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Bryn Mawr Classical Review

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Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers, Fritz Felgentreu, Stephen Wheeler, *Aetas Claudianea. Eine Tagung an der Freien Universität Berlin vom 28. bis 30. Juni 2002*. München/Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2004. Pp. xviii, 258. ISBN 3-598-73020-9. €88.00.

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

This book contains a selection of the papers presented at the *Aetas Claudianea* conference held at Berlin's Freie Universität in June 2002.¹ In the volume's excellent introduction (pp. i-xiii, in German), which includes summaries of the essays and their relationship to current topics in Claudian scholarship, the editors state that the conference was organized to address the question of whether and how Claudian was representative of late antique Latin verse, and to support the renaissance of Claudian scholarship that followed the publication of A. Cameron's seminal monograph, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970). In their literary approach to Claudian's works, the essays in this collection begin to answer these questions, and should foster even more interest in this author.

This volume will be required reading for students of Claudian, and offers much of value to scholars of late antique literary culture and the Classical Tradition in general. In their inclusion of extensive references and supplementary material, most contributors appear to be aiming at an audience beyond that of the Claudian specialist, and taken together the twelve contributions in this volume provide a valuable introduction to the current questions and challenges of Claudian scholarship, as well as a useful overview of its bibliography. Of the twelve contributions, six are in German, four in English, and two in Italian.

In the book's first essay, "Claudian and the City: Poetry and Pride of Place" (pp. 1-15), Jacqueline Long explores how Claudian uses the "language of places and presence to imply [...] that his work interacted with Rome." Long notes that Claudian's descriptions of Rome focus on the city's topography, in particular the personified Tiber, which often serves metonymically for the city and Roman society. Long explores how Claudian employs descriptions of physical topography to give passages "sensory authenticity;" manipulates topography in the service of panegyric; and projects poetry onto the landscape, as when images of Giants hanging from the Tarpeian Rock introduce a dizzying, almost hallucinatory, panorama of the city. Although Claudian minimizes references to Roman monuments, some do play important roles in his poems

-- such as the Rostra, which serves as the center of political activity for Stilicho and Honorius, linking them with republican governance and illustrious figures of the past. Claudian's topographical descriptions of Rome help elevate it above the other imperial cities (Milan and Constantinople), which in Claudian's poems lack distinctive topography and are never personified.

Claudia Schindler's essay, "Tradition - Transformation - Innovation: Claudian's Panegyrics and the Epos" (pp. 16-37), documents the function of epic themes and devices in Claudian's six consular panegyrics, *Bellum Geticum*, and *In Gildonem*.² In the four sections of her essay, Schindler 1) identifies the presence and effects of individual epic elements on Claudian's panegyrics; 2) investigates how epic elements are integrated into the strict rhetorical form of the panegyric; 3) illuminates points of contact with related genres (e.g. rhetorical works; didactic epic; epyllion); and 4) discusses how epic elements reinforce the praise of the poem's protagonist. Although Claudian consciously casts his panegyrics as part of an epic tradition and incorporates explicit evocations of epic material (e.g. narrative elements; geographic and ethnographic names; *topoi*, and references to well-known epic moments), these poems differ from heroic epic in content, scope, and structure. Schindler documents instances where the demands of panegyric required that epic devices be modified: allusions are stripped of negative connotations; heavenly forces are subordinated to the will of the poem's protagonist; and catalogues, battle scenes, and ekphraseis are reduced to an abbreviated core. Schindler concludes that epic devices and material served as guidelines for speech and style, and also augmented the stature of the panegyric's subject.

In "Das Orpheus-Thema in Claudian's *De raptu Proserpinae*" (pp. 38-56), Christine Schmitz elucidates how the figure of Orpheus and the taming of nature serve as unifying themes in the poem. Schmitz argues persuasively that the first and second prefaces are linked thematically to each other and to a broader theme of the poem, how the civilizing power of human *artes* can tame the forces of chaos. She documents how Claudian emphasizes Proserpina's similarity to Orpheus in her first appearance, the mournful reaction to her departure, her mastering of Pluto through words, and the suspension of infernal torments in her presence. In the references to Orpheus, Schmitz sees Claudian developing a model for the civilizing role of the poet: as Orpheus both tamed nature through his *ars* and sang the praises of those who fought against chaos, so Claudian in his poems can -- like Stilicho and Honorius in the military and political spheres -- strengthen the cosmic order.

