *Theb.* 5.505 (*terrigena exoritur serpens tractuque soluto*). In Latin, the dragon is sometimes labelled with the term *draco* (e.g. in Ov. *Met.* 7.36) or *anguis* (e.g. Ov. *Her.* 12.60, where it is also described as *pervigil*).

23. aurati ... velleris: the Golden Fleece; cf. Cat. 64.5 (*auratam ... pellem*), Ov. *Her.* 6.2 (*auratae vellere ... ovis*), Manil. 1.263 (*aurato princeps Aries in vellere fulgens*) and 2.212 (*aurato vellere*, also for the constellation), Pan. Lat. III(11).8.1 *aurati velleris furtum*.

24. et iuga taurorum rapidis ambusta favillis: Claudian merges the two images of the bulls that breathe fire and of the yoke with which Jason tames them, see Apoll. Rhod. 3.1284–334. He uses the participle *ambusta* with the active meaning of 'burning hot' and not with the passive one of 'burned', cf. Sidon. *Ep.* 2.9.8 (*lapidum cumulus ambustus*): see Gualandri 2008, 769, n. 48.

25–6. In the narration of Apollonius Rhodius, Jason sows the dragon's teeth with the help of the tamed oxen (Apoll. Rhod. 3.1340–39). Earth-born warriors spring up from the ploughed furrows and Jason defeats them by heeding the advice of Medea, who had warned him that the warriors would fight one another if he threw stones at them (Apoll. Rhod. 3.1354–398; cf. Apollod. 1.130–31). This episode of the myth of the Argonauts resembles that of Cadmus, who plants the teeth of another snake to give life to the future inhabitants of Thebes (cf. the narration of this story in Ov. *Met.* 3.50–130). Claudian refers to the story of Cadmus with a vocabulary which is very close to

that employed in these two verses: see *Stil.* 1.322-24 (*cum semine iacto / terrigenae galea matrem nascente ferirent / armifer et viridi floreret milite sulcus*).

25. virides galeis sulcos: literally, ‘the furrows green with helmets’. The colour green is associated with the growing of plants and thus takes on the metaphorical meaning of ‘blooming’; Claudian’s choice of the verb *canuit* to portray the Goths in v. 35 is in obvious contrast with *virides*.

25–6. fetasque novales / Martis: the image of the ‘ploughed fields pregnant with Mars’ vividly conveys the idea of the warriors who grow out of the furrows. Claudian often uses the name of Mars as a synonym of ‘war’: see *e.g.* *Ruf.* 2.56, 501, *IV Hon.* 18, *Gild.* 273, *Get.* 280, 507, *VI Hon.* 91; the use predates Claudian: cf. *Ov. Her.* 6.35 (*civili Marte*), *Met.* 3.122-3 (*suoque / Marte*). Here, he probably alludes to *Theb.* 8.231–31 (*Cadmum fetosque cruenti / Martis agros*), where Statius uses the same device to depict the earth-born warriors who appear in the myth of Cadmus; cf. also *Theb.* 3.645 (*diri ... novalia Cadmi*) and *Val. Fl.* 7.77 (*miles et armata florescent pube novales*). The mention of Mars also connects this line with *Mavortia aetas* in v. 35, reinforcing the correlation between the soldiers of the myth and the Goths, which will be made explicit in the following lines. Even though the notion of the pregnancy of the earth is not at all new in the poetic tradition, it is insistently underlined in many retelling of the story of the Argonauts, cf. *Ov. Met.* 7.128–9 (*sic, ubi visceribus gravidae telluris imago / effecta est hominis, feto consurgit in arvo*).

26. in segetem crescentis ... belli: the term *seges* indicates a field bearing crops and it is particularly appropriate to describe the warriors sprouting from the ground. Virgil exploits its meaning to portray a field where the picture of the stalks effectively blends with that of the soldiers’ helmets and spears: see *Georg.* 2.142 (*nec galeis densisque virum seges horruit hastis*); cf. *Aen.* 12.663–4 (*strictisque seges mucronibus horret / ferrea*). Ovid uses the same word to identify the earth-born warriors in *Her.* 6.11 (*seminibus iactis segetes adolesse virorum*), 12.59 (*segetesque nefandae*) and *Met.* 3.110 (*crescitque seges clipeata virorum*). For a Greek parallel of *seges*, see *Eur. Phoen.* 939 (στάχυν). Claudian had already employed the word *seges* to depict the swords surrounding Rufinus before his death in *Ruf.* 2.391 (*seges undique ferri*) and the soldiers lined up to greet Honorius in *III Hon.* 135 (*nudique seges Mavortia ferri*).

The participle *crescentis* is placed in hypallage: it agrees grammatically with *belli*, but it refers to the growing crops of soldiers.

semina belli: cf. Lucan. 1.158–9 (*Hae ducibus causae; suberant sed publica semina / belli*) and 3.150 (*Ocius avertat diri mala semina belli*), Stat. *Theb.* 1.243 (*belli mihi semina sunt*), Sil. 1.654 (*semina fumarent belli*).

27. nil veris aequale dabunt: this climactic assertion crowns the condemnation of the poets' fabrications and constitutes the main clause of the section which had begun in v. 14.

27–35. In the conclusive verses of the proem, Claudian draws a series of indirect comparisons between two sets of monsters encountered by the Argonauts – the Harpies and the warriors born from the teeth of the dragon who guarded the Golden Fleece – and the invading Goths. This *synkrisis* lays the foundations for the exaltation of Stilicho: by giving emphasis to the brutality of the Goths through their identification with the monsters of the myth and by pounding on markers such as *tot* (v. 29), *tantis* (v. 34) and *tota* (v. 35), which all signify a large quantity or length and thus magnify the level of danger engendered by the invading Goths, Claudian demonstrates that Stilicho's achievements are much greater than those of the Argonauts. The central theme of the poem – Stilicho's success in defeating the Goths – is introduced through a series of rhetorical questions, which are meant to engender an appreciation of Stilicho's achievement in the audience (Schindler 2005, 114).

27–8. rapaces / scilicet Harpyias: the Harpies are mythological creatures portrayed as big birds with women's faces. Hesiod calls them 'fair-haired' (*Theog.* 267, ἠυκόμους), but Virgil famously depicts them as abominable monsters with foul stomachs and clawed hands (*Aen.* 3.214–18), intensifying the description of Apollonius Rhodius, for whom they embody the destructive force of a storm (*Apoll. Rhod.* 2.267–9; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 3.225–6 and Val. Fl. 4.451–2). They figure prominently in the myth of the Argonauts: Jason and his companions chance upon Phineus – who is tormented by the Harpies to the point that he cannot lay hands on food without it being covered in excrements – and succeed in freeing him from their presence (the entire episode is narrated in *Apoll. Rhod.* 2.234–300). Aeneas, on the other hand, encounters them on the Strophades islands, where they had settled after being chased away from Phineus' table (Verg. *Aen.* 3.209–77); Virgil insists on their bestiality and

relate them to the Furies: see 3.252, where Celaeno labels herself *Furiarum ego maxima*. Valerius Flaccus escalates this representation by lingering on the disgusting details of their attack on Phineus (4.493–9). Already in antiquity, the name of the Harpies was linked etymologically with the Greek verb ἀρπάζω (‘to snatch away’) and Apollonius plays with this notion in 2.223 (Ἄρπυιαι στόματός μοι ἀφαρπάξουσιν ἔδωδῆν). Claudian imitates him by choosing the adjective *rapax*, which translates the Greek ἀρπάζω, even though Horace had already done the same in *Sat.* 2.2.40 (*Harpyiis ... rapacibus*): for further bibliography on this pun, see Gualandri 2008, 772, n. 61. Rutilius Namatianus capitalises on the known greed of Harpies and uses them as a metaphor for corrupt officials (vv. 1.608–9). Cf. the description of Rufinus as *rapax fera* in *Ruf.* 1.261. In the Latin poetic tradition, the adjective is employed to describe other monsters – especially Scylla, see *Cat.* 64.156, *Ov. Her.* 12.123, *Met.* 7.65 – and wild animals – in particular wolves, see *Hor. Epod.* 16.20, *Ov. Trist.* 4.1.79–80, *Sen. Oed.* 149, *Claud. Eutr.* 1.134–5.

28. unaque excludere mensa: the implied object of the verb *excludo* are the Harpies. By placing the numeral *una* in the middle of verse, immediately after the caesura, Claudian gives particular prominence to it. The one table of Phineus is set in stark opposition with the whole of Latium in v. 30.

29. nobilior titulus: *titulus* has here the meaning of ‘claim to fame’ (see *OLD s.v. titulus* 7) and the reason for the distinction awarded is explained by the three infinitives *prohibere* (v. 27), *excludere* (v. 28) and *avertere* (v. 29).

tot: the adjective *tot* describes an indefinitely large number of entities; its vagueness amplifies the perceived size of the Gothic army and is set in stark contrast with the fact that, according to the poets, the Harpies were a very small group: Homer mentions one Podarge – mother of Achilles’ steeds (*Il.* 16.150) – Hesiod lists Aello and Ocypete (*Hes.* 267–9); to these, Virgil adds Celaeno (*Aen.* 3.211). The implication is that Stilicho’s accomplishment is much greater than that of the Argonauts.

29–30. paratas / in Latii praedam: the past participle *paratas* agrees with the noun *fauces* at the end of the following verse and *praeda* is used in the sense of ‘act of preying’ (*TLL s.v. praeda*, 10.2.527.65–528.219), so that the jaws of the Goths are ‘ready to make prey of Latium’. The term *praeda* and its cognates are linked to the Harpies in Verg. *Aen.* 3.233 (*turba sonans praeda pedibus circumvolant uncis*) and

3.244 (*semesam praedam ... relinquunt*) and in Val. Fl. 4.429 (*dapes praedantur*) and 4.498 (*praedaque retenta*); a desire for prey is attributed also to Alaric by a member of his entourage in *Get.* 502 (*ne nova praedari cupiens*) and Alaric himself ironically becomes prey when his attack is foiled by Stilicho (*Get.* 87, *praeda fuit*), thus turning upside down the scene presented in the poem.

30. Geticas ... fauces: by focusing on their jaws, which implicitly recall the episode of the ravenous Harpies, this synecdoche crowns the beastly connotation of the Goths. Cf. Val. Fl. 4.503 (*lapsaeque rapinae / faucibus*; note also the presence of *rapinae*). Cf. the connotation of Rufinus as a monster and a beast in Claudian's two invectives against him (see Ware 2012, 124–6) and the representation of avarice with gaping jaws in *Stil.* 2.111–13 (*patulis ... faucibus*).

avertere: this verb echoes *prohibere* and *excludere* of the previous lines. Exactly like the Harpies, Alaric's Goths had not been killed, but only driven away.

31. terrigenas: Lucretius uses this term to describe the first men, 'born from the earth', in 5.1411 and 5.1427. It is also applied to various mythical monsters generated by Gaia, such as Typhoeus (*Ov. Met.* 5.325) and the giants (e.g. *Lucan.* 3.316). The warriors born from the sowing of the dragon's teeth in the myth of the Argonauts shoot up from the ground and are therefore called γηγενέες by Apollonius Rhodius (e.g. in 3.1355, 3.1380, 3.1391; 4.365) and *terrigenae* in the Latin tradition (e.g. *Ov. Her.* 6.35, 12.99, *Met.* 7.141; *Sen. Med.* 470; Val. Fl. 7.505, 7.629). Cf. *Stil.* 1.323, where it is referred to the earth-born warriors from the myth of Cadmus.

31–3. The brief life of the earth-born warriors is stressed in every narration of the myth and is often measured in merely one day, see *Ov. Her.* 6.35–6 (*terrigenae ... inplesse aetatis fata diurna suae*), *Met.* 3.124 (*iamque brevis vitae spatium sortita iuventus*), *Sen. Oed.* 738–42 (especially v. 740, *uno aetatem permensa die*).

33–5. caesa Getarum / agmina: Claudian extols Stilicho's achievements by claiming that he has annihilated the Gothic army (cf. *comm. ad v.* 68); as he himself admits in his subsequent poem, however, Alaric's forces had not been completely destroyed at Pollentia and Stilicho engaged them shortly afterwards outside Verona. In fact, in the *Panegyric for the Sixth Consulship of Honorius*, Claudian talks about a weakened Alaric (v. 127, *tenuatus*) and about diminished troop numbers (v. 129, *tot amissis sociis*) in the aftermath of the battle of Pollentia: see Dewar 1996, 197–8.

34. quos ... aluit Bellona: the goddess Bellona embodies the destructive force and brutal aspects of war. This might be the reason for Claudian's portrayal of her as the nourisher of the Goths, who have been just described in their animal-like fury at v. 30 and whose martial nature is brought to the fore in the next verse. She appears several times in Claudian's poems, sometimes as a character in allegorical tableaux, sometimes as the agent of key transitions. She often accompanies Mars, whom she unburdens of the panoply of war in *P&O* 121–2 and whom she is called to assist by bringing him his helmet in *Ruf.* 1.342; she embodies the martial qualities of Rome put at the service of the consulship in *IV Hon.* 11–13 and marches before the triumphal chariot of Mars/Stilicho in *Stil.* 2.371–3. Her most important appearance is the second book of the invective against Eutropius, where she is addressed at length by Mars (*Eutr.* 2.109–59) and prompts Tribigild to the war which will bring about Eutropius' downfall by disguising herself as Tribigild's wife (*Eutr.* 2.174–32). She is mentioned again in *Bellum Geticum* in a short allegory in which she stands for martial prowess which laughs at the vain attempt of peasants to turn into soldiers before Stilicho's return to the beleaguered Milan with fresh troops (*Get.* 463–8).

tantis ... tropaeis: not only do the many trophies with which the goddess of war has nourished the Goths imply their proclivity for war, but they also constitute a tangible confirmation of the constant military success that they have enjoyed until their encounter with Stilicho at Pollentia. In the poem, Claudian lingers on the devastation which Alaric's troops have brought to Greece (*Get.* 166–93), but he also stresses that the Alps and the river Po have obtained vengeance over so many other mountains and rivers that had been overcome (*Get.* 194–6).

35. Mavortia ... aetas: an expression coined by Claudian to convey the idea of a lifetime spent waging war and to echo the previous mention of Mars in relation to the earth-born warriors in v. 26.

canuit: the subject is *Mavortia aetas* and the object are the Goths themselves. The verb *canéo*, 'to be covered in white', has a dual meaning. On the one hand, by conjuring up the image of white hair, it reiterates the idea already conveyed by the expression *tota aetas*, namely the fact that the Goths spend their entire life in martial pursuits; on the other hand, since it can be used to describe the 'whitening' of the fields when the grain grows (see *TLL* 3.249.18–25; cf. Verg. *Georg.* 3.325, Ov. *Met.* 1.110,

it reinforces the comparison between the Goths and the earth-born warriors: see Balzert 1974, 13, n. 41; Schindler 2005, 113; Gualandri 2008, 770–71, n. 57.

sub galeis: cf. Verg. *Aen.* 9.612 (*canitiem galea premimus*), an expression employed by Numanus Remulus – Turnus’ brother-in-law and Ascanius’ first kill – when he arrogantly brags about the military prowess of his people, while scoffing at the effeminacy of the Trojans. Through this pointed allusion, what could have otherwise been an admirable quality of the Goths becomes a way to cast them once again in a negative light. For another echo of this expression, cf. Ov. *Trist.* 4.1.74 (*canitiem galeae subicioque meam*). In this verse, the word *galea* is used as a synonym of ‘military service’: see *TLL s.v. galea*, 6.2.1675.21–3 and cf. Juv. 11.6 (*dum membra sufficiunt galeae*).

36–49. *Stilicho’s actions re-establish security after a long period of fear.*

After introducing the theme of the Gothic war through hyperbolic vocabulary and through the meticulous comparison with the myth of the Argonauts, Claudian turns to a description of the state of anxiety engendered throughout Italy by the menacing troops of Alaric. The role of Stilicho as the saviour of the empire is highlighted at the beginning of this section and followed by the description of the restoration of normal, peaceful routine after a period of institutional chaos and widespread panic. Surprisingly, Claudian does not shy away from admitting to the dread the Goths generated in the Roman population; on the contrary, he gives it emphasis. Moreover, his use of the first-person plural for part of the section (vv. 44–9) suggests a shared experience between the poet and his public, thus eliciting a deeper engagement with the poem: indeed, Claudian himself might have been trapped in Milan when the city was besieged by Alaric during the military operations which ultimately led to the battle of Pollentia (see *supra* pp. 71–4) and might therefore be describing his own feelings both in this passage and in vv. 450–68.

The insistence on the shock provoked by the invasion ultimately serves a laudatory purpose: by making the destruction of the empire appear more tangible, Claudian can extol Stilicho’s merit in averting something that seems inevitable. Thus, the main idea of this section stems directly from the theme of the proem – Stilicho’s

quasi-mythical greatness – and comes as a logical continuation to it. However, it is also clear from secondary evidence that Claudian here is not only exploiting a rhetorical motif, but that his description is grounded in reality. Firstly, from Symmachus’ correspondence (*Ep.* 4.9; 5.94, 95, 96; 7.13; 14), we learn that he travelled to Milan in 402, facing the hardship of a long winter journey in order to submit a petition to the emperor on behalf of the Senate. The content of his embassy – the guarantee of sufficient provisions for Rome – is proof that the Senators and officers of the city were worried for its safety during the imminent conflict (see *supra* p. 73), thus confirming Claudian’s account. Secondly, the Aurelian wall, which had been built at the end of the third century AD and constituted Rome’s main military defence, underwent substantial improvements precisely around the time of Alaric’s invasion, with works probably starting between the latter’s arrival in Italy and defeat at Pollentia: not only were extensive refurbishments carried out, but the height of the wall was almost doubled (see Dey 2011, 32–48, for a detailed description of the architectural interventions, and 137–40, for the historical context and impact of the wall itself on the conception of late antique cities and of Rome in particular).

36. per te ... unum: the implied referent is Stilicho; as he was already the explicit addressee of the poem (his name had been mentioned in v. 14), the elliptical allusion strengthens the connection between this section and the beginning of the poem. Claudian highlights Stilicho’s role as the saviour of the empire by addressing him at the beginning of the verse (and of the new section), as well as through the adjective *unus*. Stilicho had already been cast as the ‘lonely hero’ in *III Hon.* 152–3, where he had been appointed as the only (*solus*) protector of Arcadius and Honorius, and his ‘oneness’ is constantly contrasted to the dissimilar multitude of his opponents throughout Claudian’s poems (see Ware 2012, 81–8). In *Bellum Geticum*, this idea had already been introduced by the comparison with Tiphys, who had been characterised as *solus* (v. 4); cf. also the reappearance of this motif later in the poem in v. 267. The use of the personal pronoun *te* reinforces the idea that Stilicho was present at the delivery of the poem.

mediis exuta tenebris: *stricto sensu*, the verb *exuo* is used for anything that can be worn – be that clothing, armour, or other accessories – with the meaning of ‘taking

off'. Although Claudian uses it elsewhere in the poem in the sense of 'driving away, expelling' (v. 158), the right nuance for the passive voice of the verb in this line would be rather that of 'stripping, laying bare': the darkness that had previously shrouded the empire like a veil has finally been stripped off.

37. sua forma: here intended more as internal character, nature, or condition (see *TLL* s.v. *forma*, 6.1.1076.31–76), rather than external appearance. The same concept is expressed by Tacitus with regard to the restoration of order in 70 AD, after the end of the civil war of 69 AD (*Hist.* 4.39, *rediit urbi sua forma legesque et munia magistratuum*): Claudian, like Tacitus, presents the respect for the laws and for the duties of the magistrates as the paramount principle of an orderly state. Another parallel which illustrates the same metaphorical meaning of *forma* is Prud. *C. Symm.* 570 (*si formam patriae facit excellentior ordo*), where the poet considers the best citizens as the element which establishes the inherent character of Rome. However, the term *forma* in close proximity to the participle *exuta* of the previous line, also conjures up the physical notion which is at the origin of the metaphor (cf. the very corporeal image evoked in Sil. *Pun.* 8.440–41, *quem carmine Circe / exutum formae volitare per aethera iussit*).

37–8. claustrisque solutae / tristibus: the 'gloomy bounds' from which the laws are freed recall the bulwarks through which the Argo burst at the beginning of the poem (v. 1, *claustra*).

38. exangues audent procedere leges: in this effective metaphor, the laws are personified through three different traits. First of all, they are charged with volition (*audent*, 'they dare'); secondly, they move (*procedere*, 'to advance'); thirdly, they have a physical appearance (*exanguis*, 'bloodless'). The fact that they had to find the courage to act, implied in the idea of 'daring', not only makes them a little more human, but it also puts them in the same condition of the frightened citizens. The adjective *exanguis* literally means 'drained of blood': it can indicate both the fact that something is dead, but also the pallor caused by fear. This double meaning agrees very well with the personified depiction of the laws – who are pale because they are scared – and with the idea that before Stilicho's intervention, legality had ceased as if dead. Although Claudian is the only author who applies this adjective to the laws, the same

metaphorical use is attested elsewhere, cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.2 (*rem publicam ...exsanguem iam et iacentem*).

39. potestates: the plural form of *potestas* came to identify public offices and, by extension, the office-holders themselves: see e.g. Amm. 30.4.21 for the first meaning, and 14.1.10, 18.11.3, 21.16.2 and 25.4.15 for the latter. The original meaning of the term is ‘power, dominion’ and can be exercised both in the private domain – for example by a man over his household (both members of the family and slaves) – and in the public sphere, by magistrates over the citizens.

39–40. priscus ... ordo / iustitiae: the adjective *priscus* describes something which belongs to a past which is so remote that it is normally identified with an archetypal and often inherently positive state of things; as a consequence, it is frequently used in comparisons between a corrupt and enervated present, and a virtuous and great past. Tacitus, for example, in the preface to his *Annals*, famously contrasts the new order created by Augustus and his successors with the pristine world of the Republic, when mores were incorrupt (*Ann.* 1.4.1, *igitur verso civitatis statu nihil usquam prisca et integri moris*); cf. the similar attitude of Livy – who refers to an ideal and distant past in *praef.* 5 (*ego contra hoc quoque laboris praemium petam, ut me a conspectu malorum quae nostra tot per annos vidit aetas, tantisper certe dum prisca illa tota mente repeto, avertam*) – and Velleius Paterculus, who praises the restoration of the old order under Augustus (*Vell. Pat.* 2.89.3–4, esp. *prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata*).

When used to describe the character or ancestry of an individual, *priscus* typically increases their prestige: for example, the fact that the reputation of the family of Messalla has been inherited by his ancestors adds to its importance ([Tib.] 3.7.31 *sed generis priscos contendis vincere honores*); see also e.g. the speech of Lentulus to the Senate in Lucan. 5.17–18 (*si sanguine prisco / robur inest animis*), where real strength is seen as transmitted by the past generations (cf. the echo of this passage in Stat. *Theb.* 3.600–602, *huic ampla quidem de sanguine prisco / nobilitas, sed enim ipse manu praegressus avorum / facta*; here, however, Capaneus’ inherited nobility is undermined by the adversative *sed*). This notion was maintained during the fourth century, when possessing virtues or a lineage that could be recognised as reaching back to an ideal past became a respected mark of distinction: see for example Amm. 22.7.6

in the description of the conduct of the senator Praetextatus (*Praetextatus, praeclarae indolis gravitatisque priscae senator*) or Prud. *C. Symm.* 1.566 about the senatorial families (*sescentas numerare domos de sanguine prisco*).

