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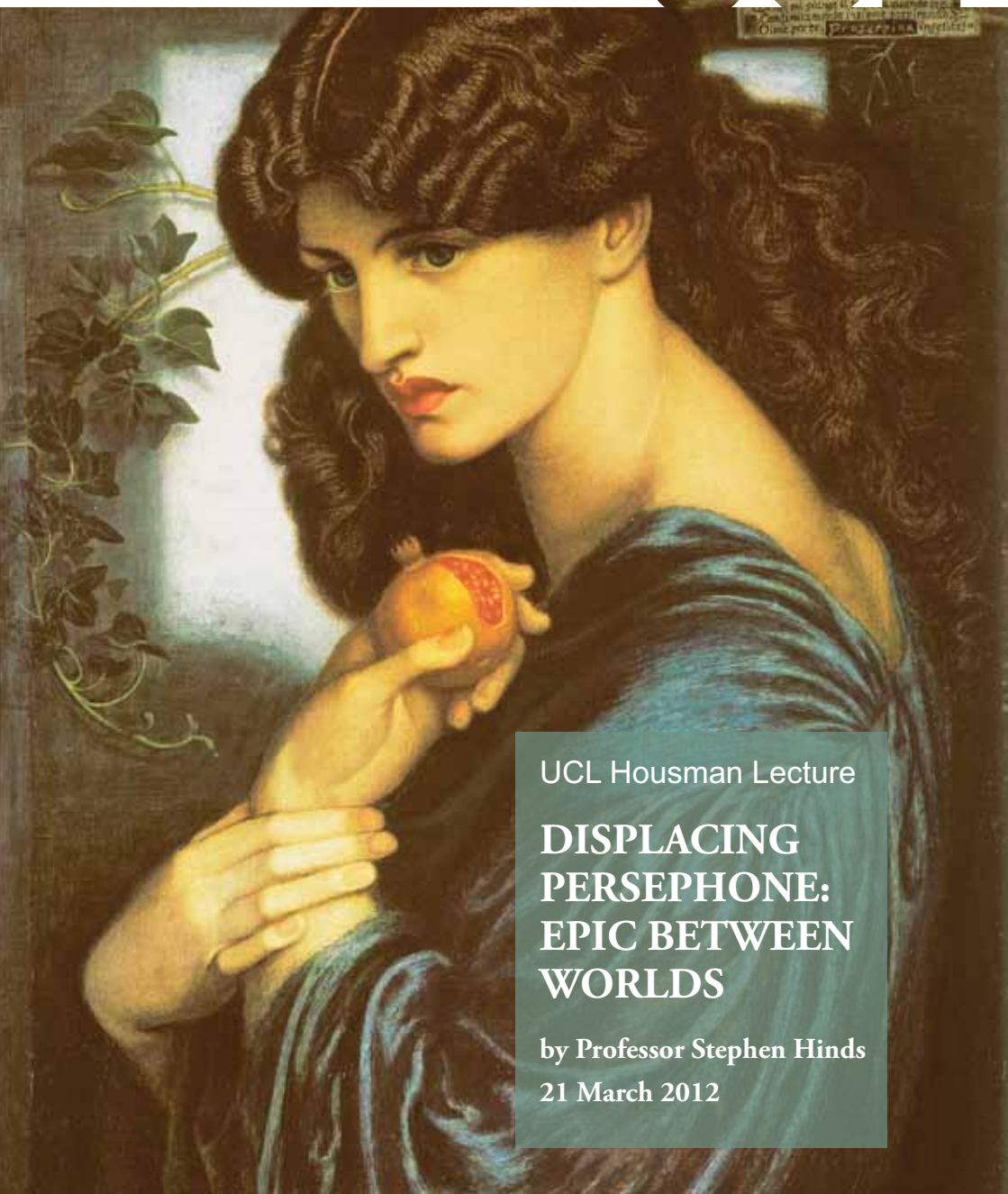

UCL Housman Lecture

DISPLACING PERSEPHONE: EPIC BETWEEN WORLDS

by Professor Stephen Hinds

21 March 2012

A.E. Housman (1859-1936)

Born in Worcestershire in 1859, Alfred Edward Housman was a gifted classical scholar and poet. After studying in Oxford, Housman worked for ten years as a clerk, while publishing and writing scholarly articles on Horace, Propertius, Ovid, Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles. He gradually acquired such a high reputation that in 1892 he returned to the academic world as Professor of Classics at University College London (1892–1911) and then as Kennedy Professor of Latin at Trinity College, Cambridge (1911–1936).