Claudio Moreschini's "*Paganus pervicacissimus religione e 'filosofia' in Claudiano*" (pp. 57-77) revisits Claudian's religious and philosophical beliefs, arguing that Claudian followed a traditional (essentially pagan) philosophical eclecticism or "popular philosophy." For Moreschini, *carm. min. 32 (De Salvatore)* reveals only the general knowledge of Christian doctrine that could be expected from a poet living at the imperial court; Claudian's representation of the phoenix, a likely candidate for crypto-religious allegory, is a rhetorical exercise, although one which may have symbolized the restored golden age. After briefly exploring the Orphic aspects of the *De raptu Proserpinae*, Moreschini turns to Claudian's knowledge of philosophy, describing several moments of philosophical interest in his poems. In these observations, Moreschini steers a reasoned course between those who would see Claudian advocating specific philosophical doctrines (e.g. Courcelle) and those who see philosophical flourishes as

subordinate to literary models (e.g. Cameron), arguing instead not for a philosopher-poet like Lucretius or Manilius, but a poet knowledgeable in philosophy and sensitive to contemporary philosophical and religious currents.

In "Claudian's Greek World: Callimachus" (pp. 78-95), Isabella Gualandri reassesses the difficult topic of Claudian's use of Greek models, focusing on a few points of apparent contact between Claudian and Callimachus. She demonstrates how allusions to the *Hymn to Delos* structure the arrival of Mars in *In Eutropium* and inform the predicted destruction of the Giants in his Greek *Gigantomachy*. This last reference leads Gualandri to discuss other instances where Claudian exploits similarities between ancient Gallic and contemporary Gothic invaders, in particular the preface to the second book of the *In Rufinum*, where the anachronistic interest in Delphi is best explained as a reference to the *Hymn to Delos*'s treatment of the Gallic invasion of 279 BCE. Although Gualandri cautions that "nothing conclusive can be inferred from these few examples," she ventures that Claudian's references to Greek models are not allusions -- i.e. *aemulatio* intended to be recognized by a learned audience -- but simply material "to be freely exploited and exhibited as if they were the result of his own *inventio*," an "elusive use of his literary models." In this well-argued essay, Gualandri is meticulous in documenting her sources and providing interesting supplementary information. She thoroughly treats other possible sources and avoids the pitfalls of overstatement that often plague the exposition of poetic models.

Catherine Ware's "Gildo *tyrannus*: Accusation and Allusion in the Speeches of Roma and Africa" (pp. 96-103) supplements recent political readings of the poem with an appreciation of how Claudian uses allusion to define the character of the African usurper Gildo.³ After briefly summarizing the historical background to the poem, Ware demonstrates how Claudian shifts blame for East/West tensions from Stilicho, Honorius, and Arcadius onto Gildo, cruel in the exercise of power and debauched in his personal conduct. The speeches of Roma and Africa use allusions to equate Gildo to Hannibal and Atreus, reinforcing explicit accusations of tyranny. The essay is at its best in the explication of how Claudian uses subtle allusive play to reinforce serious points, such as when he bookends his description of Gildo's depraved feast with allusions to Ovid's description of Atreus's cannibalistic meal.⁴ The shortest of the volume's essays, at times it perhaps betrays its origin as an oral presentation.

In his essay "Osservazioni sull'esametro di Claudiano" (pp. 104-141), Lucio Ceccarelli examines how Claudian avoids metrical monotony within the regularizing tendencies of post-Ovidian hexameter. Using detailed statistical analysis of select passages from *In Rufinum*, *De Raptu Proserpinae*, and the *carmina minora*, Ceccarelli demonstrates how Claudian underscores moments of narrative significance by varying his standard metrical practice: i.e. increasing the frequency of elision, golden lines, and words containing eight or more metrical beats (e.g. *populatrices*); decreasing the frequency of or clustering internal syntactic breaks; and repeating caesurae, metrical schemes, and *métrique verbale* over multiple lines. Ceccarelli's diligent study of this difficult topic illuminates the interaction between Claudian's metrics and narrative, and this essay will hopefully inspire further investigation of this aspect of Claudian's poetics. Of particular utility for future researchers are five statistical tables appended to the end of the essay.⁵ Ceccarelli's assumption of statistical independence when calculating the odds of various metrical events, however, calls into question whether these events are as