Ordo indicates an arrangement in which everything is set in its right place; here, it signals the return to a regular state of things after the turmoil caused by the Gothic menace. In his poem on the consulate of Stilicho, Claudian uses the expression *ordine prisco* in connection with Stilicho's handing over the decision to wage war on the rebel Gildo to the Senate (*Stil.* 1.327). By waiting for the Senate's initiative in declaring Gildo *hostis publicus*, Stilicho had acted according to the 'old custom' which designated the Senate as the only political body allowed decisions on war and peace. Although it is doubtful whether the Senate had a real choice on the matter, Claudian exploits this event to present Stilicho as the guarantor of the traditional ideals of the Roman state (*Stil.* 1.325–7, *hoc quoque non parva fas est cum laude relinqui / quod non ante fretis exercitus adstitit ultor / ordine quam prisco censeret bella senatus*; Stilicho, moreover, is explicitly compared to Brutus, the founder of the Republic, and deemed superior in *Stil.* 2.322–6). Sidonius reworks the same expression into Rome's speech to Aurora in his panegyric to Anthemius (*Anth.* 2.441–3, *venio ... nec ut ordine prisco / Indicus Ausonia potetur casside Ganges*): in this poem, *ordine prisco* refers to the lawful possession that Rome had on the East before yielding those areas to the authority of Constantinople, personified in these lines by the goddess Aurora.

41–2. Cf. the similar *IV Hon.* 56–8, which refers to Theodosius' reparation after the disaster of Adrianople (*unus tot funera contra / restitit extinxitque faces agrisque colonos / reddidit et leti rapuit de faucibus urbes*). Notice that Theodosius is designated as *unus* in this poem, a role that Stilicho will inherit directly from him: see Ware 2012, 81–8.

41. tua ... dextera: the feminine form of the adjective *dexter* is often used to signify the right hand and, by extension, it can come to mean either hand. The fact that the right hand is the one that is most often the stronger of the two and that it is used to perform actions and to wield weapons lies behind the preference Claudian shows for this term whenever he wants to underline Stilicho's military achievements. For example, in the scene of the assassination of Rufinus, both the murdering hands of the soldiers and Rufinus' truncated hands are called *manus*, but Stilicho's metaphorical

avenging hand is conspicuously labelled *dextera* (*Ruf.* 2.402–3, *hac Stilicho ... dextera / te ferit*). *Dextera* also often acquires the translate meaning of ‘power’ (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.103–4, *liceat Phrygio servire marito / dotalisque tuae Tyrios permittere dextrae*), ‘strength’ (cf. *IV Hon.* 521–2, *promittitur ingens / dextra rudimentis*; *Gild.* 231–2, *da tangere dextram, / qua gentes cecidere ferae*) and ‘virtue’ (cf. Sil. 15.257, *Laelius ... cui dextera clara domusque*), thus constituting a suitable attribute for Stilicho (cf. e.g. *III Hon.* 153, *geminos dextra tu protege fratres*; *Ruf.* 1.316, *nam tua cum Geticas stravisset dextra catervas*) or for those who are close to him (*Ruf.* 2.262, where it stands for the armies which have contributed to Stilicho’s victories; *Stil.* 1.38, referred to Stilicho’s father; *Get.* 619, referred to the hands of the soldiers who have set free the prisoners of the Goths). Claudian also employs it, by contrast, to accentuate the mockery of Stilicho’s enemies: see e.g. *Ruf.* 2.436–9, where Rufinus’ right hand is used to perform the degrading task of begging for alms, *Eutr.* 1.370 and *Eutr.* 2 pr. 61 (*lenonia dextera*).

41–2. leto / eripuit: the noun *letum* for ‘death’ is attested in prose almost exclusively in the archaic expression *leto dare* (see Cic. *Leg.* 2.22; Varro *Ling.* 7.42), which survived in the juridical language of late antiquity (see *Cod. Theod.* 9.3.1); on the contrary, it appears often in poetry. The specific expression *leto eripere* recurs in Verg. *Aen.* 2.134, 5.690 and Sil. 10.57 (a very close idea is expressed in Cat. 64.149–50, *certe ego te in medio versantem turbine leti / eripui*, and in Stat. *Theb.* 68–9): in all these occurrences, it underlines the agency of the person or divinity who performs the action. In this verse and elsewhere, *letum* confers a solemn character to the situation described: cf. the opposite concept – that of giving somebody to death – in *VI Hon.* 223 (*ipsum te caperet letoque, Alarice, dedisset*; see Dewar 1996 *comm. ad loc.*).

43. damnati fato populi virtute renati: a chiasmus. The two participles which define the central noun *populi* are placed at the extremes of the line to surround it both graphically and acoustically with the rhyme *damnati – renati*.

44. formidine: not only the feeling of fear itself, but also what produces such fear. In particular, it can indicate a hunting tool made of feathers, whose function is to frighten the prey and thus facilitate the hunt (see *TLL s.v. formido*, 6.1.1100.11–39). The juxtaposition of *formidine* and *clausi*, and the identification of the men petrified by dread with scared cattle could recall Lucan. 4.437 (*sic, dum pavidos formidine cervos*

/ claudat odoratae mutuentes aera pinnae); in this passage, Lucan uses the simile of the frightened deer to describe the tactic employed by Marcus Octavius – fleet commander under Pompey – to capture the Caesarian troops led by Gaius Antonius, during their attempt to reach the mainland and escape famine on the small island on which they had been trapped. In turn, Lucan’s simile is inspired by Verg. *Georg.* 3.371–2 (*hos non... / puniceaeve agitant pavidos formidine pinnae*; notice the same characterisation of the deer as ‘trembling, timid’), perhaps through Ov. *Fast.* 5.173–4 (*pavidos formidine cervos / terret*).

46–9. nec ... nec ... aut: instead of *nec ... nec ... nec*, see *TLL s.v. nec*, 2.0.1567.84–1568.11.

46. metior: the verb *metior* can be interpreted with the meaning of ‘appraising something with the eyes’ (*TLL s.v. metior*, 8.0.885.48–60). Cf. *Gild.* 67 (*pavido metimur caerula voto*), where the citizens of Rome, threatened by famine caused by Gildo’s insurrection, scan the sea anxiously, still hoping to see a corn-bearing ship from Africa approaching their coast. In this example, the verb indicates the appraising of a distance (a ship coming from far away; the same meaning, for example, of Ov. *Her.* 10.28, where Ariadne looks out over the sea and sees Theseus’ ship sailing away); in *Bellum Geticum*, it refers to the measuring of the depth of the rivers: indeed, the deeper they are, the better, as they can afford greater protection.

46–7. flumina ... / ... amnes: the difference between *flumen* and *amnis* is that the latter is a bigger stream than the second (see *TLL s.v. flumen*, 6.1.967.71–7); however, they seem to be used as synonyms in this passage (as it happens often, see *TLL s.v. flumen*, 6.1.967.58–71). Rivers hold an important role in Greek and Roman culture, and they are perceived and described as divinities both in religion and in literature. As rivers are often portrayed in epic as participating in the defence of their lands (cf. the role of the Scamander in the *Iliad*) or as witnesses to military actions (also in prose, see Plin. *Pan.* 14.1 and 82.4), Claudian himself draws upon a vast literary tradition to depict the personifications of Tiber (in *P&O* and in *VI Hon.*) and Eridanus (in *VI Hon.*). As well as constituting a profitable resource and an effective means of communication capable of bringing communities together, rivers can also become powerful physical and psychological barriers. Far from being impermeable to people’s movements as it was, the *limes* of the Roman empire relied nonetheless in great part on the natural

frontiers offered by the Rhine, the Danube and the Euphrates (for an interesting insight of the psychological function of rivers as frontiers, see Braund 1996).

In accordance with this role, Claudian portrays the rivers mentioned in this section as a means of defence from the invaders. In order to constitute a meaningful obstacle to the advance of the Goths, the Italian rivers would have had to be swollen up with the winter rains or the melting of the snow in spring and this setting in fact roughly corresponds to the timeframe of the Gothic invasion. Although rivers could indeed prove an impediment during military actions, Claudian's description here is mainly functional to the psychological characterisation of the Roman citizens who are the subject of the passage. A series of elements in these lines, in fact, contributes once again to heightening the feeling of uncertainty and insecurity, which is projected on the surrounding environment: the prayers are uncertain (*incertis*), the rivers can only offer delay (*mora*) and not safety, their assurance and that of the transient (*fugaces*) clouds is wavy (*undosa*). In the subsequent *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto Sextum Consuli*, which celebrates what was thought to be the decisive victory over the Goths, Claudian offers a much more clear-cut picture: Alaric – now that he has been defeated – positively panics at anything that could slow him down in his haste to leave Italy behind (*VI Hon.* 144–5, *clausa putat sibi cuncta pavor, retroque relictos / quos modo temnebat, rediens exhorruit amnes*). In *VI Hon.* 144, the mental attitude displayed by the Gothic leader (*clausa putat sibi cuncta pavor*) is allusively set in opposition with the hubris he had shown in *Get.* 471 (*iam cuncta sibi promisit aperta*). The meteorological conditions which could have made the swelling of rivers a plausible obstacle to the advance of the Goths in winter and spring, however, seems out of place in the context of the events described in Claudian's last panegyric (the battle of Verona, the final act immortalised in the poem, took place in summer), thus making Alaric's sudden fear even more ludicrous.

48. servare fidem: the same expression is applied to nature also in *Rapt.* 1.167, where Mount Etna is represented as observing a truce with the snow, since it is at the same time a hot volcano and a snowy peak.

undosam ... fidem: cf. the house of Tiber in *VI Hon.* 146 (*undosa ... domo*). Since the waves possess a regular, but undulatory movement, the adjective could imply a negative meaning: a confidence that is intrinsically untrustworthy, unsteady, that has

ups and downs, ‘wavering’. The adjective links the noun more closely to the rivers, but *fides* is also referred to the clouds at the of the line.

fugaces: as with *undosa* referred to *fides*, by indicating that the clouds are ‘transient, of short duration’, the adjective already professes their unreliability.

49. coniuuratum serenum: *coniuratus* is normally a person linked to somebody else by oath (*TLL s.v. coniuratus*, 4.0.341.8–21); the adjective is applied here to the weather, as a clear sky and good climatic conditions would be an ally of the enemy. The same term is applied by Claudian to the winds who allegedly favoured Theodosius in his battle against Eugenius thanks to the influence of the young Honorius (*III Hon.* 98, *et coniurati veniunt ad classica venti*). Interestingly, the latter passage is openly quoted by Augustine to demonstrate how well-known Theodosius’ piety was, even among pagans (*Civ.* 5.26; whether true or not, Augustine affirms in this passage that Claudian is *a Christi nomine alienus*). The idea of the sky being *coniuratus* is close to *Georg.* 2.497 (*aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro*), alluded to later in the poem in v. 81 (see *comm. ad loc.*). Cf. also *Ruf.* 1.319, where Rufinus is depicted as an ally of the Goths (*coniuratusque Getarum*).

50–60. *First address to Rome.*

The poet addresses Rome directly for the first time in the poem. He urges her to raise her head and to have confidence in the favour she has with the gods. A series of impossible reversals of the laws of nature are then listed, such as the river Tanais irrigating Egypt, or Eurus blowing from the West: according to Claudian, the fall of Rome is as unconceivable as these absurd events. Simultaneously, by mentioning rivers and cardinal points, the poet charts the boundaries of the empire, underlining its impressive extension.

This initial section contains the first allusion to one of the most important interpretative keys overarching the whole poem: the presentation of Alaric as *alter Hannibal*, a second Hannibal (as he had already done in the case of Gildo, see Ware 2004c, 98–100). In these lines, such correspondence is only subtly hinted at, but it will be fully exploited later in this epic and picked up again throughout the *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto Sextum Consuli* (see in particular Dewar 1996, *comm. ad vv.*

182–4 and 184–6). The choice of Hannibal is not accidental. The main circumstantial similarity between the two, and the event which must have surely contributed to suggest their identification in the first place, is the fact that both leaders thwarted Italy's natural defences and succeeded in storming into its territory through the otherwise almost unviolated Alpine arc. The momentous impact of other well-remembered invasions of Italy, such as those of the Gauls under Brennus and of the Cimbri at the end of the second century BC, is equally exploited by Claudian in the poem; nevertheless, the significance of these events scores only second place when compared to the 'trauma' caused by Hannibal: he had been one of – if not the – most feared of Rome's enemies. His seemingly unstoppable advance through Italian soil, worsened by the Roman military disasters of Trebbia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae, and his ominous approach to Rome had effected such an everlasting dread that his figure became a by-word for Rome's enemies. The memory of his undertakings found place in the large-scale epic by Silius Italicus, the *Punica*, to which Claudian is clearly indebted. By linking the current Gothic war to what was perhaps the single most dangerous phase – of at least the one preserved in memory as such – of Roman history, when Rome was almost on the point of being erased, Claudian is able to increase exponentially the magnitude of the threat posed by Alaric; this in turn greatly amplifies the significance of Stilicho's achievement: in the poet's retelling, Stilicho has not only defeated a dangerous enemy, he has essentially saved the empire from the brink of annihilation. At the same time, the connection with Hannibal enables Claudian to tie his own poem to the end of that of Silius, thus connecting the whole of Roman history in a coherent and continuous epic cycle (see Ware 2012, 53–8).

50. internis: some manuscripts read *interius*, a variant which can be easily explained from the palaeographical point of view with a transposition of the group *ni* as *in*. The reading *interius* is printed by Gesner and supported by Heinsius through the comparison with Sil. 8.21–2 (*his super internae labes et civica vulnus / invidia augebant*, which he reads with the variant *tabes* for *labes*, in turn backing this choice with the similarly metaphorical use of the word at Sall. *Hist. frg.* 4.36 and Tac. *Ann.* 11.6). In the end, Heinsius prints *interni*, thus connecting the adjective with the other

genitive in the verse, *plebis*; however, it seems slightly redundant to connote the *plebs* as ‘internal’ and it makes more sense to associate with *furiis*.

furiis: *furor* – a force closely associated with *furia* and with the Furies, who are its agents and whose name shares the same root – is the main impulse that initiates and shapes action in Roman epic, from Virgil onwards (Juno’s opposition to Aeneas in the Virgilian epic is the product of her *furor*, see *Aen.* 12.832, discussed in Feeney 1991, 148). *Furor* is the driving motor of Rome’s enemies also in Claudian’s poetry, from Rufinus – whom Claudian even paints as the physical product of the Furies’ creative effort – to Alaric – whose madness is explicitly pointed out in *VI Hon.* 185–6 (*tunc Giganteis urbem temptare deorum / adgressus furiis*; cf. Dewar 1996, *comm. ad vv.* 184–6): for an analysis of the role of *furor* in Claudian’s poems as a continuation of the Roman epic tradition, see Ware 2012, 117–24. Hannibal too is portrayed as guided by this passion in *Get.* 143 (*furentem*). The mention of *furor* in this line, however, does not seem to be invested with the same significance as in the other passages cited above. It might just be an incidental remark or it might hint at rioting in Rome at the time of the Gothic invasion, not an unexpected occurrence. The only other attribution of madness to the *plebs* in Claudian’s poems occurs in *Stil.* 2.79–81 (*nec, si quid iners atque impia turba / praetendens proprio nomen regale furore / audeat, adscribis iuveni*).

51. securas iam ... arces: here the term designates the hills of Rome and by extension the entire city, as elsewhere in Claudian: see *Fesc.* 2.19–20 (*aurea septigeminas / Roma coronet arces*) and *Stil.* 3.30 (*Romanae ... arces*); cf. the same concept expressed with different terms in *P&O* 175–6; *Stil.* 3.65, 135; *VI Hon.* 529–31, 616–17. The use of this metonymy to indicate Rome goes back to Verg. *Georg.* 2.534–5 (*pulcherrima Roma / septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces*) and is filtered by Statius, who employs it often (see e.g. *Silv.* 1.1.64, 1.2.144–5 and 191–2). For the charged use of topographical details in late antique poetic representations of Rome, see in particular Roberts 2001, especially 543–5 for the hills.

The adjective *securas*, ‘untroubled, no longer fearing’, echoes the final warning of Hannibal at the closing of the *Punica*: *Sil.* 17.610–11, *nec deinde relinquo / securam te, Roma, mei*. Even after suffering defeat at the hands of Scipio, Hannibal’s hatred does not quell and he forewarns that Rome will never be free from fear of his return.

Claudian picks up precisely on this element when he chooses to represent the invasion of Alaric as the re-embodiment of the Hannibalic threat. The use of the adverb *iam* is particularly telling; by stressing a temporal distance and a change from a past situation, it signals the allusion: only now, thanks to Stilicho's intervention, Rome is finally free from that anxiety which had been left open at the end of Silius' epic. This allusion constitutes once again a confirmation that Claudian's poems are firmly inscribed within the cycle of Roman epic and that they should always be read against the background of Rome's history as construed by epic.

levat: Gesner, Hall and Garuti all print *levat*, whereas Birt chooses the variant *leva* reported in Hall's manuscript K4. Heinsius argues that the latter reading is better on the basis of the direct address to Rome which follows it, but the presence of the intensive pronoun *ipsa* in v. 50 strongly suggests that the actual apostrophe to Rome only begins with the imperative *surge* in v. 52; the third person *levat* is therefore the best choice.

The metaphorical image of the hills raising higher after a lethal threat has been averted echoes the panegyric of Pacatus, dedicated to the emperor Theodosius and focussed on the defeat of the usurper Maximus: *Spectabas haec e tuis collibus, Roma, et septena arce sublimis celsior gaudio ferebaris* (*Pan. Lat.* II(12).46.1). In Pacatus' speech, the interpretation of *arce* is made clear by the explicit mention of the hills (*e tuis collibus*) and by the use of the adjective (*septena*), unambiguously referred to the seven hills which in literature are a commonplace feature of Rome.

52. veneranda parens: this epithet occurs in the same position in *P&O* 177, where it is applied to Anicia Faltonia Proba (*PLRE s.v. Anicia Faltonia Proba* 3, 1.732–3), the aged mother of the newly appointed consuls Probinus and Olybrius. For Rome's status as mother, cf. *Stil.* 3.136 (*armorum legumque parens*) and *Rut. Nam.* 1.49 (*genetrix hominum genetrixque deorum*).

52–3. secundis / ... deis: the world of Claudian's poems is strewn with the speeches and actions of gods and personifications; *Bellum Geticum*, on the other hand, does not include any (see Ware 2012, 48–53 for the role of the divine machinery in Claudian's epic). The mention of the gods in this line, therefore, constitutes an important reminder of the special place that Rome holds in the divine plan. This comment does not implicate actual faith in the traditional gods – as of course the majority of Claudian's

public, as well as his patrons, were Christian – but rather it firmly inscribes the poem once again within the tradition of Roman epic and in particular within the Virgilian conception of empire. The gods favour Claudian’s Rome as they favoured Virgil’s Agrippa in the depiction of Aeneas’ shield in *Aen.* 8.682–3 (*parte alia ventis et dis Agrippa secundis / arduus agmen agens*): they are the guarantee that Rome’s power and political institutions have been divinely ordained. Lucan denies this endorsement to Caesar (9.1098, *caruere deis mea vota secundis*), and the opposite factions in Statius’ *Thebaid* erroneously take advantage of or claim the gods’ approval for themselves (2.688–9 and 10.23–4): in the first passage from the *Thebaid* the expression occupies the same position in the verse as in *Bellum Geticum*; the second is sarcastic – Eteocles believes that the gods will favour his enterprise, but at the end of the day the Thebans are defeated – and is perhaps filtered through Ov. *Her.* 16.377, the letter in which Paris urges Helen to leave Sparta with him with the favour of the gods (*dis secundis*). The allusion to the ekphrasis of Aeneas’ shield anticipates the theme of the Gigantomachy, which occupies vv. 61–76 (see *comm. ad loc.*).

53. humilemque metum deponere senectae: Rome should put aside her fears, which befit old age and not the powerful ruler of the world. In virtue of her being, so to speak, the neighbour of death (*Ruf.* 1.31, *leto vicina Senectus*), old age is placed by Claudian among the infernal goddesses: she is the equal of afflictions such as strife, hunger, illness and their likes (*Ruf.* 1.30–38), and therefore a most unwelcome condition (cf. also *Stil.* 2.410, where it is again presented in a negative light as a potential obstacle to the spreading of Stilicho’s fame). Twice Claudian links old age with peace, casting it as the culprit for the fall of the cities and fortresses of Phrygia in front of Tribigild and his Goths (*Eutr.* 2.278), as well as for the weakness that has beset Rome before the refashioning of her defences (*VI Hon.* 534–6). The crucial representation of the effects of senility, however, is contained in *De bello Gildonico*. At the beginning of that poem, the miserable state of Rome is connected with old age (vv. 17–25); the goddess’ hair are grey (v. 25, *canitiem*) and she speaks of herself as a veteran (v. 115, *emeritae ... senectae*), an association that goes back to the appearance of her personification in Lucan. 1.186–9. The description is followed by her rejuvenation at the hands of Jupiter (vv. 208–12). The theme of Rome’s rejuvenation is central to Claudian’s conception of the cyclic nature of epic time: the goddess is restored to a

previous state of prosperity which can be attained – and will be attained – no matter how many times she is threatened by external or internal enemies; this is warranted by the favour showed to her by the gods, just expressed by the poet (*Get.* 52–3). The process of rejuvenation, therefore, can be repeated as many times as it is necessary. This allows not only Claudian (who employs this motif also *e.g.* in the already quoted *VI Hon.* 534–6, where a state of *senectus* is contrasted with the action of *iuvenescere*), but also subsequent authors to refashion the *topos* in their works, starting from the words Prudentius puts on the mouth of the goddess Rome when she addresses the emperors Arcadius and Honorius in *C. Symm.* 2.655–8 (*O clari salvete duces, generosa propago / principis invicti, sub quo senium omne renascens / deposui vidique meam flavescere rursus / canitiem*). See also the description of the goddess in *Rut.* 1.115–6 (*erige crinales lauros seniumque sacrati / verticis in virides, Roma, refinge comas*) and the exhortation that Sidonius Apollinaris closely models on Claudian (*Avit.* 595–8, *laetior at tanto modo principe, prisca deorum / Roma parens, attolle genas ac turpe veternum / deponere: en princeps faciet iuvenescere maior, / quam pueri fecere senem*). Claudian himself comes back to this theme later in *Bellum Geticum* in vv. 436–7, where he praises Stilicho for restoring the empire (*ut sese pariter diffudit in omnia regni / membra vigor vivusque redit color urbibus aegris!*). For the *topos* of Rome’s rejuvenation, see further Roberts 2001, 535–41; Ware 2012, esp. 99–100 and 151–2.

54. urbs aequaeva polo: ‘city as old as the sky’. In its strict sense, *polus* indicates each end of the axis around which the vault of heavens and the stars it contains rotate; more broadly, it can come to signify the celestial sphere, the seat of the stars, or more generally the heavens (cf. *e.g.* *IV Hon.* 535, *Rapt.* 3.428, *Gild.* 2). In *P&O* 127–8, Claudian had commented on the physical proximity of Rome’s sphere of influence to that of the stars (*longeque regendo / circumfusa polo consorsque adiuncta Tonantis*); cf. the similar status of Rome in *Rut.* 1.48 (*inter sidereos Roma recepta polos*) and 50 (*non procul a caelo per tua templa sumus*). In *Bellum Geticum*, in line with the former remarks about the goddess’ status of venerable mother, he underlines her antiquity, matching it to that of the sky itself. Whereas the term *senecta* in the previous line triggered all the negative connotations linked to old age – weakness, apathy, frailty – this comparison draws in the positive aspects which come with it – authority, dignity, distinction.