Housman Lectures at UCL

The Department of Greek and Latin at University College London organizes regular Housman Lectures, named after its illustrious former colleague (with support from UCL Alumni). Housman Lectures, delivered by a scholar of international distinction, originally took place every second year and now happen every year, alternating between Greek and Roman topics (Greek lectures being generously funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation). The fourth Housman lecture, which was given by Professor Stephen Hinds (Professor of Classics, Byron W. and Alice L. Lockwood Professor of the Humanities, University of Washington, Seattle) on 21 March 2012, is here reproduced with minor adjustments.

DISPLACING PERSEPHONE: EPIC BETWEEN WORLDS

Stephen Hinds (University of Washington, Seattle)

For Ted Kenney

CLAUDIAN'S *DE RAPTU PROSERPINAE* (*circa* AD 400)

A goddess between the Lower world and the Upper, an imperial poet between East and West, an Ovidian tradition between antiquity and modernity.

The goddess Persephone (or Proserpina) is abducted by her uncle Pluto (or Dis) in what is simultaneously a violent abduction and an arranged marriage engineered by her father Jupiter without the knowledge or agreement of Persephone's mother Demeter (or Ceres). The story is most famously told in Greek in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and in Latin in two versions by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fasti* 4. Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* (a full millennium after the *Homeric Hymn*) unfolds the myth in a more expansive narrative than any of these, but it breaks off in the middle, interrupted (we think) either by Claudian's death or by a change in his poetic priorities. Claudian's epic falls silent at the point where Ceres is just beginning her worldwide quest to look for her daughter. Hence (except by way of foreshadowing) we don't get to read in the *DRP* about the eventual settlement which will allow Persephone to split her time between two worlds, the Lower and the Upper, or about the politics of Ceres' distribution of grain to humankind. I'll have something to say about the unfinished status of the *DRP* later.

Now, one thing that you'll have noticed about the poster for my lecture is that the title doesn't include the word 'Claudian'. Originally it did, but along the way an act of rebranding occurred, and the poet's name was demoted from the title to the smaller print of the promotional blurb. Why not put Claudian in the title of a lecture like today's? Why tuck his name away in the fine print?

Well, the problem is that my hosts wanted (quite rightly) to attract a crowd, and Claudian just isn't automatic box-office gold in the way of a Virgil, or of an Ovid. I begin, then, with the image problem which has often relegated one of the most attractive and effervescent narrative poems in the classical tradition to the margins of mainstream critical discussion of Latin literature.

Here is what Maurice Platnauer writes about Claudian in the introduction to his 1922 Loeb edition:

> … as a poet Claudian is not always despicable.
>
> Claudian's faults are easy to find. He mistook memory for inspiration and so is often wordy and tedious … Worse than this, he is frequently obscure and involved … The besetting sin, too, of almost all post-Virgilian Roman poets, I mean a "conceited" frigidity, is one into which he is particularly liable to fall.

Now of course this was written ninety years ago. But the rehabilitation of 'almost all post-Virgilian Roman poets', though it has by now advanced to the Flavians, has not really hit the late fourth century yet, except among confirmed specialists in the period. Even Claudian's champions in our own generation tend to be a little faint-hearted in their championship, and to be more committed to Claudian as an historical player than as a poet; so that one of my purposes today is to try to *interest* you in an epic which some of you may not have read recently (as we politely say), or indeed very much at all.

To the first part of the lecture I have given the subtitle 'Claudianism in the *DRP*': I want to consider some of the things that majority opinion still thinks of as 'frigid conceits' in Claudian (that is, overworked and jaded literary *topoi*), and to see if it is possible to look at them anew, *in Claudian's own terms*, with fresh and unjaded eyes.