unusual as he suggests. For example, Ceccarelli calculates the odds of Claudian composing six sequential verses with a trochaic caesura in the third foot (e.g. *Ruf.* 2.67-72) by raising the frequency of this phenomenon occurring in any given line (0.2356) to the 6th power.⁶ This analysis, however, assumes that the presence of the phenomenon in one line is independent of its presence in the other line(s). Since certain metrical phenomena seem to occur in clusters,⁷ the odds of several sequential lines in Claudian having trochaic caesura may actually be much higher than Ceccarelli's calculation suggests. A similar methodological question must be raised when Ceccarelli calculates the chances of several metrical phenomena occurring in the same line, since it is possible that various phenomena tend to occur together. The limitations of this review preclude testing the independence of these metrical phenomena in Claudian's corpus; and it is entirely possible that they are independent, and Ceccarelli's calculations are correct. This independence, however, must be demonstrated for the results to inspire confidence. Finally, when comparing the frequency of phenomena observed in a passage to that expected from a survey of Claudian's entire corpus, Ceccarelli often does not supply the variance, making it impossible to judge the importance of the difference he highlights.⁸

Franca Ela Consolino's "Poetry and politics in Claudian's *carmina minora* 22 and 50" (pp. 142-175) investigates how Claudian treats contemporary political concerns in his shorter poems.⁹ In the essay's first section ("Playing the exile Ovid: the *deprecatio ad Hadrianum*"), Consolino examines how Claudian's "learned references and the structure of the poem itself give an ironical turn to the pleading tone" of the poem. The accumulated references to Ovid on the theme of the persecuted poet provides the work with a "flavour of mockery," a quality reinforced by allusion to Horace's *deprecatio* to Canidia (*Ep.* 17). In contrast to *carm. min.* 22, which saw political imagery masking a literary treatment of a literary disagreement, Consolino argues that *carm. min.* 50 "uses literary polemics to hint at the political and perhaps religious situation." After reviewing what little is known about the poem's addressee, Jacobus, Consolino examines the significance of each of the saints mentioned in the poem, noting that the invocation of some must be ironic (Thomas, Bartholomew), while others had particular relevance for a Milanese audience (Theclas, Susanna). Consolino speculates that *carm. min.* 50 may be a response to Jacobus' critique of the *Bellum Geticum*, which sanitized Saul's attack on the Goths while they celebrated Easter. Criticizing Vanderspoel's interpretation of vv. 11 f., Consolino suggests that the closing image evokes the biblical triumph of the chaste and sober Judith over Holophernes, a comparison that critiques both Jacobus' cowardice and drunkenness. Consolino is admirably thorough in documenting sources and providing relevant supplementary information.

In "Spott und Ironie in Claudians *carmina minora*" (pp. 175-186), Jens Michners investigates the causes, targets, and models of Claudian's satirical epigrams (*carm. min.* 43, 44, 13, 50, and 23).¹⁰ In the process of arguing that *carm. min.* 13, 43, and 44 are satires of character types, while *carm. min.* 23 and 50 criticize real individuals, Michners capably explores the literary models for these poems (Martial is given special attention); the differences in tone and attitude Claudian can wield in the service of invective; and how the structure of the poems influences the ironic treatment of their subject. On *carm. min.* 23, Michners includes a thoughtful defense (against Jeep and Gniska) of the authenticity of vv. 15-16. On *carm. min.* 50, Michners argues that the specificity of the irony suggests an actual target. Michners's arguments concerning the existence of the poems' addressees -- praiseworthy in their treatment of the poems as literary

phenomena, rather than containers of biographical information -- are often too speculative to be fully persuasive. For example, Michners argues that *carm. min. 13* is fictional in part because the metrical fault that provoked the *podager's* criticism is too rare and trivial to provoke dispute. Such pedantry, however, is exactly what Claudian is mocking, and care must surely be taken in assuming what a pedant may choose to condemn. Further exploration of the connections of these poems with Ausonius would have been illuminating, in particular the relationship of *carm. min. 43* and *44* with Ausonius's epigrams on the same sexual obsession (*Ep. 74, 82-86*).