54–6. The apostrophe continues with the reassurance that Rome will never meet her downfall. This assertion takes the form of the *adynaton*, a figure of speech which demonstrates a situation as inconceivable through the comparison with other paradoxical circumstances, often drawn from the natural world and charged with a proverbial flavour. Exploiting this device, Claudian argues that Rome will cease to exist only when nature will start to follow implausible, new laws; the effect is magnified by the series of impossible natural reversals which follow in the subsequent lines. The upheaval of the natural laws which govern the world (*foedera mundi*) and the fall of Rome are associated also by Lucan (1.70–80): according to him all things decay and fall due to a jealous fate and to an inescapable law that forbids anything from enduring (vv. 71–1, *invida fatorum series summisque negatum / stare diu*). Claudian, however, has a different outlook. The syntactic nexus of a sentence introduced by *tum demum*, which already implies delayed action, and preceding a *cum*-clause, indicates the strict restriction of the first sentence to the terms of the clause, which, as we have seen, contains an impossible condition: the implication, therefore, is that Rome will not fall. The faith in the eternity of Rome – *Roma Aeterna* – in the face of increasing external threats is widespread in late antique literature: see Paschoud 1967, 151–4.

54–5. ferrea ... Lachesis: the goddess Lachesis and her two sisters, Clotho and Atropos, embody the forces of destiny which determine the life of mortals and constrain the actions of immortals. The specific role and attributes of each member of the sisterly triad – known together as *Moirai* in Greek and *Parcae* in Latin – are mostly interchangeable and the interpretation of their specific function varies according to the different authors (for example, Lachesis is represented in Pl. *R.* 617c as singing about the past, whereas in Arist. *Mu.* 401b her domain is the future). In literary texts, the goddesses are often mentioned together as a group, although at times one of them can be singled out for special mention. Judging from the frequency of her apparitions, Lachesis seems to be favoured by Latin authors over her sisters. She comes to play an important role in Claudian’s poems, as she substantiates Jupiter’s positive answer to Rome’s pleading against the tyrant Gildo by spinning her thread accordingly (*Gild.* 203, *et Lachesis iungebat stamina dictis*; in this action, she is accompanied by her sister Atropos, who writes down Jupiter’s words); even more importantly, she acts as

the guarantor of the coming of the golden age that Rome will experience under Stilicho (*Stil.* 2.335, *aurea quo Lachesis sub te [i.e. Stilichonem] mihi saecula texit*). Her relevance is mirrored in this line, since Lachesis would be the one entitled to determine Rome's downfall. In general, Lachesis is characterised by adjectives which underline her inflexibility and sometimes harshness towards mortals, traits that are easy to understand in relation to her shared functions as guarantor of the fulfilment of destiny: see e.g. *Ov. Trist.* 5.10.45, *Stat. Theb.* 2.249 and *Sen. Oed.* 986 (*dura*, in the last case the adjective is metonymically referred to her hand); *Stat. Silv.* 2.1.120 (*infausta*, again applied to her hand); *Mart.* 10.53.3 and *Auson. Par.* 29.5 (*invida*). The attribute *ferrea* chosen by Claudian fits with these predecessors but at the same time it expands its meaning: not only does it constitute a specific echo of *Ov. Met.* 15.781 (*ferrea ... veterum decreta sororum*), but it also alludes to the *ferrea gens* (*Verg. Ecl.* 4.8–9) and to the *ferrea saecula* (*Tib.* 2.3.35) which would give way to the golden ones.

sumet / ius in te: 'will claim authority over you'. The idea that one of the *Parcae* would assume authority over Rome is tantamount to decree the city's downfall. For the use of *ius* (with the meaning of 'authority') followed by *in* + accusative to indicate the physical entities subjected to such authority, cf. e.g. *Caes. Gall.* 6.13.2 (*in hos eadem omnia sunt iura, quae dominis in servos*), *Liv.* 23.7.1 (*ne quis imperator magistratusve Poenorum ius ullum in civem Campanum haberet*), *Lucan.* 1.406–7 (*non Corus in illum / ius habet aut Zephyrus*) and 9.838 (*et tibi dant Stygiae ius in sua fila sorores*), the latter referred to the *Parcae*.

55–6. cum ... novis: the *cum*-clause expresses the restrictions imposed on the actualisation of the previous prediction, a restriction the poet well knows it cannot happen (see *comm. ad vv.* 54–6).

55. axem: the immaterial line around which both earth and sky rotate, as explained in *Germ.* 19–23 and at length in *Manil.* 1.275–93. General fundamental features of the axis are its lack of motion and its fixity; its alteration according to new laws (v. 56, *foederibus novis*), therefore, portends the hypothetical major change in the natural order of things clarified in the following lines.

56–60. The series of *adynata* chosen by Claudian all constitute impossible reversals of the course of natural elements, namely the swapping of the positions of rivers and the inversion of the directions of the winds; they are part of a result clause introduced by

the adverb *sic* in v. 55. Claudian had chosen images similarly drawn from the natural world also in *P&O* 169–72, embellishing them with the citation of the mythological episode of the banquet offered to Thyestes by his brother Atreus. Sidonius clearly reworks these and similar passages when he comes up with his own, much more extended, list of *adynata* in *Maior.* 280–90; among other absurd phenomena, he describes, like Claudian, the swapping over of two rivers (the *Tanais*, in modern Russia, and the *Bagradas*, in north-eastern Africa, vv. 282–3).

57. inriget Aegyptum Tanais, Maeotida Nilus: the river *Tanais* corresponds to the modern Don, which flows through the area which was once home to the Scythian and Sarmatian tribes, in modern Russia. The river flows into the Sea of Azov, passing first through a marshy area known in antiquity as the Maeotian Swamp. By describing the *Tanais* irrigating Egypt and the Nile bringing water to the Maeotian Swamp, therefore, Claudian is clearly making an impossible statement.

The Maeotian Swamp and the Nile are associated as the extremes of the earth in *P&O* 36–8 (*audii et gelido si quem Maeotica pascit / sub Iove vel calido si quis coniunctus in axe / nascentem te, Nile, bibit*), where Probus' fame is said to have reached the most remote places of the empire; similarly, the *Tanais* and the Nile are mentioned as the extreme boundaries of the empire in *IV Hon.* 44 (*inter se Tanais quantum Nilusque relinquunt*).

58–60. These verses contain an inversion along the axis east-west for *Eurus* and *Zephyrus*, and north-south for *Auster* and *Aquilo*, thus covering all four cardinal points.

60. Gaetulas: The *Gaetuli* were a Berber tribe who inhabited the area between the *Syrtis Minor* (modern Gulf of Gabès) and the Atlantic Ocean.

61–76. *The sky under siege.*

The sixteen lines which follow the first address to Rome constitute a relatively long digression centred on the attack on heaven by hideous creatures which defy natural anatomy either for being a patchwork of too many limbs taken from disparate animals, or for their oversized bodies. In Greek mythology, this series of monsters, mostly of tellurian origin, became dangerous challengers that the Olympians had to face in battle. Tales of 'Titanomachy', 'Typhonomachy', or simply 'Gigantomachy' – as these brutal

conflicts are sometimes collectively labelled since their narrative elements are indifferently mixed up in Latin literature – occupy a conspicuous role within Claudian’s *corpus* and they are indeed almost ubiquitous in Latin epic, as well as figuring prominently in other poetical genres. As they picture the universal struggle between *cosmos* – the order sanctioned by the Olympian gods – and *chaos* – the alternative represented by the monsters – these stories easily lend themselves to allegorical interpretations (in fact, this allegorical use could be responsible for the intentional confusion between the different types of monsters, all squeezed in an ideologically cosmic ‘other’: see Lowe 2015, 192). Virgil, for example, embeds references to the different types of Gigantomachy throughout the *Aeneid* to provide the cosmic background for the divine ratification of Augustus’ rule (a thesis expounded in Hardie 1986) and, in his fourth *Roman Ode*, Horace explicitly draws a comparison between Augustus, winner of Actium, and Jupiter’s annihilation of the Titans and Giants (Hor. *Od.* 3.4.37–64; for other important appearances of the myth see also e.g. Hor. *Od.* 3.1.7; Ov. *Met.* 1.151–60, where the Giants appear with the dawning of the Iron Age, and *Trist.* 2.333). Moreover, literary figures presented as Roman enemies are traditionally depicted like Giants. One of such enemies is Turnus, whose last act before being killed by Aeneas is a superhuman attempt to hit his adversary with a massive boulder, which in later ages would have required the strength of twelve men in order to be moved (Verg. *Aen.* 896–902); Turnus, however, like the Giants, is destined to be defeated: his strength fails him mid-way through his effort (vv. 903–7) and he is cut short by the spear of Aeneas, significantly compared to a thunderbolt (vv. 919–23); see Hardie 1986, 147–54, and Lowe 2015, 210–11.

The importance of the theme of Gigantomachy for Claudian is demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the fact that he wrote two poems entirely devoted to this myth – one in Latin (*Carm. min.* 53) and one in Greek (*Carm. graec.* I–II) – both unfortunately handed down to us only in incomplete or fragmentary form. Accidentally, they are the only self-standing ‘Gigantomachies’ preserved from antiquity: see Hardie 1986, 101. Giants and other monsters pop up frequently in Claudian’s epic poems: they symbolise the constant, latent threat which cyclically manifests itself in the form of Rome’s enemies, ready to shake the order of things and plunge the world into chaos: see Coombe 2018, 93–4. Their ‘otherness’ and their ambition to subjugate heaven, in

particular, could be identified with the pressure put on the Roman empire by barbarian populations, a usage whose roots go back at least to the Hellenistic period: see Hardie 1986, 86; cf. also Gruzelier 1993, *comm. ad vv.* 43ff. The association between barbarians and Giants reaches its most complete formulation precisely in the last two poems composed by Claudian. In *Bellum Geticum*, the memory of the Gigantomachy serves to amplify the magnitude of the dangers that surround Rome: the myth is presented as a reassurance that even the highest powers – the gods – had to face dangerous hazards to their authority and that, no matter the strength of their enemies, they have always ultimately prevailed, as the poet shows at the end of the passage (vv. 72–6). On a second level, the Goths are metaphorically transformed from human opponents into supernatural creatures (cf. vv. 27–30 and especially 31–5, where the comparison between the Goths and the earth-born warriors of the Argonauts' tale recalls the myth of the Giants for their common tellurian origin); this, in turn, proportionally magnifies the heroic virtue demonstrated by Stilicho in fighting such dangers and averting the impending destruction of the empire.

In the *Panegyric for the Sixth Consulship of Honorius*, Claudian pushes this association even further. The preface to the poem is an extended building up to a final surprise. The poet affirms that each individual goes back with the mind to their accustomed day activity while dreaming (vv. 1–10) and he claims therefore to have perceived himself while reciting a Gigantomachy in front of Jupiter and the gods (vv. 11–20); but then – behold! – the dream comes true and he is indeed performing in the presence of a divine audience (vv. 21–6). Claudian exploits here the Gigantomachy's inherent link with elevated and large-scale epic – what could be more epically sublime than the ultimate fight between the monstrous sons of the earth and the Olympians? – to assert his poetic persona and at the same time heap praise on his audience: the implication of the fulfilment of the dream is that not only are the emperor and those around him the equals of the gods, but also that the poem that follows, centred on the defeat of the Goths, is in fact a Gigantomachy: just as he was celebrating the crushing of Typhoeus and Enceladus in the preface, Claudian is now singing about the annihilation of Alaric's troops, who are thus completely assimilated to the mythological monsters. For further allusions throughout the poem, cf. v. 45 and vv. 185–6: see Dewar 1996, *comm. ad loc.*; cf. also Hinds 2013, 180–82; Coombe 2018,

115–19; for an overview of the *topos* in Claudian's *corpus*, see Ware 2012, 128–34, and 135–41, in particular, for the identification of Alaric with the Giants and with Phaëton.

The specific stories conflated in this section of the poem are the fight between Jupiter and Typhoeus (the monstrous offspring of Earth and Tartarus, see Hes. *Theog.* 820–80; sometimes described as generated by Hera, see *H. Merc.* 305–54), and the attempt of Otos and Ephialtes – sons of Aloeus according to Hom. *Il.* 5.385–6 and to Claudian, sons of Poseidon according to other versions (Hom. *Od.* 11.305–8) – to storm heaven by stacking the mountains of Greece one on top of the other (Hom. *Od.* 11.313–20). The two myths are narrated at length in Apollodorus 1.6.3 (Typhoeus, whose story is reported immediately after that of the Giants in 1.6.1–2) and 1.7.4 (the Aloads); although Apollodorus differs from both Homer and Claudian in affirming that Otos and Ephialtes mistakenly killed themselves – rather than attributing their demise to Apollo – their accidental death is nonetheless brought about by the intervention of Artemis. These two myths share recurring elements with the battle against the Giants themselves: first, the majority of these monsters have a strong connection with the earth, whether because they are earth-born (for the Giants, see *Carm. min.* 52.1–3), because they use fragments of earth as weapons, or both (there is a constant opposition between earth and sky); second, their limbs, mostly arms or feet, consist of dragons or snakes (who, in turn, are animals with a strong chthonic connotation); third, they wreak havoc on the natural order of things by tearing up mountains and razing everything to the ground; lastly, they all nurture the desire of chasing the gods away from Olympus – at time they even aspire to partner with a goddess – but their desire remains invariably unfulfilled. Some of these features recur also in the long war fought by the sons of Chronos against the Titans, the predecessors of the Olympians (Hes. *Theog.* 617–735; Horace, for example, associates the Titans with the Aloads in *Od.* 3.4.42–64).

61. fatales ... manus: ‘fatal troops’. *Manus* here should be intended in the military sense of ‘armed force’; in fact, this is the meaning more in keeping with both the immediate sense of the passage and the broader context of the poem, and the term should be understood as standing for the troops of Alaric. This interpretation is

strongly supported by the use of the same word to designate Alaric's army after suffering defeat at Pollentia (v. 89), whereas the opposite position of Reinach 1914, 1–2, is both improbable and unnecessary. Reinach interprets the term as an allusion to the prodigious finding of alive human hands in the stomach of two wolves, an omen described at length in vv. 249–66; to consider the word *manus* as an allusion to this event, however, he has to postulate a widespread knowledge of the miracle itself among the contemporaries – or at least among the Senate and the members of the court – in order for the allusion to be recognised by the audience and this is far from likely: cf. Balzert 1974, 51–3. At this point in the poem, the Gothic troops have already been allusively presented as savage beasts in the proem (vv. 29–30 and 33–5): this half line and the section that follows it act as a reminder of the magnitude of the danger to Rome.

The expression *fatales manus* echoes Verg. *Aen.* 12.232, where it characterises the army of the Etruscans to which a seer had prescribed that they should wait for a foreign leader in order to wage war on their enemies (cf. *Aen.* 8.499–503). If Tarrant is right in seeing the expression in Virgil as 'certainly ironic' and perhaps even as 'a jibe at the stereotype of superstitious Etruscans' (Tarrant 2012, 149), then the allusion is made stronger by the similarity between the Etruscans and the credulous Alaric who, in Claudian's fiction, first swears a sacred oath to destroy Rome (vv. 81–2) and then blindly relies on a deceitful oracle which leads him astray (vv. 544–9).

The adjective *fatalis* qualifies something which has been ordained by fate, or at any rate pertains to its remit. In this sense, it can therefore be applied either to a person or to an object which fulfils a prophecy, as for example in Verg. *Aen.* 7.114–5 (*orbem / fatalis crusti* refers to the pieces of bread used as plates by Aeneas and his companions, and eaten by them at the end of the meal: the prophecy pronounced by the harpy Celaeno in *Aen.* 3.255–7 – recalled as Anchises' warning in *Aen.* 7.124–7 (cf. Seider 2013, 28–31 and 41–6) – had predicted that event as the sign that the wandering Dardans would have finally found their destined home). Aeneas himself is described as *fatalis* because driven by fate and the gods to reach Latium (*Aen.* 11.232, *fatalem Aenean manifesto numine ferri*); similarly, Claudian adopts the adjective for Stilicho, placing it on the lips of the defeated Alaric, to whom the Roman general 'is fated' to bring destruction (*VI Hon.* 301, *fatalis semper Stilicho*; cf. also Liv. 22.53.6,

where the adjective designates Scipio). This latter example well shows the overlapping between two often complementary notions encompassed by the word *fatalis*: something ‘brought about by fate’ (or in any case ‘related to fate’) and something ‘which brings death, destruction’ (with this meaning, it often denotes a weapon, as in e.g. *Aen.* 12.919 and *Met.* 5.182). A good example of this overlapping is found once again in the *Aeneid*, where the adjective is applied to the Trojan Horse twice (*Aen.* 2.237 *fatalis machina* and 6.515 *fatalis equus*, in the words of Aeneas and Deiphobus respectively): the ruse of the horse is both in a way ordained by fate – as the fall of Troy is – and doomed to heap death and destruction on the Trojans. Claudian seems to have in mind both meanings in this passage and, for example, in *Get.* 637 (*virtutis fatale solum!*), where he hails Pollentia as the ‘destined’ ground of victory, but construes it also as the ‘memorable funeral pyre of barbarity’ (the Goths and the Cimbri).

hucusque: the adverb circumscribes the reach of the Gothic army (‘thus far’) and is charged with an irony which will become evident only towards the end of the poem, when Claudian reveals that Alaric has been fooled by a fallacious divine prophecy that had led him to pursue the invasion of Italy. In his only speech in the poem (vv. 544–9), Alaric claims that a voice coming from a grove had assured him that his path would lead as far as Rome and reports part of the oracle’s words as *huc iter usque datur* (v. 549), where *huc* is related to the word *urbem* in the previous line. In the following verses, the poet explains that the deception consisted in the existence of a river called *Urbem* (*Orbam*) near Pollentia. Not perceiving his mistake, Alaric rushed towards his defeat. This later passage sheds light on the use of *hucusque* in this line: the troops of the Goths are ‘driven by fate’ (*fatales*) only until they reach a precise place (*hucusque*); the adverb looks forward to the verdict of the oracle and foreshadows Alaric’s defeat at Pollentia, where indeed the Gothic advance into Italy had been stopped. In addition to the already mentioned prophecy of vv. 544–9, the idea that the Goths had been (mis)guided by fate is stated elsewhere in *Bellum Geticum* (v. 171, *seu fata vocabant*, and v. 540, *sic me [sc. Alaricum] fata fovent*). Cf. also the words of the goddess Roma to Caesar in Lucan. 1.192 (*si cives, huc usque licet*), aimed at limiting the lawful movement range of his troops.

From the first century AD onwards *hucusque* is increasingly employed to indicate the portion of a book up to the point of writing, see e.g. Mart. 3.68.1 (*huc est usque tibi scriptus, matrona, libellus*) and Front. *Strat.* 3 *pr.* (*si priores libri [...] lectorem huc usque cum attentione perduxerunt*). The adverb could therefore hide a metaliterary remark and refer to the moment of Claudian's recitation of the poem, thus giving more resonance to the allusion, especially given that it is conspicuously placed between the two Virgilian words.

61–2. crebris notatae / prodigiis abiere minae: the threat posed by the Gothic advance (*minae*) had been announced by frequent ominous signs on which Claudian expands in a later section of the poem (vv. 227–66). The expression *prodigiis abiere minas* closely echoes *Eutr.* 2.3 (*prodigii patuere minae*) with a *variatio* due to the fact that in this passage the omens are mentioned in retrospective; also in the case of Eutropius' consulship, Claudian claims that the imminent disgrace had been announced by omens (indeed he opens the first book of his invective against the eunuch with a series of terrifying prodigies, *Eutr.* 1–8). Cf. *VI Hon.* 141 (*talis [sc. Alaricus] ab urbe minas retro flectebat inanes*), where the turning aside of the threat of the invasion is picked on again using the same term *minae*, and *Carm. min.* 31.28, where the menaces of Enceladus, significantly one of the Giants, are also called *minae*.

62–3. nec sidera pacem / semper habent: the conjunction *nec* closely links this proposition with the one that precedes and should be read with the same meaning of *ne ... quidem*, 'not even'. This transition allows Claudian to equate the current political situation, namely the danger posed by the Goths in Italy, to the mythological tales of the battles of the gods against monsters. The stars often stand for what is immutable and fixed in the universe (cf. e.g. Lucan. 2.267–8, *Sicut caelestia semper / inconcussa suo volvuntur sidera lapsu*; this idea is further expanded through the claim that the gods are exempted from turmoil, vv. 271–3, *nubes excedit Olympus. / Lege deum minimas rerum discordia turbat, / pacem magna tenent*). Claudian, however, tells a different story: he is about to remind the audience that the divine world has not always been at peace, but that, on the contrary, the power of the gods has been challenged time and time again by fearful creatures. All Gigantomachies were described by the poets as catastrophic events that had shaken the whole order of things, especially nature and its laws (cf. Claudian himself in *Carm. Min.* 53.9, *pallescent subito stellae*

and 53.61–62, *confusaque rursus / pro domino Natura timet*, with *rursus* implying the previous conflict against the Titans). The use of *nec*, then, underlines that the troubles caused on earth by the Goths should not be so surprising, if even the apparently immutable stars have been shaken up by conflict. The same allusive hint to the disturbance of the sky caused by the monstrous opponents of the Olympians is found in Ov. *Met.* 1.151–3 (*Neve foret terris securior arduus aether, / adfectasse ferunt regnum caeleste gigantas / altaque congestos struxisse ad sidera montis*); Ovid’s own refashioning of the Gigantomachy plays an important role in Claudian’s use of the myth. Cf. also Nonn. *Dion.* 1.165–257, where the monster Typhoeus literally battles against the stars in a long and elaborated cosmic war.

ipsumque Iovem: same metrical position in Ov. *Met.* 5.369–71 (*Tu [sc. Cupido] superos ipsumque Iovem ... / ... domas*).

turbante Typhoeo: according to Hesiod, *Typhoeus* (Greek variants of the name: Τυφωεύς, Τυφῶν, Τυφάων, Τυφώς; Latin variant: *Typhon*) was the youngest offspring of Gaia, the Earth, conceived with Tartarus at the time of Zeus’ defeat of the Titans (*Theog.* 820–22). Typhoeus is described as a monster across Greek and Latin literature: Hesiod attributes to him a hundred snake-heads and fire-blazing eyes (*Theog.* 824–8); Apollodorus even saddles him with vipers coiling around his thighs (Apoll.1.6.3; see *comm. ad* 64–6); Nonnus goes the extra mile by picturing him as a chaotic patchwork of assorted animals (Nonn. *Dion.* 1.154–62). Claudian reckons him among the Giants, see *Carm. Min.* 53.32. The expression *turbante Typhoeo* could be a variation on the Virgilian line ending *turbante tumultu* (Virg. *Aen.* 6.857, 9.397; also Sil. 11.191).

The weapons of the Fury Tisiphone, who shares grotesque physical features with the monsters listed by Claudian in this passage (especially snakes as limbs, see Ov. *Met.* 4.491–4; Stat. *Theb.* 1.90–91 and 1.103–13), are described as frightening Jupiter and the other immortal gods in Sil. 2.535 (*illa deos summumque Iovem turbantia tela*).