In the latter part of the lecture I will move on to 'Ovidianism in the *DRP*'. *I* am in fact one of those literary Latinists who had not read this poem all the way through until a couple of years ago; and I feel especially guilty about that, because I actually used five lines of the *DRP* as an epigraph to my first book, a treatment of *Ovid's* twin versions of Persephone. So Claudian has been on my conscience for some twenty-five years: I want to do something today to celebrate *his* very congenial reading of Ovid, perhaps also incorporating some very brief reflections about the workings of Ovidian myth in literary tradition at large.

I. CLAUDIANISM IN THE *DRP*

Claudianism: poetry across languages

In a way that is perhaps characteristic of the poetry of his period, a period in which reading communities are in various kinds of flux, Claudian works hard to create his own literary historical terms of reference. Even (or especially) where his poetry can seem at its most derivative to a critic with low expectations, Claudian has the capacity to reinvent and to give a fresh turn to tradition. To begin with the basics, this is a late antique poet whose own life can be advertised as a recapitulation of the main east-to-west Greek-to-Latin vector of Roman literary history:

> Romanos bibimus primum te consule fontes
> et Latiae cessit Graia Thalia togae
> *Carm. Min.* 41.13-14 (*Epistula ad Probinum*)
>
> In your consulship I first drank of the streams of Roman song and my Greek Thalia yielded to a Latin toga

Born in Alexandria, Claudius Claudianus enters the history of Roman literature as a native speaker of Greek. He is, then, one of those poets (like Statius) with an inherent (and often overlooked) capacity to reanimate the originary dialogue between Greek and Latin upon which Roman literature is founded. Here is a first category of 'Claudianism' to give our poet his own handle on tradition: linguistic biculturality.

More than that, within the category of Roman poets with a claim to linguistic biculturality, Claudian is one of the very few from whom we actually have extant verse in both languages, including two distinct cases of Greek and Latin treatments of a single theme: a bilingual set of epigrams on the geological curio of a crystal enclosing a drop of water, one of which begins with the word *clauditur* (*Carm. Min.* 33-9, *Carm. Graec.* IV-V = *Anth. Pal.* 9.753-4; more on naming puns later); and on a larger scale a pair of incomplete Greek and Latin gigantomachies, apparently from different phases of the poet's career (again a theme to be picked up later). This may have no practical effect upon our reading; or it may license us to press a little harder whenever we encounter in Claudian's work moments of verbal interplay across languages. At the level of genre – especially epic genre – it may encourage us to look for an especial capacity in Claudian himself, both innate and acquired, to reinvent dialogue between Greek and Latin traditions – whether or not the majority of his readers in late antique Rome or Milan were linguistically equipped to join him in that project.

Consider in this connection the inscribed bilingual dedication, featuring Latin epigraphic formulae and a Greek verse epigram, set up in the Forum of Trajan at Rome to accompany a statue voted in Claudian's honour in the name of the two brother-emperors of East and West, Arcadius and Honorius (sons and successors of the last emperor to rule both East and West together, Theodosius):

> CLAVDIO CLAVDIANO VC TRIBVNO ET NOTARIO …
> DD NN ARCADIVS ET HONORIVS …
> STATVAM IN FORO DIVI TRAIANI ERIGI COLLOCARIQUE IVSSERVNT
>
> ΕΙΝ ΕΝΙ ΒΙΡΓΙΛΙΟΙΟ ΝΟΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΟΥΣΑΝ ΟΜΗΡΟΥ
> ΚΛΑΥΔΙΑΝΟΝ ΡΩΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΗΣ ΕΘΕΣΑΝ
> from *CIL* 6.1710, incl. Gk. epigram
>
> To Claudius Claudianus, Rt. Hon., tribune and notary…
> our Emperors Arcadius and Honorius…
> have bidden this statue to be raised and set up in the Forum of the Divine Trajan
>
> Rome and Emperors set up Claudian, the mind of Virgil and the Muse of Homer in one man

The dedication is mentioned by Claudian himself in his own poetry, at *Bell. Get.* Praef. 7-14 – a remarkable attestation of an inscription still physically extant today (in Naples). It has been suggested that the author of the Greek elegiac distich is none other than Claudian himself. Be that as it may, one thing that this Greek dedicatory couplet has in common with the Latin autobiographical couplet previously quoted is an association of the move to Rome (and to Latin) with the acquisition of civic identity and high political connectedness. Both tell the story of a poet whose work is destined to be bound up with the public events and figures of his time.