The collection's most controversial essay is Peter Lebrecht Schmidt's "Rezeptionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zur Claudianüberlieferung" (pp. 187-206). Faulting scholars (especially Charlet) who have dismissed but not argued against his own reconstruction of Claudian's stemma,^{[11](#)} Schmidt laments the continued acceptance of two influential -- and to his mind seriously mistaken -- theories: 1) a complete, posthumous edition of Claudian was assembled at the request of Stilicho; and 2) the *Panegyricus dictus Probino et Olybrio consulibus* (*carm. mai. 1*) was originally transmitted separately from the bulk of Claudian's poems, a fallacy he condemns as the "first lie of Claudian philology." Rejecting the anti-stemmatic positions of Birt and Hall, Schmidt argues that Claudian's corpus is the compilation of four late antique corpora: (1) *carm. min.*, 2) *De raptu Proserpinae*, 3) the four epics and invectives (*Ruf.*, *Eutr.*, *Gild.*, and *Get.*), and 4) the occasional poetry (panegyrics (including *carm. mai. 1*), epithalamium, etc.) that may have remained separate for much of the medieval period. While the circle of readers for such an essay may be small, Schmidt's intelligent questioning of these fundamental issues is welcome, and this reviewer shares his hope that his work will spur discussion about the ordering of the *carmina minora* and the applicability of stemmatic reconstruction for refining Claudian's texts. Schmidt helpfully includes four stemmata (one reprinted from Birt; three illustrating Schmidt's theories) and a chart displaying the order of poems in three of the manuscript families under discussion.

In "Claudian in der Neuzeit: Geschmackswandel und Übergang von der rhetorischen zur philologischen Betrachtungsweise" (pp. 207-223), Manfred Fuhrmann details how changes in aesthetic criteria and social conditions in the eighteenth century affected the reception of Claudian. Fuhrmann observes that early modern critics steeped in a rhetorical appreciation of poetry -- such as Julius Caesar Scaliger, Joachim von Watt, and Daniel Georg Morhof -- compared Claudian favorably to his contemporaries, although they often faulted him for similar transgressions against their aesthetic preconceptions. Fuhrmann continues by exploring how the changing literary and intellectual circumstances of the "philological" era inaugurated by F.A. Wolfé influenced the study and appreciation of Claudian. Along with most imperial and late antique authors, Claudian was exiled from the classical canon and disparaged for perceived tastelessness and lack of immediacy. Since Claudian was considered a pagan, he retained a minor place in Classical scholarship, often earning the underhanded compliment of being the "last Roman poet." Fuhrmann concludes by presenting exemplary judgments of Claudian by nineteenth and early-twentieth century critics, who either fault him for failing to conform to contemporary aesthetics (Ersch and Gruber, Larousse), or attempt to show how he embodies them in a way remarkable for his era (Schuster, Encyclopedia Britannica).

Siegmar Döpp's "Von Napoleon zu Ludwig XVIII.: Der Claudian-Cento des L.A. Decampe"

(pp. 224-258) introduces the idiosyncratic invective by L.A. Decampe, who shortly after Napoleon's fall in 1814 composed a 509-line cento drawn from nearly the entirety of Claudian's hexametric poems. After summarizing the historical circumstances that motivated Decampe, Claudian's currency in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, the nature of cento literature, and the poem itself, Döpp delineates how Decampe adapted Claudian's quasi-epic chronological structure and mixture of praise and criticism, as well as establishing specific relationships to characters in his source texts -- Napoleon appears as a second Rufinus; Czar Alexander as a reborn Stilicho. The essay concludes with two appendices: 1) the introductory remarks by the editor of the journal that first published the poem; and, most significantly, 2) Döpp's new edition of the cento. Döpp's text includes a parallel list of the Claudian lines used in the cento and a (very brief) *apparatus criticus* after the text.

Turning to matters aesthetic and editorial, the volume's sturdy sewn binding and good quality paper withstood substantial wear-and-tear during the reviewing process. The reddish-brown hardcover sports handsome inlaid titles on the front cover and spine. Typographical mistakes are unfortunately not infrequent but generally minor (e.g. missing spaces: "277and" (p.13), "902Flavius" (p.143); spelling errors: "focusses" (p. 98), "conbines" (p. 103); repeated or misplaced periods: "allusion.." (p. 94)). A few errors, however, will cause confusion: "alla corte di Orosio" [for Onorio] (p. 57); a misplaced apostrophe causes "Gaina's" [for Gainas]; line numbers are reversed in "dattilo nel v. 71, spondeo nel v. 72" [for "dattilo nel v. 72, spondeo nel v. 71"] (p. 108). Typesetting irregularities occasionally create unnatural spacing between letters (e.g. *inquesto caso* (p. 115, n. 34). Printing on a few pages shows streaking and/or fading (usually in the fifth line), but never to the point of illegibility (e.g. p. 23,30).