64. tremuisse ferunt: among Greek authors, the idea that Zeus was not fully in control during the fight against Typhoeus is explicitly developed only by Apollodorus, who represents him struggling in his battle against the monster (at a certain point, he even has to be rescued by Hermes and Pan, see Apollod. 1.6.3); this version also relates that the gods tried to escape Typhoeus’ destructive force by turning into animals (however, cf. the gods cowering in terror already in Hom. *Il.* 1.406, and Hades and the Titans

scared by Typhoeus in Hes. *Theog.* 850–52). This uncomplimentary tradition witnessed by Apollodorus is the one which we find recorded in the Latin sources: Hyginus (*Fab.* 196, on Pan), Manilius (4.581 and 4.801) and Ovid (*Fast.* 2.461), for example, all mention the flight of the gods. Claudian presents this variant of the story as a reported tale (*ferunt*), thus inviting his audience to understand the whole passage as allusive. His wording, in particular, recalls the episode as it is narrated in Hor. *Od.* 2.12.8–9 (*contremuit domus / Saturni*), 3.4.49 (*magnum illa terrorem intulerat Iovem*); Ov. *Met.* 5.322 (*caelitibus fecisse metum*) and *Aetna* 54 (*Iuppiter et caelo metuit*); cf. by contrast Virgil’s Hercules, who does not tremble even in front of Typhoeus (*Aen.* 8.298, *non terruit ipse Typhoeus*). Hor. *Od.* 3.4 makes an explicit connection between Augustus and Jupiter, and between the battle of Actium and the Gigantomachy: his account reflects an exploitation of the myth to read current political events in a pro-Augustan light. Ovid’s narration, on the other hand, is more problematic, as the myth is presented by one of the Muses as a retelling of the story originally sung by the Pierides, the nine sisters that had challenged the Muses themselves to a singing contest. Although the mortal challengers are predictably defeated, their choice of myth – Typhoeus’ attack to Olympus and the gods’ fear at his advance – allusively subverted the prevalent pro-Augustan interpretation embraced by Horace: the monster is presented as a valid alternative to the Olympian gods, at least in the Muses’ reading of the story (*Met.* 5.319–20, *falsoque in honore gigantas / ponit*; see Johnson 1996–7). Claudian’s choice to represent this version of the myth and his allusion to the Ovidian intertext seem to hinge on a desire to justify the tangible fear that Alaric’s advance had spread in Italy (cf. *comm. ad vv.* 36–49). Behind the allusion, it is therefore possible to detect an acknowledgement and, at the same time, a sympathetic justification of the worries held by the senators, the court and – through the mention of Jupiter – by the emperor himself (cf. the identification of the emperor and his court with Jupiter and the gods in the preface to the *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto Sextum Consuli*), who was in Milan when the city was blockaded by Alaric (see *above* pp. 73–4). On the other hand, Stilicho had already been extolled for being the only one able to stand his ground even against mythological monsters (*III Hon.* 159–62) and for surpassing the power held by the monsters themselves (*Stil.* 1.303–5), two examples of the

underlying pre-eminence of Stilicho over everyone else – included the emperor – in Claudian’s *corpus*.

64. si fas est: originally a religious formula, the expression becomes common in literature to convey caution towards a statement that might go beyond what is allowed by piety or, in general, permitted to human beings. Catullus, for example, adds the formula to his poem 51 as a disclaimer that the person he is praising seems to surpass even the gods in beauty ‘if that is permitted’ (Cat. 51.1–2, *ille mi par esse deo videtur / ille, si fas es, superare divos*); Ovid particularly favours this expression and uses it frequently, especially in the poems of his exile. In this passage, the expression not only suggests a caution with regard to what Claudian is reporting, namely Jupiter’s fear of Typhoeus – and, by extension, the emperor’s fear – but it also triggers an Ovidian intertext: Ovid, in fact, applies it to statements regarding the emperor in *Trist.* 1.2.95–6 (*nec, quae damnaverit ille [sc. Caesar], / crimina defendi fasque piumpue puto*) and 5.2.46 (*si fas est homini cum Iove posse loqui*, where *Iove* stands for the emperor); for further examples of this usage in other authors, see *TLL s.v. fas*, 6.290.84–291.8. Statius uses this expression in relation to the story of the Giants when he compares Tydeus’ ardour to them in *Theb.* 2.595–6 (*non aliter Getica, si fas est credere, Phlegra / armatum immensus Birareus stetit aethera contra*).

64–6. The depiction of Typhoeus in these lines is modelled on Hesiod’s description of the monster with hundred heads and dragon’s tongues in *Theog.* 824–5; dragon’s heads are also mentioned e.g. in Apollod. 1.6.3 (ἐκ τούτων δὲ ἐξείχον ἑκατὸν κεφαλαὶ δρακόντων. τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ μηρῶν σπείρας εἶχεν ὑπερμεγέθεις ἐχιδνῶν, ὧν ὄλκοι πρὸς αὐτὴν ἐκτεινόμενοι κορυφὴν συριγμὸν πολλὸν ἐξίεσαν) and Manil. *Astr.* 4.581 (*anguipedem ... Typhona*). Hundred feet were normally attributed to the Hekatoncheires, see Hes. *Theog.* 147–50, but also Hor. *Od.* 2.17.14, 3.4.69; Ov. *Am.* 2.1.12, *Trist.* 4.7.18. Feet in the form of snakes or dragons were associated also with the Giants, see e.g. Apoll. 1.6.1; Ov. *Met.* 1.183–4 (*centum quisque parabat / inicere anguipedum captivo brachia caelo*), 3.303 (*quo centimanum deiecerat igne Typhoea*), *Fast.* 5.37, *Trist.* 1.4.17 (*serpentipedesque Gigantas*); Val. Fl. 2.29; Sil. 6.152; Paus. 8.29.3; Pan. Lat. II(12).44 (*anguipedum bella monstrorum*); Macr. *Sat.* 1.20.9 (*horum pedes in draconum volumina desinebant*); Serv. *Aen.* 578 (*et quia de humillimis ad summa reptabant, dicti sunt pro pedibus habuisse serpentes*). The giants are crucially

represented as half snakes in Claudian's Latin Gigantomachy, often with quite grotesque descriptions too, see 53.80–81, 89–90, 111–12, and 114.

65. montibus armaret: cf. Claud. *Carm. min.* 53.29; see *comm. ad vv.* 69–71.

66. lamberet ... erectis anguibus: cf. the description of Allecto, the guardian of Tartarus, in Stat. *Theb.* 1.91 (*lamberet sulphureas permiserat anguibus undas*); cf. *comm. ad v.* 63. The fact that the snakes are erected suggests their aggressivity: for example, Tisiphone, when provoked in a dream by Turnus in *Aen.* 7.450, causes a couple of snakes from her head to stand up (*et geminos erexit crinibus anguis*), with the result that Turnus is mightily scared; Pallas, on the other hand, is metaphorically described as 'pulling down the erect snakes on her breast' in Stat. *Theb.* 8.518 (*et erecti sederunt pectoris angues*), when Hercules mollifies her (for the secondary notion of hostility taken by the verb *erigo*, see *TLL s.v. erigo*, 5.2.780.69–86). Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 3.574 (*attollitque globos flammaram et sidera lambit*), where Aetna – under which Enceladus, or according to other versions Typhoeus, was buried – licks the stars with its flames.

attonitas Arctos: the accusative plural *Arctos* encompasses both the constellations of the Great and Little Bear. The detail of the unsettled constellations puts into effect the general claim about the lack of peace of the stars of vv. 62–3. The adjective *attonitus*, 'stunned', 'stupefied', 'thunderstruck', etymologically recalls the thunders with which Jupiter fought against Typhoeus. Claudian depicts the terror of the celestial bodies, included the constellation *Arctos* (singular this time, it is not specified which one of the two), also in *Carm. min.* 53.9–12. Cf. the echo of this line in Sid. *Avit. pr.* 26 (*Arctoas sueti lambere calce rotas*): the subject of the comment is a series of monsters, including Ephialtes, who 'were used to lick the northern stars with their heel'.

67. quid mirum, si ... : the rhetorical expression denoting a lack of surprise, 'what wonder, if ...?', makes explicit the connection between the tales of Gigantomachy and the actual circumstances around which the whole poem rotates, i.e. the Gothic invasion, a connection that so far had only been implied. The expression *quid mirum* is often placed at the beginning of the hexameter.

regna mortalia: cf. *mortalia saecla*, an expression typically employed by Lucretius to indicated 'human beings' (2.1153, 5.988, 1169, 1238) and 'animals'

(5.791, 805). Cf. in particular Lucr. 5.12.38 (*quid mirum si se temnunt mortalia saecla*); the close similarity of the two passages and the context of the verse in Lucretius – the misery brought down on humankind by the turmoils of nature – suggests an allusion on Claudian’s part. Apart from Lucretius’ poem, the nexus *mortalia saec(u)la* is found in poetry only in *Ruf.* 2.473 to identify mortals, whereas the variation *regna mortalia* to indicate ‘humankind, human affairs’, is only attested in this passage (and in August. *Civ.* 6.1.71, but with the more literal meaning of ‘the kingdoms of the mortals’).

68. gemini fratres: elsewhere used by Claudian to refer to Arcadius and Honorius, cf. *III Hon.* 153; both words appear in close proximity to mark the brotherhood that fasten – or rather, should fasten – the two halves of the empire in harmony, as in *Ruf.* 2.5–6 (cf., in particular, the nexus *geminæ aulae*), *Eutr.* 1.81–2, *Gild.* 218 (*geminis ... regnis*). Otos and Ephialtes, the Aloids (see v. 74), are called *geminis* also in Virg. *Aen.* 6.582 (*hic et Aloidas geminos ... vidi*); this should not be necessarily interpreted as ‘twins’, but more generally as ‘brothers’ (cf. also the interpretation of the expression in Claud. Don. *Aen.* 6.582).

quos genuit ... Aloeus: the only claim to fame of Aloeus was fathering the giants Otos and Ephialtes, although apparently not even this enterprise could be attributed to him with any certainty. Indeed, whereas Hom. *Il.* 5.386 qualifies the monstrous brothers as sons of Aloeus, a scholiast specifies that they were only adoptive children of Aloeus, but natural children of Poseidon and Iphimedeia. This is the version reported in *Od.* 11.305–8, where Odysseus claims that Iphimedeia herself had admitted to her relationship with Poseidon and to having begotten her children with him (cf. also Apollod. 1.7.4; Hyg. *Fab.* 28; Ov. *Met.* 6.116–17 and Serv. *Aen.* 6.582).

asper: applied to people, it denotes their being harsh or violent, sometimes with a specific implication of impiety and/or excessive fury: see for example Verg. *Aen.* 7.647, where Mezentius is described as *asper* and immediately after as *contemptor divom* (7.648), and 9.62–3, where Turnus is compared to a wolf (*asper et improbus / ira saevit*); cf. also Sil. 1.148–9 (*[sc. Hasdrubal] asper amore / sanguinis*) and 2.327–8 (*Gestar ... impatiens asperque coquebat / ... iras*). Even if his characterisation is minimal, Claudian is close to Lucan who, alone, seems to grant some agency to

Aloeus, imputing his sons' rebellion to him (Lucan. 6.410, *inpius hinc prolem superis inmisit Aloeus*). The adjective is often employed for the characterisation of fighting women (Camilla is *aspera virgo* in *Aen.* 11.664; *aspera* are also Diana in *Stat. Theb.* 2.237, and Minerva in *Sil.* 10.434 and in *Rapt.* 2.20).

69. Martem ... vinclis: this is a second reminder that even the gods can find themselves in difficult and dangerous situations. If the previous occurrence could be seen as a justification of Honorius' fear at the approach of the Gothic army (see *comm. ad vv.* 63–4), this passage appears to be allusively aimed to Stilicho, who later in the poem is strongly matched with Mars (v. 468, *vivida Martis imago*; also elsewhere in Claudian's *corpus*, see e.g. *Stil.* 1.16). In fact, the story of how Otus and Ephialtes imprisoned Mars, together with other divine misadventures, is told by Dione in *Hom. Il.* 5.385–91, precisely with the aim of consoling Aphrodite, after she has been hurt in battle by Diomedes, by showing to her how other gods had already suffered at the hands of mortals (Dione makes this explicit at the beginning of her speech, in vv. 382–4). The tale seems to play a similar role in this section of the poem.

69–71. Otos and Ephialtes' ambition of making a big pile using the mountains of Greece and thus reaching the sky to wage war against the Olympians appears for the first time in *Hom. Od.* 11.313–16. From then on, the story became the quintessential ingredient for any Gigantomachy, to the point that Otos and Ephialtes are not always primarily involved or mentioned in connection with the stacking of mountains, as e.g. in *Verg. Georg.* 1.279–83; *Hor. Od.* 3.4.50–52; *Prop.* 2.1.19–20; *Ov. Am.* 2.1.11–16; *Stat. Theb.* 78–9; or in the extreme stylisation of *Lucan.* 6.411–12, where the mountains themselves – and not the giants – are the main actors.

69–70. negatas / temptarint ... vias: cf. *Hor. Od.* 3.2.22 (*[virtus] negata temptat iter via*); as pointed out by Nisbet and Rudd 2004, *comm. ad loc.*, the use of *tempto* implies a courageous and bold attempt. Elsewhere, the idea of finding a way through forbidden paths is linked to the hero Theseus (*Sen. Phaedr.* 224, *solus negatas invenit Theseus vias*) or to the boldness of poetic creativity (*Rapt.* 1 *pr.* 4, *quas natura negat praebuit arte vias*; cf. also *Virg. Georg.* 3. 8–9, *temptanda via est qua me quoque possim / tollere humo*, for the attempt to follow new poetic paths instead of retelling trite stories).

munire vias: the verb *munio* indicates a paved road or highway (cf. Lucr. 5.102, *via ... munita*) and can be used in a military context (cf. the very concrete, military sense that the expression has in Plaut. *Mil.* 223). It can also underline the process of construction of a road, suggesting that it did not exist before and that it is, therefore, a novelty.

70–71. stetit ... machina: Platnauer translates as ‘the universe’ according to a secondary meaning that the word acquires after Lucr. 5.96 (*sustentata ruet moles et machina mundi*; cf. also e.g. Lucan. 1.80; *Aetna* 280; Stat. *Theb.* 7.812). Claudian uses this sense of the word several times in his poems (*III Hon.* 169; *IV Hon.* 68; *Theod.* 102; *Stil.* 1.145; *Rapt.* 2.280). However, he also employs the word in the more concrete meaning of ‘war-engine’ in *Ruf.* 1.219; *IV Hon.* 329 and in *Carm. min.* 53.49. Garuti translates according to this meaning of the word *machina*: ‘e stette ... la ballista’; this notion works better with the verb *sto*, which means ‘to stand upright’; cf. Sen. *Ag.* 345–6 (*stetit imposita / Pelion Ossa*). Cf. the similar ending *machina belli* in Verg. *Aen.* 2.151; Lucan 6.37, 8.377 and 10.481; even if the genitive *belli* in Virgil and Lucan is an attribute of *machina* and the ablative *bello* in Claudian indicates a temporal circumstance (‘during the war’), the correspondence is suggestive.

revulsis ... tribus scopulis: the word *scopulus* in poetry indicates a projecting rock or cliff (cf. v. 2) and in this passage it signifies the mountains torn away by the hands of Otos and Ephialtes (cf. the rocks flung in the air by the erupting Aetna in Verg. *Aen.* 3.575). Although Claudian mentions three rocks, only two mountains are explicitly named in the following lines. In his Latin Gigantomachy, on the other hand, he introduces other peaks that were employed as weapons by the Giants in their fight against the Olympians (*Carm. min.* 53.66–9).

71. paene: in his translation Platnauer reads it together with *steterit* in v. 70 (‘and the universe almost ceased to move’). In the majority of occurrences, however, the adverb *paene* is placed before the word it qualifies and, although it is possible to find it postponed (as in e.g. Ov. *Met.* 1.443, *exhausta paene pharetra*), it is very hard to understand it in conjunction with a verb from which it is separated by another verb (in this case *revulsis*; see *TLL s.v. paene*, 10.1.49.65–82). It would be much more natural to read the adverb *paene* with the participle *revulsis*: cf. Garuti’s translation ‘quasi divelte le tre rupi’. Another possibility would be to interpret *paene* with the numeral

tribus which immediately follows as ‘when almost three rocks had been torn off’. Despite the fact that this is a combination rarely attested, the option has the advantage of making sense of the number three, since a third mountain is not mentioned later: in fact, Otos and Ephialtes were killed off by the gods before they could reach Olympus and, we could imagine, before they could tear up another mountain to fulfil their objective.

caelesti ... bello: cf. *Ov. Am.* 2.1.11, where the Gigantomachy which Ovid never wrote is described in the same way, and *Sil.* 12.660.

72. sed ... furor: this passage has the quality of an aphorism, cf. *Phaedr.* 1.20.1 (*stultum consilium ... effectu caret*).

72–3. improba ... spes: the attribute *improbus*, ‘bad, wicked’, very often has a moral connotation and, on a literal reading of the passage, it is easy to understand why it is applied to two Giants who wish to conquer the seat of the gods and oust them from their kingdom: their action is clearly sacrilegious (cf. the same adjective applied to two other monsters, Megaera in *Ruf.* 1.74 and the Giant Porphyrius in *Carm. min.* 53.116). Under the surface of the text, however, Claudian is still alluding to the invading Gothic army and to the impious aspiration of conquering Rome nurtured by Alaric; in fact, the poet will use the same term to describe him in Eridanus’ scolding words in *VI Hon.* 186 (Rufinus, Eutropius and the Gothic ruler Tribigild had all been labelled in the same way in *Ruf.* 2.500, *Eutr.* 2 *pr.* 51 and *Eutr.* 2.176 respectively). For the use of the same nexus, see *Lucan.* 5.130, 6.29; *Sen. Thy.* 295 (*credula improba spes*; ironically Alaric’s hope will prove credulous too). Cf. also the discussion in *Sen. Benef.* 2.27.3, where the description of an ambition that knows no limit is closely linked to passions which Claudian’s Alaric positively displays in the poem.

73–4. nec pervenere iuventae / robur: ‘and they did not reach the full vigour of youth’. In one of the first attestations of the myth, the Aloids attempt to storm Olympus when they are only nine years old and they are therefore slain before they can reach full maturity, see *Hom. Od.* 11.315–20. Youth is the age most often associated with excitement and strong passions, cf. e.g. *Verg. Aen.* 5.397–8 (where moreover youth is defined as what gives confidence to a man who is *improbus*; cf. *comm. ad vv.* 72–3); *Hor. Ars.* 116–17 (*adhuc florente iuventa / fervidus*), *Od.* 1.16.23–4 (*in dulci iuventa / fervor*), 3.14.27 (*calidus iuventa*); cf. also the general statement

about youth in Prud. *C. Symm.* 320 (*sanguine praecalido fervet nervosa iuventa*). Claudian exploits the connection between youth and heat, which is evident in the Horatian examples, when he portrays Alaric later in the poem. During a fictional war council in the Gothic camp, he pitches one against the other an old counsellor and Alaric himself in a rhetorical skirmish. The two figures are construed as opposites both in physical traits – one old, the other young – and character, with the old Goth advising caution and the reckless Alaric disparaging that advice with an aggressive stance. In the words of the old Goth, Alaric’s decision to invade Italy was due to his ‘hot youth’, see v. 498 (*sed quoniam calidae rapuit te flamma iuventae*). By contrast, cf. *Stil.* 3.120–21, where Stilicho is praised for keeping Honorius’ youth in check. The underlying association between passions and young age explains why Horace employs words connected with youth to describe the Giants, see *Od.* 2.12.7 (*telluris iuvenes*) and 3.4.50 (*fidens iuventus horrida bracchiis*).

The verb *pervenio* is found elsewhere in poetry with the simple accusative, cf. *Ov. Met.* 3.462 and *Stat. Theb.* 3.121–2.

74. Aloidae: see *comm. ad v.* 68.

74–6. The order in which Olympus, Ossa and Pelion are piled up in the myth of the Aloads varies from author to author: starting from the mountain placed at the bottom, Homer (*Od.* 11.315–16), Horace (*Od.* 3.451–2) and Statius (*Silv.* 3.2.64–5) have the sequence Olympus, Ossa and Pelion, whereas Virgil (*Georg.* 1.281–2) and *Aetna* 49 place Olympus on top. For the inconsistent use of Ovid and Seneca, see McKeown 1998 on *Ov. Am.* 2.1.13–14 and Tarrant 1976 on *Ag.* 345ff.

74. Pelion: a mountain located in the south-east of Thessaly and projecting into the sea in a hook-shaped promontory between the Aegean Sea and the Pagasetic Gulf. It was the dwelling place of the centaur Chiron, who trained many a hero in the surroundings of the mountain.

75. occubuit Phoebo: the verb *occumbo* is mostly applied to those who die of unnatural causes, in particular in battle (*TLL s.v. occumbo*, 9.2.380.31–53); it is possible to find the perpetrator in the dative in poetry (here *Phoebo*, see *TLL s.v. occumbo*, 9.2.380.72–3). Apollo is responsible for killing the Aloads in Hom. *Od.* 318–20; according to Apollodorus (1.6.2), Ephialtes is dispatched through the joint effort of Apollo and Hercules. Claudian represents the island of Delos crying for help

to Apollo in *Carm. min.* 53.125–28 and, although the poem is incomplete, we might presume that the god played an important role in the defeat of the Giants.

76. in latus obliquam ... Ossam: a mountain range in eastern Thessaly, placed precisely between Pelion and Olympus, and separated from the former by a small depression, from the latter by the narrow Vale of Tempe. The predicative *obliquam* indicates that Ephialtes drops the mountain in an unnatural slanting position and the addition of *in latus* reinforces this idea, specifying that Ossa has been thrown on its flank, as it were a casualty of war. Cf. *Ov. Met.* 3.187, for the similarity of the beginning of the verse (*in latus obliquam ... adstitit*), and 6.228–9, for the context of a falling warrior, the Niobid Ismenus (*tela gerit frenisque manu moriente remissis / in latus a dextro paulatim defluit armo*); both these examples, however, differ from Claudian's: in the first, the adjective *obliquum* is an attribute of *latus*; in the second, *in latus* refers to the side of the dying Ismenus himself, whereas in this passage it refers to the side of the object thrown away by the dying Ephialtes.

languidus: 'weak, faint', often in the context of sexual activity (*e.g.* *Tib.* 1.9.56; *Prop.* 1.3.2; *Ov. Am.* 3.7.3; *Priap.* 47.4) and sometimes illness (*e.g.* *Mart.* 9.85.1; *Juv.* 1.122).

77–89. *Second address to Rome and representation of Alaric.*

The emphasis returns on the city of Rome, to whom the section is once again addressed. As in the previous lines, there is also a representation of the enemy, this time embodied by their leader, although his name is not mentioned yet.

78–82. Claudian has already described the Goths as wild beasts in the proem; now he gives for the first time a portrait of their leader, Alaric, who is caught in the moment of the bitter realisation of his failure and of the impossibility of conquering Rome. The description pivots on the adjective *dissimilis* which opens in v. 80 and acts as a divide between Alaric's current demeanour (vv. 78–9, where he is described as *inglorius*) and the arrogant attitude he had paraded before his defeat (vv. 80–82, where – consistently with the aggressive traits of his people – he is depicted as rushing down on Rome). In these lines, Claudian succeeds in creating an iconic image which was probably aimed at shocking his audience deeply: we may assume that the mere idea of a barbaric leader

trampling the *rostra* and swaggering across the Roman Forum would have been enough to stir a strong feeling of indignation and revulsion in his listeners (v. 82). The picture also contributes to reinforce the idea, already partly conveyed by the mention of *Latium* in v. 30, that Alaric's ultimate goal was the conquest and, given the strong allusiveness of the expression *calcatis rostris*, the humiliation of Rome. Claudian insists on Alaric's obsession for Rome, still ideologically the beating heart of the empire, throughout the poem: he puts forward the same idea in other passages (in particular, vv. 505–506 and 533) and in the choice of comparing Alaric to famous foreign generals bent on the destruction of the city, like Pyrrhus and Hannibal. In this way he could impress on his audience the magnitude of the danger constituted by the invading Goths and thus continue to glorify Stilicho's defense of the empire, as well as justifying his cautious policies (see vv. 90–98).