Indeed (although I emphasize Claudian's bilingual credentials mainly to urge future work on his poetics), the *civic dimension* in each of these quotations is perhaps suggestive of a broader Claudianic claim of cultural competence, or mastery, capable of straddling both halves of a split-imperial world, East as well as West. After all, on two (other?) occasions in Claudian's verse when praise is offered for a capacity to bridge Greek and Latin poetic traditions, the figures praised are, respectively, the adoptive daughter of one Emperor and the bride of another: viz Serena, niece and adoptive daughter of Theodosius, and her daughter Maria, soon-to-be bride of Honorius (*Carm. Min.* 30.146-59 with *Epithal. Honorio et Mariae* 232-5).

Claudianism: cosmic dualism

Other than the Greek and Latin gigantomachic fragments, the *De Raptu Proserpinae* is the only one of Claudian's mid- to large-size hexameter poems *not* to be driven by the geopolitics and prosopography of the imperial court. Does it follow from this that fourth-century imperial politics are wholly *irrelevant* to the poetry of the *DRP*? I think not, even though at one level the *DRP* constitutes Claudian's signal departure into pure myth. In much of my lecture today I am going to be looking at the *DRP* as a kind of poetic game with poetic tradition: the kind of game that we would call 'post-Alexandrian' if Claudian had been born in an earlier era (…but, although he wasn't born in an earlier era, he *was* born in Alexandria, so 'post-Alexandrian' it is). However, even though the *DRP* takes us into a world of timeless mythic tradition, that does not preclude narrative pressure from contemporary imperial politics.

Let me approach the geopolitical question thus. In a long view of epic tradition, Claudian's way of structuring *all* his extended poems fits with ease and predictability into a persistent pattern of *cosmic dualism*, involving some imagistic appeal to balanced or opposing forces in the human and/or divine realms, a pattern hard-wired into Roman epic tradition from Virgil on. (Philip Hardie might call this tradition post-Pergamene.) Even without fourth-century imperial politics, this is the way we would expect Claudian to write epic *anyway*: not just in his versions of political epic (some panegyrical, some invective), but in the *DRP* too.

So then, to advance the case for a distinctively Claudianic reanimation of tradition in this area, what I want to do is to emphasize *how peculiarly well* this pattern fits the *lived experience* of poet and readers at this point in history. Claudian moves within a world, personally and politically, which positions him perfectly not just to inhabit but to reenergize the age-old epic *topoi* of cosmic dualism: the world of a problematically divided Western and Eastern empire, Rome and Constantinople,

> urbs etiam, magnae quae ducitur aemula Romae
> et Calchedonias contra despectat harenas
> *In Rufinum* 2.54-5
>
> That city, too [i.e. Constantinople], held to be the rival of great Rome, that looks across and down to Chalcedon's strand

a division at once cosmic, geopolitical and fraternal; and (this will be important) a division still sufficiently provisional in the generation after Theodosius that the vocabulary of division entails the vocabulary of reconciliation, and *vice versa*:

Oriensque, regna fratrum,
simul Occidensque plaudat;
placidae iocentur urbes,
quaeque novo quaeque nitent
deficiente Phoebo
(12) *Fescennina* 36-40

Let East and West, the brothers' paired realms,
join in their applause;
let peace and joy fill the cities
illumined by the Sun at his rising
and at his setting

Visions of reconciliation notwithstanding, Claudian's political poetry is full of fraught moments which pit the two halves of the world against one another, West against East:

…en iterum belli civilis imago!
quid consanguineas acies, quid dividis olim
concordes aquilas?…
In Rufinum 2.236-8

Behold once more the spectral image of civil war! Why do you seek to divide kindred armies and standards long united?

