BOOK REVIEW

Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition. By CATHERINE WARE. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. ix + 266. Hardcover, $99.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01343-8.

Late Latin poetry has been enjoying a welcome renaissance in Anglophone scholarship over the past several years. A spate of publications on a variety of authors and genres,[1] the recent bi-coastal conference, "The Classics Renewed: The Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity," held at Rice and Brown Universities in 2011, and a panel on late antique poetry and poetics at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in San Antonio, together with a new series of translations (*The Routledge Series in Later Latin Poetry*) and monographs (*Brill's Late Ancient Literature*), all evince a revitalized interest in and appreciation for the under-read poetry of the fourth through sixth centuries.

Catherine Ware's *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition* is a fine addition to this growing scholarship on late Latin poetry. In a concise, clear, and well-written series of chapters in which she focuses (for the most part) on Claudian's political poetry and its allusive relationship to previous Roman poetry, Ware makes the case that Claudian receives and renews the Roman epic past and transforms it in a highly erudite way for accommodation to late Roman aesthetics and application to contemporary political circumstances—especially as related to the valorization of Stilicho as a new old-fashioned epic hero who keeps the barbarians at bay and brings about a new *aurea aetas* emanating from his own virtuous person into the Western Empire as a whole. Though Claudian's hopes for Stilicho and the West and his absolute confidence in *imperium sine fine* were revealed by sub-

[1] Cf. M. Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); R. P. H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); M. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); S. McGill, *Virgil Recomposed: The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); A. Dykes, *Reading Sin in the World: The* Hamartigenia *of Prudentius and the Vocation of the Responsible Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); in addition to articles too numerous to list here.

sequent events to have fallen prey to a certain amount of wishful thinking, they nevertheless (or perhaps therefore) would have provided comfort for a contemporary audience and carried a potent propagandistic value for Stilicho himself among his subjects.

In her useful introduction (1–17), Ware deals succinctly with Claudian's background, biography, and audience. She then turns to her own methodology of reading allusion, which is influenced by such scholars as Stephen Hinds, Richard Thomas, G. B. Conte, and Philip Hardie. Ware utilizes insights from these and other critics and, through a series of examples, shows how they can be employed fruitfully in the reading of Claudian against his epic background. She does this in a way that is unencumbered by jargon, and, thus, her reading is happily accessible to a wide audience, whether familiar with in-house argot or not.

The first chapter (18–31), titled "Panegyric-Epic," is also of an introductory nature. Ware here provides a serviceable summary of panegyric in prose and verse and of the ways in which Claudian fuses the two, thereby transforming both. In addition, she advances the provocative claim that his panegyric-epics can be read as one poem: "because the individual poems concern the same characters and promote the policies of the same man, the corpus as a whole is poetically coherent and politically persuasive in a way that individual panegyrics could not be" (30). Her argument in the next several chapters bears out this claim.

After showing in Chapter 2 (32–66) how Claudian builds upon the Roman epic tradition and innovates within it (here she reprises several commonplaces of the evaluation of late poetry explicated so well by Michael Roberts in *The Jeweled Style* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989]: e.g., episodic vs. narrative construction; the desire for ornamentation and the elaboration of details), Ware proceeds in the remaining chapters (3–7) to conduct a series of close readings of a large range of passages in Claudian's poems and demonstrates their fertile dependence on earlier authors as Claudian recasts them on a contemporary stage. Throughout, her range of and familiarity with sources is impressive, as she interacts carefully with Vergil, Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Silius Italicus, Lucretius, and Juvenal, among others. Certain passages come in for repeated treatment: Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, Ovid's account of creation and the story of Phaëthon, the prophetic passages of the *Aeneid* together with Numanus' description of Italian hardiness in *Aeneid* 9, and the Golden Age and Augustan material of the *Georgics*.

Her explication of allusions and their significance is sensitive and, in the majority of instances, compelling. I provide one example as indicative of her approach. In demonstrating Claudian's depiction of Gildo as a classic case of the

ruthless *tyrannus*, Ware shows that Claudian means the audience to think of Atreus and Thyestes in Ovid, *Amores* 3.12, even though there is no explicit reference to either figure when he first calls them to mind. He does this through a divided allusion to *Am.* 3.12.39, *[quid referam …] aversumque diem mensis furialibus Atrei?* Claudian alludes to the first part of the line at *Gild.* 180 (*furialis mensa*) and then closes the allusion near the end of the poem with a direct reference to Atreus (*avertitque diem; sceleri sed reddidit Atreus*, 400). Why? To show that "Gildo, who refused burial to his brother's children, is even worse than Atreus. Honorius, Stilicho says, must avenge the betrayal of the laws, the unburied children, the insult to piety: he is demanded as the avenger, *ultor* (*Gild.* 403)" (157).

A few concluding remarks: in general, the book is handsomely produced, though a few mistakes and typos slipped in, such as: *Augustas* translated as nominative singular (83), "weath" for "wealth" (91), *genus* is left untranslated in *Probinus et Olybrius* 8 (102), "Roman" for "Rome" in the bibliographical entry for Elsner 1998 (234). There are also a few infelicitous phrases: for example, her reference to "[t]he heroic behaviour of Lucan's heroes" (147). Finally, a chronology of the poems together with their abbreviations (ix) would have been useful, as would a conclusion tying together the book's main themes. But these quibbles do not detract from the overall force of the book's arguments and evidence, which remain strong. The bibliography (231–44) is full and the *index locorum* (245–59) and general index (260–66) indispensable.

In sum, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition* is a commendable, rewarding book and a significant contribution to the study of late Latin poetry.

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