In fact, there are good reasons to think that Alaric never planned to push as far as Rome in 402, let alone capturing the city. In all probability, his intention was to exert military pressure on the emperor Honorius and his court in Milan, in order to obtain a position equivalent to that of *magister militum*, which he had been granted by Eutropius after 397 and lost as a consequence of the latter's fall in 399; another explanation is that he might have sought land for settlement for his people (Jord. *Get.* 29.147): this would be consistent with Alaric's attempt to cross over to Gaul before the road westwards had been completely barred to him by Stilicho, but it would not be the only motive for such development; for a complete discussion of the likely motivation behind Alaric's invasion, see *above* pp. 63–5).

78–9. rarum referens inglorius agmen / ... eat: cf. the similar phrasing in Stat. *Theb.* 4.82–3 (*addit opes, ne rara movens inglorius iret / agmina*), where Adrastus gives military resources to Polynices so that he would not march on Thebes without glory and leading only a scanty army; the wording is very close to that of Claudian and clearly demonstrates his intimate knowledge of the hexametric tradition of epic. The stress in this scene is not only on Alaric's personal shame in having been forced to retreat without achieving the victory he had expected, but also on the fact that he is leading back a straggling army, radically diminished in number and struggling to keep up the pace; this is an explicit reversal of the situation portrayed in the proem, where

the Goths were described as ‘so many’ (v. 29, *tot*), and later suggested by their purposeful display of strength in other sections of the poem (especially, vv. 166–93).

80–1. qui cuncta sibi cessura ruenti / pollicitus: cf. Lucan. 5.577 (*fisus cuncta sibi cessura pericula Caesar*), where Caesar is similarly mistaken in thinking that Fortune will help him, in this case, to cross the stormy sea back to Italy, where half of his troops have been blocked by the adverse weather: although his life is spared, he is cast back on the shore which he had left. The participle *ruenti* evokes Alaric’s impetuosity, a constant trait of his character in the poem (cf. v. 498 and his speech in vv. 518–49). Stereotypes about the arrogant nature of the barbarians, which are commonplace both in poetry and in historiography, might have contributed to the fashioning of Alaric’s literary character. Ammianus, for example, gives a consistently negative portrait of the populations who live across the Roman frontier: they behave almost like wild animals, are completely untrustworthy, and it is their belligerent and treacherous nature that basically forces the Romans to fight them. One clear example is given by the figure of the Alamannic chief Chnodomarius, who was defeated by the Caesar Julian in 357. Ammianus paints him in very vivid colours and each detail of his countenance and military apparatus is designed to convey his hubristic temper (16.12.24): his helmet culminates in a bright-red crest (*flammeus torulus*), he is bold and confident in his physical strength (*audax et fidens ingenti robore lacertum*), he towers on a foaming horse (*equo spumante sublimior*), he stands tall next to his massive spear (*erectus in iaculum formidandae vastitatis*) and the brilliance of his armour makes him more conspicuous than anyone else (*armorumque nitore conspicuus ante alios*). This description is set in stark contrast with the humiliation of the barbaric leader after his defeat (16.12.65–6), when he prostrates himself to the ground (*humi suppliciter fusus*) and begs for mercy in meek tones (*gentilique prece veniam poscens*). For other examples of Ammianus’ treatment of Roman and barbarian attitudes on the frontier, including his stereotypically savage depiction of the barbarians, see Seager 1999. The treatment of the figure of Chnodomarius by Ammianus can be compared with Claudian’s hackneyed portrayal of Alaric, first as a cocky leader and then as a dejected loser; this description will be picked up time and again in the first half of the *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto Sextum Consuli* (vv. 127–45, 154–7, 178–92, 238–321): cf. in particular vv. 154–5 (‘*en Alaricus*’ ait ‘*non qualem nuper ovanem / vidimus ...*’) and 267–72, with the clear

distinction between Alaric's present condition (v. 271, *nunc*) and his previous bravado (v. 269, *tum*; vv. 267–72, *et nimium diversi stamine fati / praesentes reditus fortunatosque revolvit / ingressus: solo peragens tum murmure bellum / protento leviter frangebat moenia conto / inridens scopulos; nunc desolatus et expes / debita pulsato reddit spectacular monti*).

patrii numen iuraverat Histri: the Goths had lived north of the river Danube before they crossed in 376. *Hister* specifically designated the lower part of the river, but could nevertheless be applied to the whole course. Statistically, it appears undoubtedly to be preferred by poets over its alternative – *Danuvius* – which, on the other hand, occurs more often in prose, particularly in imperial historiography (with the notable exception of Ammianus); epic poets such as Virgil, Lucan, Statius and Silius Italicus never actually use the word *Danuvius*. Claudian employs both nouns, but shows a stark preference for *Hister*; this choice is surely dictated by the tradition of the Latin hexameter and, ultimately, by the Greek origin of the word.

The inclusion of an oath in the depiction of Alaric is a fundamental detail in the latter's presentation as *alter Hannibal*, one of the key elements in the interpretation of the verses that follow and of the whole poem. The story of how the nine-year old Hannibal had been driven by his father to swear an oath to become the avowed enemy of Rome was ubiquitous in the accounts of the second Punic war. Whereas the version preserved in the historians was fairly moderate and depicted the young leader simply as determined in considering the Romans as his enemies or denying *amicitia* to them (Liv. 21.1.4; Nep. *Hann.* 2.3), the writers of handbooks and the poets greatly exaggerated the story by portraying him as strenuous in his resolve to see either Rome or Carthage utterly annihilated. This second version became the most popular and would figure prominently in the authors studied at school: Valerius Maximus refers to it as an unforgettable exemplum of anger and hatred (Val. Max. 9.3. *Ext.* 3), and Silius Italicus builds his poem on the Punic war on the presupposition that Hannibal is determined to avenge the injustice suffered by Dido at the hands of Aeneas (Sil. 1.70–71, 1.114–19). Claudian is clearly alluding to this variant of the tradition. Once the identification between Alaric and Hannibal had been perceived, the listeners would have been sensitive to any further allusion between the current poem – and the current threat posed by Alaric – and the literary and historical figure of Hannibal, thus

magnifying Stilicho's achievements in defeating such a dangerous enemy. In fact, the figure of Hannibal had already been exploited in the last poem recited by Claudian before *Bellum Geticum*, when he had explicitly compared Stilicho with Scipio Africanus and Gildo with Hannibal (*Stil. 3 pr. 21–2, noster Scipiades Stilicho quo concidit alter / Hannibal antiquo saevior Hannibale*). For the assimilation of Alaric with Hannibal in the last poems of Claudian, see Dewar 1994; on the oath, also Janßen 2004, 135–6; Ware 2012, 141–2.

The sensational image conveyed by Claudian in this passage, which lays bare – or better, counterfeits – Alaric's arrogant self-confidence and his fierce resolve to destroy Rome, and the fiction of the oath sworn to the river god *Hister*, must have had a big impact on Claudian's audience: immediately after the delivery of Claudian's panegyric these verses were pointedly imitated by Prudentius. In his *Reply to Symmachus*, Prudentius conjures a very similar representation of Alaric and of his promise to literally wipe out Italy and Rome, adding a few vivid details of his own and closely alluding to Virgil (*C. Symm. 2.696–9: temptavit Geticus nuper delere tyrannus / Italiam patrio veniens iuratus ab Histro / has arces aequare solo, tecta aurea flammis / solvere, mastrucis proceres vestire togatos*; cf. Verg. *Georg. 2.497, coniurato ... Histro*). This reuse testifies to the rhetorical efficacy of his depiction, as the pagan tinge which underlies the oath scene must have little or no ground in reality, since the Goths were mostly entirely Christianised by this stage: for an overview of Ulfila's evangelisation mission among the Goths, see Heather and Matthews 1991, 124–6.

82. calcatis ... rostris: 'the *rostra* having been trampled upon'. The *rostra* were a raised platform located in the forum, from which orators and prominent political figures would address the crowd. According to Livy, they owed their name to the fact that Gaius Maenius had placed there the beaks of the ships defeated at Antium during the Latin War in 338 BC (Liv. 8.14.12). The *rostra* became increasingly more important in Roman public life and, especially, ideology: they were embellished with many trophies and must have constituted one of the many concrete visualisations of Roman supremacy that accrued the significance of the forum itself. The platform was still very iconic and important in late antiquity, as witnessed both by the constant renovation of the area and by Claudian's focus on the forum as the setting of the triumphal procession (see Kalas 2015). Claudian uses the same metonymy also in *VI*

Hon. 42 (*attollens apicem subiectis regia rostris*), where the *rostra* stand for the whole forum.

The use of the participle from the verb *calco* in a similar context in *VI Hon.* 446 (*meque minabatur calcato obsidere vallo*, ‘he [*sc.* Alaric] threatened to besiege me [*sc.* Honorius] after my fortifications had been destroyed’) suggests that the main idea conveyed in this passage is that of control and subjection, rather than the simple action of walking on something. Cf. also the use of *calco* applied to the enemies in battle, associated with emotions such as anger and contempt (*TLL s.v. calco*, 3.0.136.75–137.32). It is fair to assume then that Claudian here is conflating two images: that of Alaric walking on the *rostra* as a conqueror and the destruction of the *rostra* themselves as a symbol of the annihilation of Rome.

This representation of Alaric’s unyielding determination on the destruction of Rome is enriched by an historical allusion which brings in the ancient hazard posed by yet another of Rome’s historical arch-enemies: the Gauls. There have been many wars fought against different Gallic groups throughout the whole history of the Roman Republic, beginning with the groups of Gallic Senones who, under the leadership of the legendary Brennus, had inflicted a resounding defeat on the Romans near the river Allia in 390 and pushed as far as the base of the Capitolium before being exposed by the cries of a group of geese and being defeated by Furius Camillus. According to Florus – the little-known author of an abridgement of Livy’s histories which was widely read in late antiquity – another Gallic tribe, the Insubrian Gauls, who defeated a Roman force at the battle of Faesulae in 225 BC, had sworn a very similar oath to that of Alaric (*Flor.* 1.20.3, *hi saepe et alias et Brittomaro duce non prius soluturos se baltea quam Capitolium ascendissent iuraverant*). Cf. also the dream of Hannibal in *Sil.* 1.64–5 (*iamque aut nocturno penetrat Capitolia visu / aut rapidis fertur per summas passibus Alpes*).

loricam: Alaric is represented as wearing a breastplate; this is possibly the direct result of his control over the imperial *fabricae* (the workshop and smithies where armours were manufactured) of Thessaly (*Get.* 237–9; see *supra* p. 63).

83–9. The exclamation of v. 83 introduces a series of contrasting images, which show once again the difference between Alaric’s confident attitude during the invasion of Italy and his humiliating condition after his defeat at Pollentia. The three clauses display the

same structure and follow one another according to a fixed scheme, with the relative pronoun placed immediately after the caesura and the sequence dactyl-spondee at the end of the hexameter (v. 83, *qui foeda parabat*; v. 85, *qui mente profunda*; v. 87, *qui militis auro*). The first two images are typical depictions of warfare and its outcomes, and rely on the poet's representation of Alaric and his people as greedy and savage would-be conquerors already outlined in the proem (especially, vv. 30 and 33–5). In a series of reversals, Alaric – and by extension all the Goths who form his army – had coveted to defile the young Roman women, but was forced instead to witness his own family being dragged away; he had already imagined himself and his people as the masters of the Roman riches, but he himself became the victim of those he had intended to conquer and ultimately had to relinquish his own war booty and possessions (vv. 605–15). To these two general illustrations of the aftermath of the conflict, the poet adds a further mockery: when in full power, Alaric had tried to buy off elements of the Roman army and thus deprive Stilicho of his military power, how shameful for him now to relinquish his own manpower and run away without an army! This circumstance, which Claudian had just stressed also in the expression *rarum agmen* of v. 78, is certainly an exaggeration, as military losses for both sides at the battle of Pollentia seem to have been roughly even. Further military actions after Pollentia and before the final expulsion of Alaric from Italy, moreover, testify to the continued ability of the Goths at this stage to engage the Roman army in battle: see *supra* pp. 77–8.

84. Romanas ... nurus: the word *nurus* specifically designates the daughter-in-law – for example, Creusa, Aeneas' wife, describes herself as *divae Veneris nurus* in Verg. *Aen.* 2.787 – but it is also used more broadly to identify a young married woman or even a young bride: see. e.g. *Carm. Min.* 25.124 (*adgreditur Cytherea nurum*), where Venus approaches the bride, and *Epith.* 286–7 (*pilentaque sacra / praeradiant ductura nurum*), where *nurum* refers to Stilicho's daughter Maria, who is about to be married to Honorius. Scenes which represent the warrior's intended or prefigured appropriation of a vanquished enemy's wife abound already in the *Iliad* (e.g. 2.354–6, 6.464–5, 9.590–94); that this threat would then be effectively carried out in case of victory is amply reflected in literature, in particular tragedies: one can think for example, but not exclusively, of Euripides' *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, or *Andromache*, all dealing with the destiny of the captured Trojan women. Illustrations of the abduction and rape of

women and young girls, the weakest members of society, crowd also the pages of the historians, as this was a consolidated war practice. To draw only a few examples from Tacitus, he depicts the soldiers of Germanicus swearing they will beat the Germans and capture their wives (*Ann.* 2.13); he reports that under Nero, Boudicca and her daughters were subjected to harsh treatment and rape (*Ann.* 14.31.1), and in his retelling of Agricola's campaign in Britain, he has Calgacus complaining about the mistreatment of the Britons' wives and children (*Agr.* 31.1). Besides being a universal feature of warfare, the detention and defilement of free women – and occasionally of young boys – became also, more specifically, a *topos* linked to the depiction of tyrants, both in ancient Greece (*e.g.* Hdt. 3.80.5; Diod. Sic. 19.8.3–5) and in imperial Rome (*e.g.* Suet. *Tib.* 44–5, *Nero* 28.1); Claudian himself has already exploited this *topos* in the representation of Gildo's debauchery (*Gild.* 182–91). The detail of Alaric's intended violence towards the Roman women seems therefore especially meant to reinforce the portrayal Alaric as a ruthless and savage individual.

The whole passage is closely imitated by Claudian himself a few years later in *VI Hon.* 297–8 (*sed pignora nobis / Romanus carasque nurus praedamque tenebat*). As its model, this section is also part of the depiction of the defeated enemy, who retreats from Italy in despair. Mourning his ignominious loss, an embittered Alaric echoes the words of the poet himself, when he complains that the wives and children of his army have become the captives of the Romans. In an ironic twist, the Gothic women are now identified with the term *nurus*: they have become an object of conquest for the Romans, whose name now appears as a nominative noun rather than as the accusative adjective of *Get.* 84.

sua pignora: *pignus* is a technical word with a legal background and indicates primarily a 'pledge, security', in particular for a payment. From this initial meaning, it came to signify by extension 'somebody dear', in particular children, but sometimes also other family members; it seems to carry an affective connotation (see *TLL s.v. pignus*, 10.1.2125.33–2126.6) and Claudian might use this particular term to underline the close attachment of fathers towards their children and thus emphasise the Goths' loss (*cf.* the depiction of Rome as mother and the affection that binds her to her citizens in *Stil.* 3.150–53). This secondary meaning does not appear before the

Augustan age and it first attested in elegy, then in prose: *OLD s.v. pignus* 4; cf. Long 1996, 110, with n.8.

85. coniugibus: although the subject of the sentence is always Alaric, the plural here points to the fact that all the wives of the Gothic soldiers are implied. It is not uncommon to find Germanic women accompanying their husbands – and indeed lending their hands – in battle: see *e.g.* Tac. *Ann.* 14.34 (*At Britannorum copiae passim per catervas et turmas exsultabant, quanta non alias multitudo, et animo adeo feroci, ut coniuges quoque testis victoriae secum traherent plaustrisque inponerent, quae super extremum ambitum campi posuerant*). Although the mention of Alaric's wife could merely be a rhetorical device, Claudian's language and his depiction of her again in v. 625 seem to imply that Alaric had really carried his family with him (cf. Döpp 1980, 200). For speculations on the numbers of people who followed the Gothic expedition, see Hall 1988, 252–4; for criticism of his modern comparisons, see Cesa and Sivan 1990, esp. 372–3. The same couple *pignus / coniunx* is employed by Ovid in mourning his circumstances while in exile (*Trist.* 3.11.15, with the addition of *patria*).

85–6. mente profundas / hauserat urbis opes: Birt and Garuti print *profundas*, which appears in some of the most important manuscripts, including Hall's Γ, g and P₂, and by the *Excerpta Gyraldina* (see *comm. ad v.* 18); Gesner and Hall print *profunda* with the rest of the tradition. In his apparatus, Birt defends the choice of the accusative drawing the parallel example of *Stil.* 3.223–4 (*magnarum nec parcus opum geminare profundas / distulit inpensas*), where *profundas inpensas* ('vast expenses') could be compared with *profundas opes* ('vast riches'); the lack of meaningful parallels for the expression *mente profunda* points towards the accusative.

86. hauserat ... opes: cf. Mart. 9.82.4 (*hausisti ... opes*).

87–8. nostri quondam qui militis auro / adgressus temptare fidem: whereas the first two statements of vv. 83–7 are more vague and simply contribute to form the idea that Alaric was a ruthless man who had invaded Italy merely to loot its territory, the final remark on the latter's attempt at corruption clearly points to specific circumstances. The lack of additional details indicates that the audience was supposed to understand the reference without further clues; therefore, either the attempted bribery was fairly recent, or at least it must have been common knowledge at court. On the assumption that Claudian tends to mention inconvenient events only after enough time has elapsed and

it is safe for Stilicho's reputation to do so, it has been suggested that the accident adumbrated in these lines should be traced back to 397, the year in which Stilicho had intervened against Alaric in Greece for the second time: see Cameron 1970, 171, accepted *inter alia* by *PLRE* s.v. *Alaricus* 1, 2.44 and by Janßen 2004, 139; cf. *supra* pp. 53–4 and 75.

88–9. desertus ab omni / gente sua manibusque redit truncates et armis: cf. the representation of Alaric forsaken by his people and with reduced resources in *VI Hon.* 129–30 (*tot amissis sociis atque omnibus una / direptis opibus*), 250–51 (*iamque frequens rarums decerpere transfuga robur / coeperat inque dies numerus decrescere castris*) and 271 (*nunc desolatus*).

90–103. *Clementia Stilichonis.*

After describing with a certain relish a battered and humiliated Alaric in the previous section, Claudian dedicates the following one to justifying why the Gothic army was not annihilated after the battle of Pollentia. Whether he is reacting to actual accusations, as Cameron hypothesises (Cameron 1970, 182–3), or just forestalling potential criticism against Stilicho, it is clear that this is an awkward subject for the poet: in fact, this was at least the third time that Stilicho and Alaric had met in battle, the third time also that Alaric had managed to disengage with his army in reasonably good condition (see *above* pp. 77–8). After a major fight on Italian soil, this outcome must have stirred up some criticism toward Stilicho and his management of the war: why had he let Alaric slip away instead of crushing his army once and for all? It is important to remember that, at the time of the performance of *Bellum Geticum* in Rome, the Gothic troops were still ranging over the north of Italy, as demonstrated by the battle near Verona later in the same year (summer 402). Claudian's strategy for defending his patron consists of two main arguments: first, that mercy can be seen as a more subtle, but not less harsh method of punishment; second, that the resolution to let Alaric slip away was dictated by the necessity of cutting him away from Rome, thus securing the safety of the city. The first justification (vv. 90–96) rests on the abstract depiction of a humbled enemy suing for peace and appeals to Roman ideas of clemency; these in turn rest on the implied recognition of Roman superiority over

barbarian opponents and can therefore hope to elicit the acquiescence of the audience on the basis of shared and codified values (cf. the depiction of the suppliant kings of several Germanic tribes to whom Stilicho grants peace in *IV Hon.* 444–54). The second, more elaborate apology (vv. 96–103) revolves around the necessity of putting the salvation of the city of Rome above any other consideration: indeed, the implication of these lines is that, if put in a tight corner, the Goths might just opt for an extreme action and attack Rome itself. A similar line of reasoning is offered by the consuls of 320 BC in Livy’s retelling of the capture of Luceria during the Samnite Wars: they prevent their soldiers from cutting down the enemy in order to dissuade the latter from slaughtering the Roman hostages out of desperation (Liv. 9.14.15–16, *ne desperata venia hostes caecos in supplicia eorum ageret, perdere prius quam perire optantes*). The insinuation that Alaric intended to conquer Rome, which is suggested throughout the poem, especially in the mention of the oath (vv. 81–2) and in the speech given by Alaric in front of his council (vv. 533 and 544–9), has no genuine foundation (see *above* pp. 65–6 and *comm. ad vv.* 78–82); Claudian cleverly exploits this fiction to manipulate the fears of his audience, already depicted in vv. 41–9.

90–1. hoc quoque ... pendas: ‘if you consider also this’. The syntactical structure of these first lines is difficult: the verb *pendas* is quite far from its referent (*hoc*) and a burdensome relative is placed between the two, the clarity of the sentence being hampered also by the split ablative absolute in v. 91 (with the two elements at either side of *pendas*) and by the problematic *si* (on the latter, see *comm. ad v.* 91). On the literal level, the verb addresses the goddess Roma, who is still the recipient of Claudian’s allocution; outside the fictional world of the poem, however, the use of the second person reaches out to the members of the audience and the subjunctive invites them to question their personal opinion on the issue of the war. While maintaining the appearance of speaking directly to Rome, clearly Claudian is really encouraging his real public to align with the version of the events that he is about to spell out in the following lines.

90. quod ... valueri mereri: the epexegetical *quod* introduces the necessary explanation of the neuter pronoun *hoc*. Rome – and the audience – are urged to reflect

on the fact that the Goths (the subject of the plural verb *valuere*) ‘were in a condition to deserve forbearance’. A convoluted clarification of why this is the case is the focus of the whole section.

veniam leti: the word *venia* embraces a series of interconnected meanings, mostly related to the two main notions of ‘favour’ (*OLD s.v. venia* 1) and ‘pardon’ (whether for a negligible or a more serious offence; *OLD s.v. venia* 4); in particular, it can also indicate the remission of a punishment (*OLD s.v. venia* 5), with the indication of the punishment being removed in the genitive case, as in this occurrence (cf. *e.g. Ov. Trist.* 5.8.30, *poenae venia*). By adopting this language, namely talking about ‘absolution from death’, Claudian is trying to convey the idea that the Goths were at the complete mercy of the Romans, to the extent that the latter could exact the harshest punishment on them. Undoubtedly, the poet had good reasons to assure his audience – albeit implicitly – that their general had the power of life and death over their enemies, given the danger they still posed even after the battle of Pollentia.

In connection with this expression, Gesner recalls a passage from the fifth book of Zosimus’ *New History* (5.29), in which the historian reports how Stilicho pressured the Senate into agreeing a truce with Alaric and paying out a conspicuous sum of money to him: Alaric was at that moment threatening to invade Italy for the second time as a form of retaliation, since Stilicho had allegedly engaged his services against the Eastern empire, but had then failed to fulfil his part of the compact. Although the events narrated by Zosimus are chronologically distant from the circumstances in which *Bellum Geticum* was written (the meeting of the Senate described is dated to the end of 408), the suspicion of an entente between Stilicho and Alaric has been interpreted by modern scholarship as one of the reasons that had prompted Claudian to go to such lengths in order to confute Stilicho’s detractors.