Roman eagles against Roman eagles, kin against kin: not since the first century BC, perhaps, has the geo*political* threat of civil conflict had such geo*poetical* heft (to borrow Alessandro Barchiesi's term) as in Claudianic epic. A case can be made that the Neronian and then the Flavian responses to such tensions in the poetry of Virgil had long since programmed civil war as the 'default setting' of epic conflict; but for Claudian I think it's special.

And, when we turn our attention within the poet's *oeuvre* from the political poetry to the mythological *DRP*, what is interesting is that we don't leave this world of potential-civil-war dualism behind: no, we retain it, but we map it along a different axis, vertical rather than horizontal. Again two brothers divide the world between them, not West to East (Honorius and Arcadius) but Upper to Lower (Jupiter and Dis): in this version of Claudianism as in that, imperial epic is split-imperial epic.

Stephen Wheeler's impressive application of Hardiesque terms to the *DRP* enables us to recognize in our poem's opposition between Upper and Lower worlds a strong continuity with the version of cosmic binarism most fundamental to Roman epic tradition, in which a primal division between heaven and hell figures and negotiates all kinds of other binaries in the epic plot: think for example of the classic moment in the *Aeneid* when Juno summons Allecto and her dark forces from the Underworld to stir up (and to lend imagistic fuel to) the quasi-civil war on the ground between Trojans and Latins. But also, we cannot progress far into the *DRP* without encountering the kind of language used by Claudian himself to describe that specific, contemporary split between worlds which preoccupies him elsewhere in his hexameter *oeuvre*:

ne pete firmatas pacis dissolvere leges
quas dedimus nevitque colus, *neu foedera fratrum*
civili converte tuba. cur inpia tollis
signa? quid incestis aperis Titanibus auras?
De Raptu Proserpinae 1.63-6

[Lachesis to Dis] Seek not to disssolve the established laws of peace which we have given and our distaff has spun, and do not overturn the bonds of brothers with the trumpet-blast of civil war. Why do you raise impious standards? Why do you give the unholy Titans open access to the upper air?

Once again, then, Claudian both operates within and newly reanimates the *topoi* of epic dualism: in a universe of split-imperial poetry, the *DRP* asks: how *does* the Upper-to-Nether narrative of a fraternally divided cosmos map on to the West-to-East narrative of a fraternally divided cosmos?

And here's the thing: the answer is not necessarily a simple one. Claudian's complicated political balancing act between Western and Eastern courts will lead to a corresponding complication in his imagining of the duality between heaven and hell. In his political poetry Claudian has an investment in avoiding simple oppositions between black and white, good and evil; and this has an effect also on the way that he represents the Underworld in the *DRP* – which, it is often observed, is at times kinder, gentler, *and more like the Upper world,* than elsewhere in the tradition, or elsewhere in the *DRP*. In other words, the intermittent amelioration of the Underworld in our poem (far from exemplifying mere Claudianic inattention to narrative consistency, a common charge against the poet) may owe something to an aspirational view of harmony between West and East elsewhere in Claudian's *oeuvre*.

A work useful to think with here is the invective *In Rufinum* (already cited above) because, within its narrative, split-imperial politics are openly juxtaposed with and framed by Upper-and-Lower world politics:

> protinus infernas ad limina taetra sorores,
> concilium deforme, vocat…
> …patriaque relicta
> Eoas Furiae iussu tendebat ad arces,
> instabilesque olim Symplegadas et freta remis
> incluta Thessalicis, celsa qua Bosporos urbe
> splendet et Odrysiis Asiam discriminat oris…
> senserunt convexa necem tellusque nefandum
> amolitur onus iam respirantibus astris.
> infernos gravat umbra lacus…
> *In Rufinum* 1.27-8, 171-5; 2.454-6

> Straightway [Allecto] summons the hideous council of the nether-world sisters to her foul palace gates…
>
> Then at the Fury [Megaera]'s bidding [Rufinus] left his fatherland and directed his way to the citadels of the East, and the formerly-shifting Symplegades, and the seas made famous by the Thessalian oars [i.e. of the Argo], where the Bosphorus gleams beneath its high-walled town, and separates Asia from the Thracian coast…
>
> The vault of heaven felt [Rufinus'] death and earth shifted off her hated burden; the stars can breathe again. His shade oppresses the waters of the nether world…