Inconsistencies in the abbreviations of Claudian's titles (a typical feature of Claudian scholarship) and a lack of an explanatory table in the volume may confuse the non-expert reader, who is advised to see Cameron 1970: xi-xii. [12](#). As is (unfortunately) common in collections such as this, the volume lacks a general index and bibliography, both of which would significantly increase its value to the non-specialist scholar.

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Notes:

1. Personal accounts of the conference by [Angelo Luceri](#) (in Italian) and [Fritz Felgentreu](#) (in German) are available on-line.

2. Schindler's argument in favor of grouping *Get.* and *Gild.* with the consular panegyrics because of fundamental similarities in content and structure is brief but unproblematic.

3. Recent scholarship on the poetics of *De Bello Gildonico* unmentioned by Ware includes H. Gärtner, "Roma redet: Claudianus (In Gildonem 28-127) im Vergleich zu früheren und zeitgenössischen Autoren," *AantHung* 37 (1996-1997): 277-284; and P. Hajdú, "Poetics of an unfinished poem: (Claudian's *De bello Gildonico*)," *AantHung* 37 (1996-1997): 89-113.

4. Ovid *Am.* 3.12.39 (*aversumque diem mensis furialibus Atrei*); *Gild.* 180 (... *furalis mensa*...); *Gild.* 400 (*avertitque diem... Atreus*).

5. These tables detail: 1) the frequency of elision in Claudian; 2a-d) the ratio of dactylic to spondaic syllables in Claudian and other Latin poets (in total and for each of the first four feet of the hexameter); 3) a summary of Tables 2a-d; 4) a breakdown by work of the frequency of dactyls in the first four feet; and 5) observed and expected frequency of metrical schemes (i.e. DDS, DSDS, etc.). Ceccarelli compiled his data from Hall's edition (1985). Spot-checking revealed no errors. The different sums for the total number of lines in Claudian given in the tables resulted from the exclusion of (variously) three to five corrupt lines. A list of these excluded lines would have been useful.

6. $(0.2352)^6 = 0.2352 * 0.2352 * 0.2352 * 0.2352 * 0.2352 * 0.2352 = 0.00017$, or 1.7 in 10,000 lines.

7. See, for example, Duckworth's work on the clustering of metrical phenomena -- G. Duckworth, "Variety and Repetition in Vergil's Hexameters," *TAPhA* 95 (1964): 9-65; "Studies in Latin Hexameter Poetry," *TAPhA* 97 (1966): 67-113; "Five Centuries of Latin Hexameter Poetry: Silver Age and Late Empire," *TAPhA* 98 (1967): 77-150 --, and Ceccarelli's own comments about the clustering of elision and metrical schemes in *Rapt.* (e.g. p.111 and esp. 117, where he gives an example of four sequential third foot trochaic caesurae).

8. E.g. Ceccarelli's claim that the presence of 16 words with eight or more metrical beats compared to the expected value of 11.92 in a passage represents a statistically significant difference.

9. Consolino's claim that the recognition of the relationship between *carm. min.* 21 and 22 is "unanimous" ignores P. Christiansen, "Claudian: a Greek or a Latin?" *Scholia* 6 (1997): 79-95, which despite -- or perhaps because of -- its provocative reinterpretation of Claudian's life and poetry has received scant scholarly attention.

[10.](#) Michners excludes *carm. min.* 21 and 22 from his discussion because they have already been treated sufficiently elsewhere.

[11.](#) P. Schmidt, "Die Überlieferungsgeschichte von Claudians Carmina maiora," ICS 14 (1989): 391-415; and "Zur niederen und höheren Kritik von Claudians carmina minora," in *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes: mélanges offerts à Jacques Fontaine, à l'occasion de son 70e anniversaire, par ses élèves, amis et collègues.*, (Paris, Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1992), 643-660.

[12.](#) A summary of abbreviations is also available [on-line](#).

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