91. positis ... odiis: from Claudian’s mention of the necessity to put aside hatred, it is apparent that some of Stilicho’s actions must have been greeted with a degree of animosity and criticism; indeed, the use of *odiis* could hint at stronger passions. For this expression, cf. *Sen. Thy.* 1025, *Phaedr.* 238, *Herc. O.* 1324; *Sil.* 17.462–3. Birt prints *sic positis* to underline the fact that Claudian is still addressing Rome (as in v. 77 and v. 96); the use of the hypothetical *si*, on the other hand, increases the impression that there is internal disagreement in Rome.

ignoscere pulchrum: ‘it is honourable to forgive’ (the verb *est* is implied with the adjective). This is the first part of the double apodosis which follows the protasis contained in vv. 90–91. The same concept, namely that forgiving is an honourable action, is expressed in a very similar way in the collection of aphorisms attributed to the first-century BC author Publilius (*Sent.* V 34, *vincere est honestum, opprimere acerbum, pulchrum ignoscere*). These types of aphorisms or *sententiae*, universal statements which are connected with the Greek tradition of γνῶμαι, was particularly common in declamations, to the point that Quintilian dedicates a whole chapter to their treatment (8.5), while Seneca the Elder testifies to their importance for the orator by documenting their appropriateness as rhetorical exercises (*Contr.* 1 *pr.* 23). Publilius’ collection, in particular, experienced considerable fame during the Imperial period (see e.g. *Sen. Contr.* 7.3.8; *Gell.* 17.14.4) and was still used in school during the fourth century (see *Jerom. Ep.* 103.8.1): on this collection, see Panayotakis 2013, esp. 101–112. It is possible, therefore, that Claudian is echoing precisely this collection. *Sententiae* play an important role in declamations: they attract the attention of the listener with their brilliance and conciseness, catalyse consent due to their reflection of widespread ethical judgements and popular wisdom, and can be often remembered independently from the context in which they appear thanks to their universal value. All these features make them a powerful persuasive tool and contribute to investing their author with *auctoritas*, thus adding compelling vigour to his arguments (see Faure-Ribreau 2016, esp. 221–5). The use of sententious language in this passage confers persuasive weight to the defence of Stilicho.

92. poenaeque genus: ‘it is a kind of punishment’ (the verb *est* is again implied). What the punishment consists in is explained by the infinitive which follows (*vidisse*, ‘to have seen’).

precantem: ‘a man who begs’. Claudian insists that it is compensation enough to have seen an enemy lowered down to the point that he has to beg his victor for mercy and forgiveness. The suggestion that Alaric has been humbled to such an extent echoes the description of his wretchedness in the previous section (vv. 77–89) and, through the sharp contrast with his characterisation in the poem as defiant and arrogant, makes his downfall all the more dramatic. In spite of Claudian’s sensational language, however, the implication that Alaric had been reduced to pray for his life is in

contradiction with the actual state of things after Pollentia: albeit defeated, the Goths were still a force to be reckoned with, as was demonstrated by the subsequent battle of Verona. Although Claudian here is clearly blowing Alaric's plight out of proportion, it is indeed possible that the Gothic leader had been the first to approach Stilicho for a parlay, as his situation in Italy must not have looked too promising at that point. Cf. the final representation of the beseeching Turnus, another arrogant character who is ultimately humbled, in Verg. *Aen.* 12.930–31 (*ille humilis supplex dextram precantem / protendens*).

93. vindicta: the idea of vengeance is strongly associated with the battleground of Pollentia at the end of the poem (v. 639, *plena lacessito rediit vindicta Quirino*).

prior: referred to *vindicta* with the qualitative meaning of 'superior, more excellent'.

formido: turning upside-down the situation depicted at the beginning of the poem – the fear of the Roman people barricaded behind their walls – it is now the turn of the invaders to be scared, an apt retribution; for *formido*, see *comm. ad v.* 44.

superbos flectit: words in the semantic field of *superbia* in most cases have a negative connotation, an exception perhaps being the adjective *superbus* with the meaning of 'highly placed' (see *OLD s.v. superbus* 1c and cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.630 *Tiburque superbum*), or when the same adjective is used with clear eulogistic purposes, as for example by Claudian himself in *III Hon.* 35–6 (*aut caede superbus / Assyria*, where the adjective is referred to Honorius). The qualification of *superbus* to connote someone or something negatively as 'proud, haughty', as in this passage, is usually pinned on those who are identified as enemies of Rome, be they fellow citizens (cf. the depiction Cicero gives of Verres in *e.g. Cic. Verr.* 2.122, or the 'inbred arrogance' ascribed by Tacitus to the Claudian family in *Ann.* 1.4) or foreign opponents (see *e.g. Enn. Ann.* 287 Sk. for the Carthaginians, *Caes. Gall.* 1.33 for Ariovistus; *Hor. Od.* 4.15.7-8 for the Parthians, *Carm. Saec.* 55 for the Scythians and the Indians; *Liv.* 5.81 for the people of the Etruscan city of Volsinii), and on tyrants (most notably, the last Roman king was – and still is – widely known as *Tarquinius Superbus*, as testified among others by Livy in 1.49.1; cf. Claudian's play on the name of this king in *VI Hon.* 487, see Dewar 1996 *comm. ad loc.*). As effectively summarised by Lindsay Watson in his commentary on Horace's *Odes*, '*superbia* may in general be defined as

a wilful refusal to recognize and bow to the political, legal, and moral order embodied by the *imperium Romanum*' (Watson 2003, 274). As such, it is portrayed by Roman writers as an intrinsic feature of the barbarian people who defy and threaten the stability of the dominion of Rome. Ammianus, for example, regularly represents the barbarians as taunting the Romans with their arrogance, thus prompting the latter to intervene in order to keep them in check; cf. the passages commented in Seager 2004, 148–9.

Although haughtiness is a trait displayed by several characters in the *Aeneid* – even Aeneas is tainted by it in Dido's eyes (she calls him *hostem ... superbum* in *Aen.* 4.424) – it is strongly associated with Turnus, the *superbus* par excellence (*Aen.* 12.326), the dogged enemy who, despite his last-minute entreaty at the very end of the poem, cannot find a place in the new order and therefore has to be destroyed. Turnus' intransigence is somehow foreshadowed in the famous expression from Book 6, *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (*Aen.* 6.853): those who cannot be reduced to accept Roman authority must be fought down (cf. the same idea of movement downward expressed by the verbs *debellare* in Virgil and *flectere* in Claudian). As in the *Aeneid*, there cannot be any mercy for the *superbi* and the clemency showed initially by Stilicho is nothing more than an illusion, as bitterly recognised by Alaric himself in *VI Hon.* 305–6 (*violentior armis / omnibus expugnat nostram clementia gentem*). For the role of *superbia* in the *Aeneid*, see Lloyd 1972 and Christenson 2002.

94. adsuetum spoliis ... egestas: the two elements in the line – 'being accustomed to spoils' and 'poverty' – are in sharp contrast. On the one hand, by immediately following the tag of *superbi*, the representation of the Goths as given to plunder completes the portrait of the barbarians in a way which is meant to arouse the rightful anger of Claudian's Roman audience. The implication of the Goths' accumulation of spoils is that they have stolen them from the Romans themselves, namely during the long pillaging which will be outlined in vv. 166–93. Indeed, the mention of the spoils finds an echo in their actual description later in the poem (vv. 604–14), where their catalogue is also aimed at provoking a strong antagonistic reaction in the public. On the other hand, the word *egestas* promptly materialises to crush the invaders' ambition and to show their changed condition after their defeat at Pollentia. As already argued for the depiction of the enemy begging for forgiveness in v. 92 (*comm. ad loc.*), *egestas*

– not simply poverty, but extreme destitution – is probably more a wish on the part of Claudian than an actuality; however, the very acuteness of the hardship *egestas* stands for paves the way for what will be the poet’s defence of Stilicho’s actions, namely that reducing an enemy to such a desperate situation might be too dangerous for the victors (cf. the poet’s own comment on *egestas* in *Eutr.* 2.179–80, *teneris etiam quae crimina suadet / ingeniis ... egestas*).

95–103. Here begins the second part of Claudian’s apology. A claim similar to that put forward in the following verses had already been tested a few years before in the panegyric dedicated to Stilicho’s consulship: see *Stil.* 1.335–40, where Stilicho is said to have given up the idea of attacking Gildo with all his strength to prevent the rebel from resorting to some desperate action. These lines are echoed in the *Panegyric for the Sixth Consulship of Honorius*, where a disgruntled Alaric interrogates himself on the potential consequences, had he listened to his own rage before: see *VI Hon.* 291–3 (*haec ego continuum si per iuga tendere cursum, / ut prior iratae fuerat sententia menti, / iam desperata voluissem luce, quid ultra?*).

95. magis ex aliis ... causis: after advocating a tolerant position towards the Goths on account of their condition as suppliants in the first part of his defence, the poet is now about to reveal what he clearly intends to present as the strongest justification for Stilicho’s course of action, i.e. the real reason behind the latter’s alleged choice to spare the enemy.

clementia: translated as ‘mercy’, ‘forgiveness’, *clementia* is a key concept whose sphere of application in Roman thought has considerably changed over time. Employed to describe the calmness and mildness of atmospheric agents such as the wind, the rain and the weather in general, it can be applied to human action in different settings, mainly the battlefield and the law-courts. Until the imperial period, it is considered a virtue whose remit is restricted to the public domain and to certain, well-codified rituals: in this context, *clementia* consisted in the forgiveness and remission of punishment toward an offender who has recognised his culpability and is therefore necessarily in an inferior position, whether as a defeated enemy, as a convicted criminal, or similar. From the Late Republic onwards, however, the manipulation of the notion of *clementia* by Julius Caesar, and especially his practice of clemency toward his peers for political advantage, broadened the original understanding of the

concept and extended its application to the political stage. In particular, the dedication of a temple to *Clementia Caesaris* (voted by the Senate in 45 BC, but never erected: see Appian *BC* 2.106; Plut. *Caes.* 57; Dio. 44.6.4; Weinstock 1972, 241–3) and the consequent sacralisation of what was originally the personal virtue of an individual, established clemency as something completely new. Although ultimately it did not benefit Caesar himself (his assassins were among those who had enjoyed his mercy), the new notion of *clementia* was variously negotiated during the subsequent civil wars between Octavian and Mark Antony, until it became one of Augustus' successful policies in his creation of the new, post-civil-wars order (cf. the *clipeus virtutum* presented by the Senate to Augustus in 27 or 26 BC, in which *clementia* figures prominently as one of the four virtues attributed to him: see *ILS* 82; the shield is remembered by Augustus himself in *RG* 34.2; see also Wallace-Hadrill 1981, 300–307 for a discussion of the virtues listed on the shield). In particular, Augustus advertised not only the clemency he had exercised towards the fellow citizens he had fought during the civil wars, but also towards foreign kings, thus laying the foundation of a more universal conception of *clementia*, which ultimately came to symbolise the Roman claim to rule the whole world. Augustus' successors continued to advertise their *clementia* on coins and inscriptions, and to bolster the concept by increasingly transforming this quality in an essential trait of the good emperor: see for example the way Pliny praises Trajan's *clementia* in his panegyric to Trajan (*Pan.* 80.1). Since *clementia* is not a passion, but – as Seneca puts it in the treaty dedicated to this virtue – a disposition of the soul (*Sen. Clem.* 2.3.1), it can be a stable trait of an individual: as such, Claudian had closely associated it with Stilicho, in whose heart *clementia* has her dwelling, already in the second book of his panegyric for the *magister militum*, written a couple of years before the current poem (*Stil.* 2.12–13). Moreover, in the same poem, the poet posits *Clementia*, represented as a divine entity, as the ideological foundation of the universal order embodied by the Roman empire (*Stil.* 2.6–11): see Coombe 2017, 75–89. It does not come entirely as a surprise, therefore, that he should show clemency toward the defeated Alaric (cf. *Stil.* 2.14–23). For a thorough study of the development of the notion and application of *clementia* in the Roman world, see Dowling 2006; see also Konstan 2005, Wallace-Hadrill 1981, Weinstock 1972, 233–40.

96. consulitur dum Roma tibi: accompanied by the dative, *consulo* means ‘to take care of’ somebody or something, and, in this passage, it is used impersonally. By not referring explicitly to a single agent, Claudian includes himself, the honorand, the audience, and, in a broader sense, every Roman citizen, in the group of those who have Rome’s destiny close to their heart: the maximum of vagueness corresponds to the maximum of inclusion. For *consulo* used in the passive impersonal, cf. Tac. *Hist.* 5.5, where it similarly refers to a group of people. The passive voice might have a middle function which lends a reflexive value to the meaning of the verb, thus intensifying the participation of the subject and underlining their emotional involvement in the action expressed by the verb itself: cf. the definition of the middle voice as a verbal process by which ‘the ‘action’ or ‘state’ affects the subject of the verb or his interests’ (Lyons 1969, 373). As underlined by the temporal conjunction *dum*, the care of Rome, whom Claudian is still addressing in the second person, constitutes the background against which – and for which – the decision of mercy has been taken.

tua cura: ‘concern for you’. The possessive adjective has here the same function of an objective genitive.

97. inclusis aperire fugam: cf. *IV Hon.* 479 (*inclusaque vallo*), where Claudian had already described the Goths as surrounded and trapped during the campaign of 397. Also in that case, they had managed to escape, although the poet does not explain why: see Cameron 1970, 169–76, who blames Stilicho’s failure to overcome Alaric at this time on unrest and disloyalty among the Roman troops.

in arto: the neuter of the adjective *artus* is used as substantive to designate a narrow space, and metaphorically, as in *Get.* 491–2 (*sed numquam Mavors adeo constrinxit in artum / res, Alarice, tuas*), a particularly difficult situation: cf. also the expression *rebus in artis* in e.g. *Stat. Theb.* 10.590; *Sil.* 5.477–8; *Eutr.* 2.354.

98. saeviret: this verb which indicates ferocious and savage behaviour is often applied to animals, atmospheric phenomena and diseases. This set of associations, in particular that with animals, echoes the image of the Goths as wild beasts, given at the beginning of the poem (v. 30).

rabies: ‘frenzy’, ‘madness’. After the verb *saevio*, it strongly reinforces the bestial connotation of the Goths, as it was used – as today – to indicate the viral disease which causes violent bursts of rage and affects humans and other mammals,

particularly dogs (*TLL s.v. rabies*, 11.2.8.27–52). The word seems to possess a distinctively negative and somehow de-humanizing character: in the *Aeneid*, for example, *rabies* is only used in relation to animals (and animalistic metaphors, as e.g. 9.62–4, within the representation of Turnus as a wolf), monsters (1.200, *Scylleam rabiem*) or natural phenomena (5.802), but it is never directly applied to human beings outside of metaphors. It begins to enter the epic vocabulary as a human attribute with Ovid (see *Met.* 3.567 for the rage of Pentheus), but it is particularly employed by the later epicists Lucan, Statius and Silius Italicus: among other occurrences, the former ascribes it to Caesar (2.545; 7.245, 551; 10.72), the second to Polynices and Tydeus (1.408, both heroes; 9.1–2, Tydeus only), the latter to Hannibal (1.70–71, 11.224); it is also increasingly adopted to describe the fury of the battle (e.g. Lucan. 1.666; Sil. 4.351). While also using it in relation to animal and natural phenomena, Claudian associates *rabies* with Rufinus (*Ruf.* 2.141), Eutropius (*Eutr.* 1.184), more broadly with any potential threat to Stilicho's position (*Carm. min.* 30.230), but especially with barbarians (*IV Hon.* 39, *Eutr.* 2.190, *Get.* 432). Cf. Ov. *Met.* 11.369 and Juv. 15.126 for the juxtaposition of the verb *saevio* and the noun *rabies*.

venturae conscia mortis: *rabies* is the grammatical subject of the adjective *conscia*, although the awareness of incoming death is ostensibly ascribed to the Goths. The variant *nuntia* attested by the *Excerpta Gyraldina* (see *comm. ad v.* 18) and accepted in the *editio princeps Vicentina*, is less convincing.

99–100. nec tanti ... fuit: 'it was not to be prized so much'. *Tanti* is genitive of price and expresses value; together with the verb *fuit*, whose subject is the infinitive *abolere*, it governs the concessive clause *ut propius peterere*. The shortened form of the second person singular of the imperfect subjunctive passive *peterere* is attested only here and in Ov. *Her.* 20.53.

100–101. arceat... ut: when *arceo* is followed by another verb, the latter is normally an infinitive, although there are cases – when the subordinate clause is negative – in which *arceo* takes *quin* or *ne* and the subjunctive (*TLL s.v. arceo*, 2.0.446.73–80); this passage, however, is the only occurrence of the verb *arceo* followed by *ut* and the subjunctive (see *TLL s.v. arceo*, 2.0.446.80–82). For similar requests to the gods concerning the salvation of a city, cf. Sil. 1.639

altus / Iuppiter: *altus* means ‘high’, ‘highly placed’ and, by extension, ‘exalted’, ‘noble’, an attribute which suits in particular divinities, as they occupy the higher regions of the world; cf. Virg. *Aen.* 12.140–41 (*rex aetheris altus honorem / Iuppiter*); Ov. *Met.* 15.866; Val. Fl. 2.304–305.

101. delubra Numa: Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome, was admired for having brought peace, order, law and religion to the city. Claudian is no exception in considering the king as a virtuous model, as he mentions Numa elsewhere in his poems as the archetypal wise (*Ruf.* 1.114), peaceful (*IV Hon.* 493) and pious (*Stil.* 3.167) ruler. The name of Numa was chiefly associated with two ancient temples: that of Janus Geminus, which originally stood between the *Forum Romanum* and the *Forum Iulium* (Liv. 1.19.2; Ov. *Fast.* 1.257–58; see Richardson 1992, 207–8), and that of Vesta, erected at the southeast end of the *Forum* (Dion. Hal. 2.65–6; Ov. *Fast.* 6.257–60; Fest. 320L; Plut. *Num.* 11; see Richardson 1992, 412–13). Whilst keeping in mind that these sites were not actively at the centre of Rome’s religious life anymore (the temple of Vesta was permanently closed by Theodosius in 394), they had both played a key role in Rome’s religious and cultural identity: the temple of Janus symbolically signalled whenever the city was at war by keeping its doors open, whereas the temple of Vesta was the seat of the goddess’ undying fire, symbol of the vital strength and well-being of the city itself, and of the priestesses dedicated to her cult, women of high-standing and importance in society. Certainly, by suggesting that such places, which moreover stood at the centre of the city, could be desecrated by a barbarian tribe, Claudian meant to arouse revulsion in his senatorial audience, whose members – albeit mostly Christian – continued to revere the symbols of Rome’s past.

sedemque Quirini: probably a straightforward identification of Rome as the old seat of Quirinus, an ancient divinity who was assimilated at an early stage with Romulus, the founder of Rome (cf. Sil. 11.118–9, *Quirini / sacratas ... sedes*); alternatively, a reference to a temple of Quirinus. The god had a cult, a temple on the Quirinal Hill, and a dedicated priestly order, the *Flamines Quirinalis*. He was also closely related to Mars. The association of Quirinus with the *curiae*, the political organisation of the citizens, explains why the Romans were also called *Quirites*, a term that Claudian employs eight times throughout his *corpus*: see e.g. *Eutr.* 1.409, *Stil.* 2.391, *Get.* 451, *VI Hon.* 587, 652.

102. barbaries: the fourth declension form of an otherwise old first declension noun *barbaria* is securely attested only from Lucan (once in 7.273; it is also attested as a variant in some of Ovid's manuscripts), but it becomes widespread in the fourth century. Claudian uses it three times – in *IV Hon.* 49, in *Theod.* 250, and in this passage – although he employs the first declension form more often (including in *Get.* 638). The use of the collective noun heightens the impression that it is not just the soldiers of Alaric, but the whole of barbarity which is threatening Rome.

oculis ... profanis: cf. the sacrilegious eyes of Pentheus who spies the Bacchic rites (*Ov. Met.* 3.710) and Medea's prohibition to assist her magic acts and spells with profane eyes (*Ov. Met.* 7.256).

103. arcanum ... regni: this expression closely recalls a passage in which Tacitus affirms that the proclamation of Galba as emperor after the death of Nero in 69 AD disclosed to anyone that an emperor could be made outside Rome: see *Hist.* 1.4.4 (*evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*). Despite the similarities, however, clearly this is not what Claudian refers to in this line: indeed, at the time in which he wrote, emperors had been proclaimed outside Rome for centuries. The same expression is then picked up by Rutilius Namatianus, who exploits it to attack Stilicho in extremely harsh tones: *Rut.* 2.41–2 (*quo magis est facinus diri Stilichonis acerbum / proditor arcani quod fuit imperii*). The allusion is pointed and turns upside-down Claudian's outlook: far from being hailed as the saviour of Rome and the protector of her 'secret', Stilicho is represented precisely as its betrayer. A second allusion to Claudian, who had defined Rufinus as 'betrayer of the Empire and in league with the Goths' (*Ruf.* 1.319, *proditor imperii coniuratusque Getarum*), completes the picture and pins Stilicho down as the man who has delivered Rome to the barbarians. Rutilius' literary dialogue with Claudian might shed some light on the context of *arcanum regni* and perhaps hint at some answers.

According to Rutilius Namatianus – who is our only source for this – Stilicho was responsible for the destruction of the Sibylline Books: *Rut.* 2.51–2 (*nec tantum Geticis grassatus proditor armis / ante Sybillinae fata cremavit opis*). These were a collection of Greek hexameters which contained *fata et remedia Romana* (*Serv. Aen.* 6.72), i.e. the correct ritual remedies to perform in case of unfavourable omens. Their origin seems to go back to the times of the kings: Tarquinius (Priscus according to

some versions of the story, Superbus according to others), allegedly bought them at a high price from a woman – possibly the Sybil of Cumae herself (Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.6, who reports Varro’s opinion; Plin. 13.88; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.1–4; Aul. Gell. 1.19; Serv. *Aen.* 6.72). They were placed underground in the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, where they perished in the fire that consumed the temple in 83 BC; the books were then put together again by collecting and transcribing the copies preserved in other cities (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.32.5–6): the result of these efforts produced the version that was preserved and consulted throughout the imperial age. Suetonius reports that Augustus had the books moved to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine in 12 BC (Suet. *Aug.* 31); when that temple also fell victim to a fire in 363, the books were saved (Amm. 23.3.3) and survived at least until the time of Claudian, who mentions them among other divinatory tools that had been used during the Gothic invasion of 402 (*Get.* 231–2, *quid carmine poscat / fatidico custos Romani carbasus aevi*). They were consulted whenever the state was in grave danger, as for example in 173 BC when the Romans had realised that king Philip of Macedonia was preparing for war (Liv. 42.2). The prescriptions that they contained were intimately connected with the extension of the Roman dominion and with the wars fought by generals and emperors to further it, as exemplified by the consultations performed during the imperial age: for example, Claudius II received a positive response before engaging the Goths (Aur. Vict. 33.20), whereas Julian received an unfavourable outcome just before setting out for his Parthian campaign in 363 (Amm. 23.1.7).

The transition to considering the *Libri Sibyllini* as the depository of Rome’s destiny can be pinpointed in the role that *fata* play in the *Aeneid*: see Verg. *Aen.* 6.72–4 (*hic ego namque tuas sortes **arcanaque fata** / dicta meae genti ponam, lectosque sacro, / alma, viros*). The importance of the Sibylline Books for the destiny of Rome, therefore, cannot be overstated; this in turn manifests the gravity of Rutilius’ accusation against Stilicho: the decision of destroying the books could only be linked to an intention to crush Rome herself through that act. The destruction of the Sibylline Books could have coincided with the emergence of Constantine’s rebellion in Gaul in 407 and the initial struggle to counteract this usurpation. Several scholars indeed believe that the books were destroyed in conjunction with the harsh anti-pagan measures taken by Stilicho at the end of 407, at a time when he was desperately looking

for support: see Brocca 2005, 163, n. 99. On the other hand, rather than targeting specifically pagans, Stilicho might have simply wanted to prevent any opponent from exploiting a new consultation of the books (they had probably been interrogated also in 405 when Radagaisus invaded Italy: see Brocca 2005, 167) and thus resorted to an accidental fire as stratagem: see Brocca 2005, 167–8; similarly Demougeot 1952, 83–92, who suggests that Stilicho hoped to hush apocalyptic visions of the fall of Rome, popular at the time both in pagan and Christian circles; on the relevance and topicality of the Sibylline Books and of apocalyptic visions in general at the time of the invasions of Alaric and Radagaisus, see the discussion in Janßen 2004, 143–53, where he suggests that Symmachus may have prompted the consultation of the books during his visit to the court of Milan in February 402 (cf. the already quoted *Get.* 231–2). Rutilius’ allegation, possibly a defamation like the others surrounding Stilicho’s fall in 408, witnesses to the importance that the Sibylline Books still held for Roman the intellectual and political life of Rome. In fact, the very existence of Rome had been firmly linked to the preservation of the Sibylline Books precisely by Claudian (*Gild.* 28–30; *Stil.* 3.166–7): it is just possible, therefore, that in this passage the term *arcanum* refers – if not to the book themselves – at least to some secret knowledge connected with them, which we cannot pinpoint more precisely.

tanti ... regni: cf. v. 13.

104–110. *Remembering the past.*

Having briefly laid out the main reason for allowing the Goths to withdraw with their army still relatively intact, Claudian expands this topic by bringing forward examples from the Roman past. To bolster his argument, he underlines the fact that ancient Romans preferred to wage their wars overseas, thus reducing to the minimum the immediate danger for Rome itself. Before pointing to concrete examples in the next section (vv. 124–65), he sketches a broad – and ideal – picture of ancient senatorial policy, aligning it with Stilicho’s own behaviour as represented and justified in the poem.

104. *quamquam*: the concessive conjunction is employed here as an adverb, without

subordinating value, and can be translated as ‘admittedly’, ‘to be sure’: see *OLD* s.v. *quamquam* 3; Ernout-Thomas 1951, 300. Since it is followed by the caesura, which ensures that the rest of the verse is read without interruptions until the end, it marks the transition between the statements of the previous section regarding the reasons which had led Stilicho to spare Alaric’s troops and the new arguments in favour of this choice, which will be laid out in the subsequent lines. Bridging the historical justifications with those dictated by caution, *quamquam* corrects and at the same time reinforces the latter.

veterum certamina: ‘the battles of the ancients’, a broad and vague reference to wars situated in a remote antiquity, far removed from the audience. This vagueness and the absence of chronological markers contributes to the idealisation of an undefined past.

rite recordor: this formulation echoes Anchises’ statement in Verg. *Aen.* 3.107 (*si rite audita recordor*), the only other passage in which the expression is attested. In the *Aeneid*, Anchises erroneously interprets an oracle received by the Trojans on the island of Delos and mistakenly identifies the land where they should establish their new city with Crete. Apollo had warned them that they should settle in their ancestral land, the region from where the founder of Troy had originally come (vv. 94–6). The key to the correct explanation of the oracle, overlooked by Anchises, was the epithet employed by the god, *Dardanidae*: Dardanus, one of the founders of Troy, had in fact hailed from Italy (as it will be revealed later by the Trojan Penates to Aeneas in a dream, vv. 161–8). Whereas in the *Aeneid* Anchises’ *caveat* can be taken as a problematisation of the predicaments of remembering and of the validity of the contents of memory (cf. Seider 2011, 56–7), this nuance is absent from Claudian’s text. In fact, Anchises was not necessarily mistaken: he failed to match the correct information with the riddle of the oracle, because he called to mind another story altogether – that of Teucer, another progenitor of Troy – in itself not necessarily false. As Claudian is about to tackle a long series of exempla drawn from Roman history to exalt the role of Stilicho in the war against Alaric, it is improbable that he would undermine his own eulogistic *tour de force*. The allusion therefore could be motivated merely by its own literariness and as a pointer to Claudian’s reworking of the Virgilian tradition. Cf. also Verg. *Aen.* 3.102 (*veterum volvens monumenta virorum*), in which

Anchises turns about in his mind the memory of the stories of his ancestors, referred a few verses later as *audita*, before attempting to solve the oracle.

105. *pulchra cum libertate vigerent*: the ablative depends on *vigerent*, which in its turn is governed by the conjunction *cum* with a temporal connotation (cf. *tunc etiam* at the beginning of the verse): ‘they took strength from fair liberty’. This is primarily a literary echo, rather than an idealisation of freedom *per se*. The expression pointedly recalls the appearance of Marcus Junius Brutus in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*: the Sybil points him to Aeneas during the latter’s journey through the Underworld and qualifies him as the avenger of Tarquinius (6.818), the redeemer of the consular fasces and first consul (6.818–19), the executioner of his own sons ‘in the name of beautiful freedom’, i.e. because they had plotted to restore the Tarquinii (6.820–23, in particular v. 821, *ad poenam pulchra pro libertate vocavit*). Beyond the detail of Brutus’ grisly condemnation of his sons, the detail that Claudian focuses on is his preference for *libertas*. Claudian had already recommended Brutus as the champion of *libertas* in the words allegedly addressed by Theodosius to his son Honorius in *Hon. IV* 401 (*libertas quaesita placet? Mirabere Brutum*). As well as reiterating this connection in *Stil.* 2.323–4 (*libertas populi primo tunc consule Bruto / reddita per fasces*), he also establishes in that poem a firm parallelism between Brutus and Stilicho, with the explicit supremacy of Stilicho over the first consul (*Stil.* 2.322–7). Note already in this poem the allusion to the Virgilian hypotext: the epithet *ultor*, here bestowed on Stilicho instead of Brutus (*Stil.* 2.322; *Aen.* 6.818), the mention of *libertas* (*Stil.* 2.323; *Aen.* 6.821) and the similarity between *libertas ... reddita per fasces* and *fasces receptos* (*Stil.* 2.323–4; *Aen.* 6.818). The first two books of the panegyric for the consulate of Stilicho had been recited in Milan a couple of years before *Bellum Geticum* (in 400): given the interrelations between Claudian’s poems within the cycle, it is possible that he is alluding here to his own previous poem alongside the *Aeneid* and that the remark *pulchra libertas* would have triggered the association between Stilicho and Brutus via the Virgilian text.

The notion of *libertas* is primarily defined through its opposition to slavery: it is the condition of any person who enjoys full civil rights under the Roman laws (Wirszubski 1950, 1–3); the term was also often used at an early date in a political sense to denote the Republican system as opposed to the monarchy (*e.g.* Sall. Cat. 7.2–

3; Liv. 1.17.3; Wirszubski 1950, 5). Notwithstanding this ongoing association, the notion of *libertas* ceased to correspond to a specific political programme and continued to be celebrated instead as an ideal virtue, whose core significance was not in contrast with the existence of a *de facto* ruler. Indeed, generally speaking, words which denoted distinctive political concepts during the Republican period continued to be used by later generations and only gradually their meaning shifted to accommodate a new understanding of the concept itself (the same phenomenon can be observed in the case of *exempla*: historical figures and actions which encapsulated old meanings came to be charged with a new significance: see Gowing 2005, 5–6). For Pliny, for example, Trajan is able to blur the potential contrast between Republic and Empire. In his *Panegyric*, he openly rejoices in the fact that, under Trajan, the rewards for virtue are the same than those enjoyed during the Republic (*Pan.* 44.6, *eadem quippe sub principe virtutibus praemia quae in libertate*): *libertas* does mark the Republican period as the ideal time in which virtue would be properly rewarded, but the contrast is not one between institutions; rather, the blame sits with the bad princes who have preceded Trajan. It is possible for an *optimus princeps* like Trajan to create a favourable environment in which no sensible difference can be detected from the Republican period. Despite the apparent difficulty in negotiating seemingly contradictory concepts, Claudian himself did not find it troublesome to match *libertas* with monarchy, as is made evident from his remarks in *Stil.* 3.113–5 (*fallitur egregio quisquis sub principe credit / servitium. Numquam libertas gratior extat / quam sub rege pio*).

106. proprio late florerent milite: ‘they flourished far and wide with their armies’. Cf. *Stil.* 1.324 (*et viridi floreret milite sulcus*) with a more direct pun on the etymological meaning of *floreo*, ‘the furrow bloomed with green soldiers’. Judging from his previous use of the term, Claudian employs *proprius* merely as a possessive, in the sense of ‘their own’, and not to remark the indigenous quality of the troops, as suggested by Platnauer’s translation ‘with native troops’. The latter interpretation would suggest a critical stance on the part of Claudian towards Theodosius’ and Stilicho’s enlistment of foreign mercenary troops, which seems unlikely. The spatial connotation of the adverb *late* already points to the physical distance which will be spelled out more explicitly in v. 108.

patres: the Senators of old times, who are the object of this historical reminiscence, but at the same time also the current incumbents, who are present at the delivery of the poem.

107–109. In these lines, Claudian draws attention to the phase in which Rome, having secured her political and military position in Italy, began to extend her dominion abroad waging a series of foreign wars which brought the Roman legions to fight in all the territories bordering the Mediterranean Sea (*trans aequora* in v. 108, ‘beyond the seas’, evokes the idea of remote places and assures therefore that wars outside Italy are implied). This phase could be broadly intended as the period ushered in by the end of the first Punic War (241 BC) and crowned by Octavian’s annexation of Egypt in 30 BC. Even though new regions continued to fall under Roman control under the Julio-Claudians and later emperors, the Middle and Late Republic are certainly the periods in which, at least with hindsight, military conquest acquired its greatest momentum. This view of Roman expansion was not uncommon, as it is exemplified by the stance Florus takes on the topic in his abridged history of Rome, mostly based on Livy, a popular source of historical knowledge in late antiquity and one of Claudian’s reference books (Cameron 1970, 332–4). At the beginning of his work, Florus compares the history of Rome with the four ages of man, starting with the depiction of the monarchy as the infancy of Rome (Flor. 1.4–5). He then marks the distinction between the period in which Rome subjugated Italy – the city’s adolescence (1.6–7) – and that in which she pacified the world – maturity (1.7–8). The latter ranges, always according to Florus, from after the consulate of Appius Claudius Pulcher and Quintus Fulvius Flaccus in 212 BC, the moment of maximum Carthaginian supremacy in Italy during the Second Punic War, to the principate of Augustus. This period, in fact, fits precisely with Claudian’s mention of *libertas* (v. 105) and his remark on the Senate’s own troops (v. 106). Cf. the opening of the *Punica*, whose action springs from the massive expansion of Roman power, which arouses the hatred of Juno and her fear for the safety of her beloved Carthage (Sil. 1.30–31).

107. *famae petiere insignia*: ‘tokens of fame’; cf. *Stil.* 2.218–9 for the same expression.

108. *diversa ... trans aequora*: ‘beyond the distant seas’, opting for the spatial notion of *diversus* (*OLD s.v. diversus*, 4); *diversa aequora* is a Virgilian expression (cf. Verg.

Aen. 1.376, 3.325, 12.742).

109–10. *currus regumque catenae* / ... *ductae*: the image of the *pompa triumphalis* concludes Claudian's reverie of past military achievements on a grand scale. The long procession from the *Campus Martius* to the *Forum Romanum* not only represented the highest honour for a general, but was also a spectacle meant to impress the power of Rome's military machine in the mind of the whole population; the occurrence was also marked by donations of money and festival games. Triumphal carts (*currus*), which carried the enemy's spoils, were hauled across the city and captive kings (*regum catenae*) were paraded through the streets before being killed in the prison known as the *Tullianum*. This was most famously the end of Jugurtha (Sall. *Iug.* 114.3; for his death, see also Liv. *Perioch.* 67, Plut. *Mar.* 12.2–4) and Vercingetorix (Dio 43.19), but Augustus himself records the display of captured kings in his *Res Gestae* (1.4.27, *in triumphis meis ducti sunt ante currum meum reges aut regum liberi novem*). The image became a commonplace in Augustan poetry: see Prop. 2.1.33 (*aut regum aurati circumdata colla catenis*), based on Hor. *Od.* 2.12.11–12 (*ductaque per vias / regum colla minacium*; for more parallels alongside Horace, see Fedeli 2005 *comm. ad loc.*); *Epiced. Drusi* 273 (*aspiciam regum liventia colla catenis*); Ov. *Trist.* 4.2.21 (*vinclaque captiva reges cervice gerentes*); it was then picked up, among others, by Pliny in *Paneg.* 17.2, (*sed hostilibus armis captorumque regum catenis triumphum gravem*). Comparing this passage by Claudian with the end of the depiction of Stilicho's triumph in *Stil.* 3.14–25, Birt conjectures *urbes* instead of *currus*, referring to the custom of parading images of conquered towns during the triumphal procession and arguing that *currus* does not fit as well with the following *reges*; the conjecture however does not seem justified in the light of the manuscript tradition and of parallels such as Lucan. 10.277 (*et Pharios currus regum cervicibus egit*), and Birt in fact confines his observations to the apparatus. The noun *catenae* has also been the object of scrutiny: Heinsius and Gesner print *catervae*, transmitted as a correction by Hall's *W*₁ and as a reading by few others; the parallels brought up in connection with this verse, however, all point to the relevance of chains as a key element in the description of the triumph and especially in relation with captive kings. Another pointer in this direction is constituted by the possible echo of this line in one of Claudian's most painstaking imitators, Sidonius (*Maior.* 589, *et regum aspicient Capitolia fulva catenas*).

The expression *regum catenae ductae* is a hypallage: the participle is referred grammatically to the nominative *catenae*, but logically it is the kings (*regum*) who are drawn along, rather than their chains. The plural ‘of kings’ should be understood cumulatively as referred to all the kings (and queens) paraded in a similar way during different triumphal processions, or – as maintained by Gesner – as encompassing also the captives’ relatives.

110. inter abundantis fati ludibria ductae: ‘led in the midst of mockery by an overflowing fate’. The depiction of the carts and prisoners being led ‘in the midst of mockery’ points to the taunting jests which normally accompanied the celebration of the triumph and were directed at the victorious general in order to remind him of the transient nature of his success and therefore ward *hybris* off: see *TLL s.v. ludibrium*, 7.2.1759.24–25; Hickson-Hahn 2015; Charlet 2018, 197. The words can sometimes be used in a more hostile way to describe insults at the expenses of a prisoner see e.g. Suetonius’ description of the treatment of Vitellius before his death (*Vit.* 17.1, *seminudus in Forum tractus est inter magna rerum verborum ludibria per tota per totum viae Sacrae spatium*). Claudian plays with these concrete meanings: the jests are therefore simultaneously those of the imaginary crowd who assists to the *pompa triumphalis* and the abstract ones played by fate, which lowers the victorious generals and abases the defeated kings.

111–23. *The ideal leader.*

Since Alaric’s forces have already penetrated the Alpine arc and have indeed already clashed with the Roman army in northern Italy on a couple of occasions at the time he composed the poem (first near Milan, then at Pollentia), Claudian switches to the description of past invasions of Italy and of Rome’s resilience in such circumstances in order to ground Stilicho’s action within an authoritative tradition. Before pointing to concrete examples in the next section (vv. 124–65) and after having sketched a broad – and ideal – picture of ancient senatorial policy, aligning it with Stilicho’s own behaviour as invariably represented and justified in the poem (vv. 104–10), he construes the image of a leader capable of countering an invasion by outlining the virtues that the Senate would be seeking in such a figure: moderation and self-restraint,

resilience against setbacks, mature judgement, the capability of waiting for the right moment to act. These characteristics implicitly point to all the qualities associated with Stilicho. While underlining the merits of an ideal leader, Claudian also points the finger at the opposite bad traits he would manifestly not have. The main opposition consists in the difference between someone who knows how to take measured decisions (Stilicho) and someone who would yield to a fleeting impulse or jeopardise their people's security in a foolhardy gamble (Alaric). The two contrasting sets of merits and demerits constitute one of the interpretative keys through which the subsequent sequence of events narrated in the poem should be read. By insisting on the leader's ability to adjust their action to the circumstances, in particular through delay (v. 118, *spatiumque morandi*), Claudian implicitly justifies Stilicho's own delaying in defeating the Goths by alluding to the famous precedent of Quintus Fabius Maximus, the Cunctator. In fact, not only is Fabius explicitly mentioned in v. 139, but his figure is also hinted at, through the choice of vocabulary, in the second part of this section, which echoes a passage from the *Punica*, in which Jupiter himself inspires the Romans to commit their safety to the leadership of Fabius (Sil. 6.611–12, *Fabioque salutis habenas credere ductori*). As Alaric has already been broadcasted in *Bellum Geticum* as a latter-day Hannibal, it is not surprising to find Claudian capitalising on this kind of apology and appealing to the Senate to follow the precedent set by their respected ancestors by entrusting the management of the empire to the right kind of ruler: Stilicho.

111. at vero Italiam quotiens: a punning allusion to the appearance of Mezentius on the battlefield in Verg. *Aen.* 10.762 (*at vero ingentem quotiens Mezentius hastam / turbidus ingreditur campo*), echoed also by Valerius Flaccus in his *Argonautica* (6.345, *at vero ingentem Telamon procul extulit orbem*). The adjective *turbidus*, which Virgil uses to describe the bursting force of Mezentius' entrance on the battlefield, originally refers to whirling water and is employed in particular to define the tossing waves of the sea during the raging of a storm; this semantic connection suggests that the action of the warrior is similar to a storm, an element which is central in Claudian's passage (cf. *tempestas* in v. 112). For examples of punning allusions in the text of Ammianus, see Kelly (2008), 203–4.

circumstetit: the verb is often used for enveloping dangers from which there seems to be no escape, but it is also commonly employed for negative feelings such as fear, anxiety, anguish, *e.g.* Verg. *Aen.* 2.559 (*at me tum primum saevus circumstetit horror*); Ov. *Trist.* 5.6.41 (*tam me circumstat densorum turba malorum*). Claudian uses this same verb to represent the ghosts of those whom Rufinus has brought to death and who haunt him at night as ‘standing around’ him, almost as personifications of his guilt (*Ruf.* 2.458–9, *tunc animae, quas ille fero sub iure peremit / circumstant*; cf. the ghosts of the fallen at the Battle of the Trebia evoked by Flaminius in Sil. 5.127–8, *umbrarum me noctibus atris / agmina circumstant*). The verb brings in a sense of looming disaster.

111–12. atrox / tempestas: *tempestas* originally indicated a period of time; in classical Latin, it was increasingly employed to indicate either bad or good weather, before being definitely polarised in the negative sense of ‘storm’, the only meaning which now remains in modern Romance languages (for example, Italian *tempesta*, French *tempête*, Portuguese *tempestade*). It was also often employed as a metaphor for violent times and political turmoil, *e.g.* Cic. *Sul.* 40 (*in illa turbulentissima tempestate rei publicae*), albeit always with the qualification of a negative adjective, without which the term would still maintain its neutral meaning, *e.g.* Liv. 27.37.13 (*illa tempestate*, ‘at that time’). In this passage, Claudian unmistakably marks *tempestas* as a ‘storm’ through the adjective *atrox*, ‘terrible’, ‘dreadful’. He uses the same adjective again in v. 390 to characterise the offence (*iniuria*) given by Philip of Macedonia to the Romans by thinking he could exploit their struggle with Hannibal to carve out a space for himself; indeed, as in this passage, the poet exploits that historical example to demonstrate Roman readiness in answering to a military provocation, even when pressed by another problem. The juxtaposition of the two terms *tempestas* and *atrox* appears also in a couple of passages by Livy (21.58.3 and 40.2.1; cf. also 30.39.1, *atrox vis tempestatis*) and, in particular, in Tac. *Ann.* 11.31 (*Vettius Valens ... interrogantibus quid aspiceret, respondisse tempestatem ab Ostia atrocem*). In this last passage, Vettius Valens, one of Messalina’s lovers, claims to see a storm coming from Ostia during the celebrations of Messalina’s wedding to Gaius Silius, a storm which Tacitus unmask as a political metaphor for the tough incoming reaction of Claudius, which will ultimately lead to the execution of Messalina and Silius.

In his edition Birt conjectures *atra*, ‘dark’, instead of *atrox*, based on the model provided by *Aen.* 2.516 (where Hecuba and her daughters around the altars are compared to swallows harried by a dark storm), but he restricts this suggestion to the apparatus. In general, *atra* is found more often associated with *tempestas* (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 5.693–4), but this does not justify changing the text, especially since *atrox* is securely attested by the manuscript tradition. It is interesting, however, to consider the parallel offered by Sil. 7.723–4 (*dum demum Tyriis quas circumfuderat atra / tempestas, Stygiae tandem fugere tenebrae*, where *quas* should refer to the army of Minucius, which was beleaguered by Hannibal, but managed a miraculous escape). Both poets play on atmospheric elements, such as stormy weather, darkness and clouds, as metaphors for an enemy’s assault. Silius’ *circumfundo* is close to Claudian’s *circumsto*: they share the preposition *circum*, which refers to a surrounding danger, although the former describes a movement, whereas the second expresses stillness. The storm of Silius, in fact, represents Hannibal, who was well known precisely for the pincher movement he so successfully executed at Cannae; Claudian, on the other hand, is clearly alluding to the ‘Hannibalic’ figure of Alaric.

112. ipsumque caput laesura: ‘about to bring damage to its very capital’. The word *caput* is regularly employed as a byword for Rome (*TLL s.v. caput*, 3.0.426.29–54) and Claudian himself makes this connection explicit in *Gild.* 459, where Jupiter calls the divine personification of the city *caput insuperabile rerum*. Rome as ‘head’ of Italy and capital city of the world is implied also in *Get.* 300–301 (the expression *considet regnum Rhodano capitique superstes / truncus erit?*). In that passage, Stilicho rebukes the Roman senators for considering running away from the Goths and leaving Rome (*caput*) behind in order to seek safety elsewhere in the empire (*truncus*, ‘trunk, body’). By alluding to the fact that Rome itself had been at risk of coming to harm and by drawing attention to the exceptionality of this circumstance through the intensive pronoun *ipse*, the poet picks up again on the impression induced by the concerns voiced in vv. 95–100, namely how dangerous could it be to allow the Goths too close to Rome. The future participle *laesura* conveys the idea of imminence or purpose. Starting from the first century AD onwards, the future participle is increasingly used alone to express the same meanings of the periphrastic construction with *sum*: see Ernout-Thomas 1951, 236–7.

113–14. non illis ... placebat: ‘it was not acceptable to them’. The demonstrative

pronoun *illis* stands for the senators who are explicitly mentioned as *patres* in v. 106 and then expressed once again by the ablative pronoun *his* in v. 107; they are the subject of the actions, resolutions and opinions expressed by the verbs *vigerent* (v. 105), *florerent* (v. 106), *petiere* (v. 107) and *placebat* (v. 114), and it is mainly to them that Claudian is appealing during the performance of his poem.

113. vani ... favoris: the reading *favoris* – ‘vain approbation’ – is attested by the majority of manuscripts. Hall’s P₂ and Z, together with the *Excerpta Gyraldina* (see *comm. ad v.* 18), read *furoris* – ‘vain fury’. Birt prints this variant arguing that the idea of *furor* contrasts nicely with the following concept of ‘timely resolution’ (*maturo consilio* in vv. 116–17) and that the juxtaposition of the adjectives *ventosus* and *furibundus* finds a parallel in HA 29.7.4. Through a second variant *timoris*, ‘fear’, transmitted by Hall’s F₃, Heinsius conjectures *tumoris*, a medical term which indicates a ‘swelling’ in the body and that by extension is used for ‘excitement’ or ‘proud arrogance’ (*OLS s.v. tumor* 3 and 4); Heinsius’ suggestion, therefore, still pertains to the same semantic field of the reading *furor*. Whereas the variants *furoris* and *timoris* can be more easily explained as mistakes or conjectures due to the context of the passage, which talks about an imminent and dreadful risk, the reading *favoris* is less easy to justify in the same way. As the desire for other people’s approbation could lead to actions that do not consider the best interest of the commonwealth in the long term, but only immediate approval, choosing *favoris* does not contrast with the idea, expressed in this passage, that a leader who takes decisions on a whim and without judging the long-term consequences, was not the choice of the senators of the past. In fact, a leader like Fabius Maximus, who is clearly adumbrated in this section as a model for Stilicho, became famous exactly for not yielding to easy and popular solutions to the conflict with Hannibal when he thought that inaction and delay were actually the best solution for the defence of Rome. (*Enn. Ann.* 371–3 Sk.). The virtues of Fabius and Stilicho are implicitly transferred to the Senate as the initiator of a sound policy through their choice of leader.

ventosa: the adjective literally means ‘windy’. Given its reference to wind, it can suggest both something that changes continuously – ‘inconstant, fickle’ – and something full of air, ‘puffed up, vain’. Both meanings would work in the context of the passage. According to Pliny the Younger, the Egyptians were conceited men (*Pan.* 31.2,

superbiebat ventosa et insolens natio), a description which is reiterated in *HA* 29.7.4 (*sunt enim Aegyptii, ut satis nosti, viri ventosi, furibundi*). Cf. also Drances' *ventosa lingua* in Verg. *Aen.* 11.390, Camilla's *ventosa gloria* in the accusations of Aunus' son (*Aen.* 11.708) and the windy chariot of Fame in Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.177. In the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius labels the personification of *Superbia*, the sin of Pride, *ventosa virago* (v. 194) and her whole physical description in the poem revolves around the element of air (a representation which is in turn indebted to the portrayal of the warrior and ex-priest Chloereus in Verg. *Aen.* 11.768–7).

114. graviter spectata salus: 'earnestly sought safety'. Throughout his poems, Claudian presents Stilicho as the champion of Rome's *salus*, the general well-being and the physical integrity of the empire; Stilicho cherishes *salus* as a goal (*Ruf.* 1.283) or represents Rome's only hope of deliverance from those who would harm her rule already (*Eutr.* 2.501–2, *Stil.* 1.374, 3.64–5). The poet even claims that the assistance given by the inhabitants of the Alpine valleys to Stilicho during his journey through those mountains to Raetia ensured Rome's deliverance, thus equalling Stilicho's personal safety to that of the state (*Get.* 362–3, *illae tibi, Roma, salutem / Alpinae peperere casae*).

ductor: 'leader', but chiefly 'military commander', used indifferently to designate Roman and foreign generals (e.g. referred to Turnus in Verg. *Aen.* 9.691; to Hannibal in Sil. 1.189). The term understandably crops up often in epic. Although in this passage Claudian is moulding the portrayal of an ideal leader, Stilicho was the highest military authority in the West at that moment and indeed he is called *ductor* later in the poem (v. 468), as well as in other five occurrences in the *carmina maiora* (*Ruf.* 2.196; *Epith.* 334; *Stil.* 1.160; 2.234, 392), thus corroborating the idea that Stilicho is implied behind the generic description. Claudian attests to the military connotation of the term in *Eutr.* 1.297 (*numquam spado consul in orbe / nec iudex ductorve fuit*), where he underlines the uniqueness of Eutropius' pretense, among other things, to be a general.

placebat: the verb *placeo* used impersonally in the past tense takes on the technical meaning of a decision agreed upon, in particular by the Senate (*OLD s.v. placeo* 5). The decision referred to is the choice of a leader, which is developed at length in vv. 115–9. The imperfect implies that the action was repeated and that the

Senate would habitually choose this option.

115–17. This defence is connected not only with the current situation, but also with previous difficult moments in Stilicho's confrontations with the Goths, since he had failed to engage a decisive battle against them in at least two other occasions (see *above* pp. 51–4). Claudian tries to put a positive spin on the events, by implying that the reason for the apparent fiascos was neither collusion with the enemy nor incapacity (both criticisms were presumably moved against Stilicho), but adherence to a measured and judicious strategy, which shunned reckless and ill-advised action and had the best interest of Rome close to its heart. In fact, Claudian attributes to Alaric precisely the opposite faults throughout the poem: impulsiveness and overconfidence.

115. The idea expressed in this verse is that the Senators would not choose as their leader someone who would risk everything in just one daring action. Claudian rejects the model provided by the literary figure of Julius Caesar fashioned by Lucan: Caesar's decision to engage a decisive battle with Pompey at Pharsalus, for example, is glossed with an expression very close to that of this verse (7.238–9, *oblatum videt ... / tempus, in extremos quo mitteret omnia casus*). He favours a more prudent approach, which is ascribed to Stilicho also elsewhere in his poems: in *Stil.* 1.363–8, for example, Claudian stresses that during the expedition against Gildo nothing had been left to luck (v. 362, *nil tribuat Fortuna sibi*), but that on the contrary the mission had been planned in a way that its completion was not gambled in just one battle nor at a throw of the dice (vv. 364–6, *non uni certamina pugnae / credidimus totis nec constitit alea castris / nutatura semel*), and that another stronger fleet – commanded by a stronger general, Stilicho – was ready to sail off in case it was needed (vv. 366–8).

praecipiti ... casu: cf. Enn. *Ann.* 390 Sk. (*praecipe casu*, with the old form of the adjective *praecipēs*), echoed also in Sen. *Ag.* 71, (*ut praecipites regum casus / Fortuna rotat*), Lucan. 5.746 (*praecipites aderunt casus*), Sil. 6.121 (*per varios praeceps casus rota volvitur aevi*); in prose, cf. Sall. *Iug.* 8.2, Cic. *De Orat.* 3.13 and Liv. 6.25.3. The noun *casus*, from the verb *cado*, indicates a 'fall'. The poem did open with a comparison between Stilicho's rescue of Rome and Tiphys' avoidance of the crashing down of the Symplegades (v. 6, *ancipitem ... ruinam*). *Casus* can also indicate an 'event, chance, occurrence', often in the sense of a misfortune or of a danger: Claudian employs it frequently with this last meaning and the two notions are so strictly

intertwined that it is almost impossible to separate them.

traheret: in this passage, the verb *traho* acquires the specific meaning of ‘to dragging down in one’s fall’ (see *OLD s.v. traho* 8b), in which the responsibility of a reckless leader for the potential ruin of Rome is underlined. Cf. Sil. 8.333, where the expression *trahit omnia secum* is referred to the consul Terentius Varro, who – in the words of his colleague Lucius Aemilius Paulus – acts as a madman (v. 334, *demens*; v. 337, *insano*; v. 338, *superbus*) and whose action favours the enemy (cf. App. *Hann.* 17–18), which reports the same divergence between the two consuls that will be re-enacted by Silius Italicus. Although there is not a lot of reliable evidence about the historical figure of Terentius Varro and his character, the historiographic and literary tradition have mostly held him responsible for the defeat of Cannae (e.g. Val. Max. 3.4.4 and 4.5.2), forged him into the opponent of Fabius’ politics (e.g. Liv. 22.34.2) and aggravated such a negative portrayal by sometimes debasing him because of his status as *homo novus* (e.g. Liv. 22.25.18–19).

semel omnia: ‘everything in one go’. For the expression, cf. Lucan. 2.147–8 (*semel omnia victor / iusserat*), a reference to Sulla’s proscriptions, and 3.296–7 (*acciperet felix ne non semel omnia Caesar, / vincendum pariter Pharsalia praestitit orbem*); the second occurrence, in particular, contributes to the presentation of Julius Caesar as the daring leader who is blessed by luck even when he defies danger.

116–17. maturo ... / consilio: the adjective *maturus*, ‘ripe, mature’, can be referred either objectively to *consilium* as ‘fully developed measures’ – as opposed to the flip-of-the-coin approach rejected in v. 115 – or subjectively to the agent responsible for the *consilium* as ‘measures which originate from experience’; either way the idea is clearly of a leader who thinks seriously about his strategy and who is able to wait for the right moment to act. *Maturus* is also used to describe Arcadius and Honorius’ management of the affairs of the state in *III Hon.* 183 (*maturo moderamine*).

vel laeta vel aspera rerum / ... momenta: ‘in prosperity and through adversities’. As in the English expression ‘thick and thin’, the two adjectives contrast nicely with each other: *laetus* can be used to indicate fertile soil (*OLD s.v. laetus* 1b), whereas one of the meanings of *asper* designates rough terrain and uncultivated land (*OLD s.v. asper* 4a–b). Pliny exploits the same juxtaposition in *Pan.* 7.3, where he praises Trajan for becoming Nerva’s imperial colleague not because he was attracted

by the advantageous conditions brought by power (*prospera et laeta*), but rather because he wanted to share its hardships (*aspera et dura*). *Rerum momenta* conveys the idea of a decisive stage in the course of the events (*OLD s.v. momentum* 6): cf. Liv. 3.27.7 (*puncto saepe temporis maximarum rerum momenta verti*), 27.9.1 (*adeo ex parvis saepe magnarum momenta rerum pendent*); *Gild.* 251 (*ad rerum momenta cliens*).

117–19. nec tristibus ... habenis: the portrayal of the ideal leader continues with the warning that he should measure up to unhappy circumstances, as well as restraining himself when he is successful; especially, he must be able to adapt his own policies to the situation. Together with the specific historical precedent of the dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus, who has gone down in history as ‘the Delayer’ for avoiding a direct conflict with Hannibal, the idea expressed in these lines and some of the imagery Claudian employs recall the strategies adopted during sporting contests. During the chariot race at the funerary games held in honour of Scipio Africanus’ father and uncle, narrated in the *Punica*, one of the contenders, Cynus, is too eager and spends all his horse’s energies too early, thus prompting the most experienced spectators to reproach him: ‘*quo nimius, quo, Cyrne, ruis? (nam Cynus agebat) / verbera dimitte et revoca moderatus habenas*’ (Sil. 16.342–3). The metaphor of the charioteer, who should save the strength of his horses in view of the long duration of the race and not burn them out immediately, thus becomes a means to convey the effectiveness of Stilicho’s leadership.

118. pro successu nimius: ‘immoderate because of success’. Too much confidence is detrimental also to Durius, one of the charioteers in the already mentioned race in honour of the Scipiones, who, betrayed by his assurance of victory, drops his whip and loses control of his team of horses (Sil. 16.431–2, *et, ni successu nimio laetoque pavore / proditus*). Intemperance due to success can lead to lack of discipline and thus to military disasters as in the case of the battle recklessly engaged by the praetor Gnaeus Fulvius Flaccus, pushed by his own undisciplined troops, against Hannibal in 212 BC (Liv. 25.20.6–21.10). Hannibal himself actually justifies his decision not to press the Romans after Cannae with a desire to be moderate in his success in Sil. 10.379 (*ac nimium laetis excusat fidere rebus*); for him, however, this will not prove the road to success.

118–19. spatiumque morandi / vincendi modum ... nosset: ‘who knew the time to

wait and the way to win'. These two supreme qualities merge in one person the acumen of Quintus Fabius Maximus – who 'by delaying restored the state' (*unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem*, Enn. *Ann.* 363 Sk.; reworked as *unus qui nobis cunctando restituit rem* in Verg. *Aen.* 6.846) – and the military genius of Cornelius Scipio Africanus. The two nouns *spatium* and *modus* are both followed by the genitive of the gerund and indicate respectively the time and the way to obtain something; the two constructions are arranged in a chiasmus with mirroring grammatical structures (noun + gerund / gerund + noun), thus giving a sense of closure and completeness.

119. mutatis ... habenis: 'by shifting the pressure on the reins', i.e. 'by changing the manner of ruling' (*TLL s.v. habena*, 6.3.2394.30–31 records this meaning). The metaphorical use of the plural *habenae* to describe the management of immaterial or abstract entities is very common: see e.g. Aeolus' competence in governing the winds (Verg. *Aen.* 1.63, *et premere et laxas sciret dare iussus habenas*); a flexible approach to friendship explained in Cic. *Lael.* 45 (*commodissimum esse quam laxissimas habenas habere amicitiae, quas vel adducas cum velis vel remittas*); yielding to unbridled joy on the occasion of Honorius' wedding in *Epith.* 200–201 (*solvantur habenis / gaudia*). The metaphor is also often used to refer to politics: see e.g. the authority of the Senate in Cic. *De Orat.* 1.226 (*cui [sc. Senati] populus ipse moderandi et regendi sui potestatem, quasi quasdam habenas, tradidisset*); King Latinus' relinquishing his power in Verg. *Aen.* 7.600 (*rerumque relinquit habenas*); Ov. *Met.* 15.481 (*accepisse Numam populi Latialis habenas*); Sil. 10.282 (*dic, oro, rerum Fabio tradantur habenae*), 13.34 (*[sc. Hannibal] Latiae diffisus habenae*); see *TLL s.v. habena*, 6.3.2393.80–2394.33. The political use of the image of the reins crops up very often in Claudian's poems: see the speech of the goddess Aurora when she pleads for Stilicho's intervention in the East against Eutropius (*Eutr.* 2.544–5, *rursum Stilichonis habenis / sperabam me posse regi*); Theodosius' commitment of the Empire to Honorius (*III Hon.* 83, *ille ... rerumque tibi commendat habenas*; cf. *IV Hon.* 422); the criticism of Gildo's power to entrust the command of Africa to whomever he chooses (*Gild.* 279, *cui placet, australes Gildo condonat habenas*); the description of public office (*Theod.* 13, *reducem notis imponit habenis*); the description of Eutropius' supreme power (*Eutr.* 2 *pr.* 1, *qui modo sublimes rerum flectebat habenas*); the control exercised by Stilicho over Germany (*Get.* 426, *iam sese placidam praebet Stilichonis habenis*); the choice

of Theodosius as emperor (*Carm. min.* 30.111, *denique cum rerum summas electus habenas*). Cf. Auson. *Ep.* 24.17 for another occurrence of the ablative absolute *mutatis habenis*.

120–3. Claudian emphasises the importance of self-control, caution and discernment as essential requirements in a leader at a crucial moment of danger by juxtaposing to the description of such qualities the image of a doctor who treats with more caution fatal diseases and inflammations which are closer to vital organs in order to avoid cutting too deep and thus causing a mortal damage. From the point of view of the content, the image is the reverse of that employed by Lucan to denounce the overkill of Sulla’s proscriptions of 82 BC: Lucan compares Sulla’s inordinate retaliation to an aggressive medical treatment, a sort of surgical fury which ultimately did not benefit – but rather damaged – the patient, i.e. the Republic (2.141–3, [*ille*] *dumque nimis iam putria membra recidit / excessit medicina modum, nimiumque secuta est, / qua morbi duxere, manus*); on the representation of the proscriptions by Lucan, see Walter 2011, 62–3; on the parallel between Claudian and Lucan, cf. Broganelli 2017. The image of the doctor and the need for caution while he treats an illness goes back at least to Pindar’s fourth *Pythian Ode*, written for king Arcesilaus IV of Cyrene to celebrate his victory in the chariot race at the games of 462 BC. In the ode (4.270–71), the dedicatee is compared to a surgeon who is blessed by Apollo (v. 270, ἔσσι δ’ ἰατῆρ ἐπικαιρότατος Παιάν τέ σοι τιμᾶ φάος; note the use of the epithet Παιάν for the god, see *comm. ad v.* 121) and who must apply a light hand to a festering wound (v. 271, χρῆ μαλακὰν χέρα προσβάλλοντα τρώμαν ἔλκεος ἀμφιπολεῖν).

120–1. ingentes morbos et ... / ulcera: ‘severe illnesses and ... a sore’. These ailments symbolise the Goths, whose threat to Rome equals that of a disease for the body. I do not agree with Peder Christiansen’s claim that ‘comparing Alaric and the Goths to a sore minimizes the threat’ (Christiansen 1969, 21): a wound near the heart seems a pretty serious affair to me. Terminology pertaining to the semantic field of malady to qualify the enemies of the state is employed both in prose and in poetry: Cicero, for example, labels Catiline and his accomplices a pestilence (*Catil.* 1.30, 4.3, *pestis*) and a disease (*Catil.* 1.31, *morbis*) for the Republic, and does the same, for example, with regards to Mark Antony (*Phil.* 4.7, *pestis*); Livy calls Hannibal a boil (*vomica*, 25.12.9) and in Silius Italicus’ *Punica*, the dying consul Lucius Aemilius

Paulus refers to him as a pestilence (10.281, *pestis*); for Velleius Paterculus, the return of Marius to Rome is noxious (Vell. 2.22.1, *pestifer*). In all these examples, the state is conceived as a living body which is subjected to the influence of infections and inflammations, represented both by external enemies and by internal dissension. The use of such metaphoric language originates in Greek political discourse and it is first attested in Solon's fr. 4.17 West, where civil strife is described as a wound: for other early Greek examples, see Brock 2013 (the metaphor is often found also in Greek tragedy and in historiography). Roman writers, in particular historians and orators, picked up on this medical imagery and spoke of an unhealthy state when some danger or unrest threatened it: see e.g. Cic. *Ses.* 135, *ei medentur rei publicae, qui exsecant pestem aliquam tamquam strumam civitatis*; Att. 6.1.2, where Cicero describes the regime of a previous governor in Cilicia as a medical treatment; Liv. 28.27.7–8, *invitus ea tamquam vulnera attingo; sed nisi tacta tractataque sanari non possunt*, where Scipio compares a mutiny in Spain to a wound. This type of images is not absent from poetry either, as demonstrated by Claudian and by the example from the *Punica* quoted above. For further discussion on this type of language and in particular about Catiline's pollution of the state according to Cicero, see Walters 2011, 64–77.

For a coeval different application of the metaphor from a Christian point of view not to an enemy of state, but to religion, cf. the preamble of Prud. *C. Symm.* 1.9–18, where Prudentius insists on the comparison of Rome's paganism to a disease (v. 1, *vitiis aegram gentilibus urbem*; v. 2, *antiqui pepulisse pericula morbi*; vv. 14–15, *publica morum / plaga*; v. 15, *cicatricem*; v. 16, *tabentis vulneris*) and describes the emperor's intervention in favour of Christianity as a medicine (vv. 3–4, *postquam medicina / principis inmodicos sedarat in arce dolores*; v. 14, *vir solus cui cura fuit*).

proxima cordi: 'close to the heart'. The heart, as the seat of life (*TLL s.v. cor* 1, 4.0.931.26–45), can be identified with Rome, the symbolic core of the empire. Claudian makes this association explicit later in the poem: in his speech of encouragement before the battle of Pollentia, Stilicho reminds his soldiers that they are fighting at the 'very heart' of their country (vv. 577–8, *visceribus mediis ipsoque in corde videtis / bella geri*; cf. Rut. 2.47, *visceribus nudis armatum condidit hostem*). The proximity of the wound represented by the Goths to the 'heart' of the empire – Rome – calls for extreme caution (v. 120 *cautius*).

121. Paeoniae ... sollertia curae: ‘the ingenuity of the Paeonian care’. Paeon appears as a deity in his own right in the Homeric poems (e.g. Zeus reports that he healed Hades in *Il.* 5.401), but his jurisdiction on the medical arts is later assimilated by Apollo and his name becomes one of this god’s attributes. The adjective is used to refer to medicine and is applied to substances that have a healing effect, such as herbs (Verg. *Aen.* 7.769; Homer. 351; *Eutr.* 2.12) and waters (Sil. 14.27; *Carm. min.* 26.67), but also to qualify anything that has to do with the medical profession (Verg. *Aen.* 12.401, alluded to in Stat. *Silv.* 1.4.108; Ov. *Met.* 15.535; Avian. *Fab.* 6.7; Rut. 1.75); the epithet is associated also with Asclepius in *Stil.* 3.173 (*Paeonium ... draconem*, since Asclepius establishes himself on the Tiberine island in the form of a snake; echoed in Sidon. *Anthem.* 126).

When he greets the chorus in front of his palace in Mycenae in the first tragedy of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, Agamemnon employs medical language in a political sense and speaks of ‘Paeonian remedies’ (φαρμάκων παωνίων) as a way to heal the city (Aesch. *Ag.* 848–50). In this passage the tools of medicine, cauterisation and incision, are invoked as a remedy for the state and the image appeals also to Roman writers, cf. for example Cic. *Phil.* 8.15 (*In corpore si quid eius modi est quod reliquo corpori noceat, id uri secarique patimur, ut membrum aliquod potius quam totum corpus intereat. Sic in rei publicae corpore, ut totum salvum sit, quicquid est pestiferum amputetur*). The development of the image of a saviour-type figure, which combines the roles of the political/military leader – or of the ruler in imperial times – with that of a healer, follows the evolution of the metaphor of the ailing state (cf. *comm. ad vv.* 120–1). In Claudian’s metaphor, therefore, Stilicho is implied as the healer of the state and ‘the ingenuity of the Paeonian care’ is really Stilicho’s ingenuity in defending Rome. In fact, the healing powers of Stilicho are celebrated later in *Bellum Geticum* (vv. 436–9), where Stilicho is celebrated for restoring vigour to sick cities (v. 437, *membra vigor vivusque redit color urbibus aegris*) without even the need for medicaments (vv. 441–5).

tractat: the ending in *-to* betrays the frequentative origin of this verbal form, derived from *traho*. In the medical context, it acquires the technical meaning of ‘handling’, ‘treating manually’; it is employed in this sense, for example, by Scipio while he speaks about a mutiny in Spain (Liv. 28.27.7–8, cf. *comm. ad vv.* 120–21),

but also in Celsus' technical treaty *On Medicine* (7.14.4; 8.2.5).

122. *parcendoque secat*: the gerund ablative indicates the manner in which the action expressed by the main verb is carried out, 'cuts sparingly' or 'without injuring'. In *De Clementia*, a treatise whose topic – mercy – is particularly relevant to the portrait of Stilicho that Claudian wants to create in this section of the poem, Seneca advocates moderation when a ruler must exact punishment. Seneca begins with the premise that the emperor is the soul of the *res publica*, which in turn represents the body of the ruler; by exercising moderation towards the citizens, therefore, the emperor is first of all preserving his own body and thus himself. Wrongdoing, according to Seneca, should be treated with the same care with which bleeding is performed by a doctor: to avoid the loss of too much blood, the incision should not be too deep (*Clem.* 1.5.1, *parcendum itaque est etiam improbandis civibus non aliter quam membris languentibus, et, si quando misso sanguine opus est, sustinenda est manus, ne ultra, quam necesse sit, incidat*).

By talking about the control which should be exercised by medical practitioners, Claudian goes back to the concept of moderation already advocated in vv. 90–103. The use of *parcere* in connection with this topic is not arbitrary, but constitutes a pointed reference to the approach famously formulated by Virgil in *Aen.* 6.853 (*parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*). The same verb is used by Rutilius Namatianus to allude to the same passage, when he talks about the origins of Rome and her descent from the combination of the goddess of love, Venus, and the god of war, Mars (*Rut.* 1.70–71).

ferro ... acto: cf. *Ov. Met.* 8.532 (*exegit poenas acto per viscera ferro*).

122–3. *ne ... / irrevocandus eat ... error*: 'in order that an error may not turn out to be irreversible'. The adjective *irrevocandus*, obtained from the combination of the preposition *in* and the gerundive form of *revoco*, is a hapax found only in this passage (*TLL s.v. irrevocandus*, 7.2.413.16–19); its cognate form *irrevocabilis* is, on the contrary, very frequent: cf. the expression *irrevocabilis error* in *Paul. Nol. Carm.* 27.541. In this passage, *irrevocandus* has a predicative function and completes the meaning of *eat*, which in this case acquires a similar meaning to that of *evenio* or *fio*: 'to happen, to turn out (in certain way)': see *TLL s.v. eo*, 5.2.650.79–80; *OLD s.v. eo* 20.

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