A key take-away from the *In Rufinum*, incidentally, is the recurrent idea in Claudian of some evil *third-party force* capable of fomenting discord between two fraternal realms which should otherwise get along. In the *In Rufinum* that force (for one pair of realms as for the other) is the eponymous villain Rufinus, the native of south-western France who becomes the arch-fixer of the Eastern court (operating, in Claudian's epic embellishment, as the agent of the Furies), and at the end of the *In Rufinum* is banished by Minos to a point *below* Tartarus, to Hell's Hell. In Claudian's political *oeuvre* more broadly, third-party disruption is repeatedly associated with barbarians, variously and tendentiously defined. And in the *DRP*, in turn, a corresponding third-party threat to the balance between Upper world and Lower is to be found in the lurking presence of the *Titans or Giants*, who arguably invite assimilation and appropriation to this same distinctively Claudianic scheme (e.g. at *DRP* 1.66, quoted above; Claire Gruzelier's commentary on 1.43ff. is most suggestive here). It is perhaps time for a new heading.

Claudianism: gigantomachy

Like most Latin epic poets from Virgil on, Claudian has within his idiom a marked interest in the gigantomachy, the battle of the Giants and the Gods, traditionally viewed as the originary theme of martial epos. No less typical in his *oeuvre* is the practice which marks the gigantomachy as, in general, an epic plot *other than the present one*, whether consigned to the past, deferred to the future, actualized only in metaphor, or otherwise denied full realization.

So my next category of generic reanimation and reinvention is this. When we find, both in the *DRP* and elsewhere in Claudian, exactly the kinds of reference to lurking gigantomachy that we expect in Roman epic, should we just roll our eyes at the predictability of the worn-out *topoi* of late-imperial decadence? Well, whether we do or not, let us immediately allow that these *topoi* have a special edge in Claudian, because (as noted earlier) unlike most poets Claudian *actually did write* a gigantomachy; two, in fact (probably at opposite ends of his career), one in Greek and one in Latin. A claim can be made, indeed, that these are the only free-standing literary gigantomachies to survive from antiquity.

Hence the pointedness of the preface to the panegyric on the sixth consulship of Honorius, Claudian's last firmly datable poem (January 404), where the poet recounts a dream in which he found himself in the citadel of heaven and laid his poetry at the feet of Jupiter. And the theme of the song he sang there was, naturally enough, Jupiter's victory over the Giants:

> Enceladus mihi carmen erat victusque Typhoeus
> (hic subit Inarimen, hunc gravis Aetna domat)…
> *Panegyr. Hon. VI Cos.* Praef. 17-18

> I sang of Enceladus and the defeat of Typhoeus (the one a prisoner beneath Inarime, the other oppressed by the weight of Etna)…

As the preface approaches its punch-line the poet, now awake, affirms that his dream-vision turns out to be true:

> additur ecce fides nec me mea lusit imago,
> inrita nec falsum somnia misit ebur
> *Panegyr. Hon. VI Cos.* Praef. 21-2

> See, my vision is confirmed; it was no delusion; nor has the false Gate of Ivory sent forth unaccomplished dreams

Even truer, indeed, than the immediate terms of the passage require. The ostensible conceit is in a sense doubled: 'I had a dream-vision that I sang a gigantomachy and, look, it turns out to be true', namely in the upcoming panegyric's figuring of Emperor Honorius as a Jupiter-like vanquisher of the Giant-like Goths; but also, more archly and self-referentially, 'I had a dream-vision that I sang a gigantomachy and look, it turns out to be true', namely for me more than for any other poet, given my track record *as a composer of actual gigantomachies*.

To turn in this context to the *DRP* is to feel a new Claudianic edge in that poem's peculiar hospitality to the language of gigantomachy, its lurking potential to read as gigantomachic epic. A longer lecture than this could review the many ways in which the *DRP* lingers on such possibilities. There is the moment at which, as Dis's chariot breaks into the upper air (*DRP* 2.193-4), an allusion to Ovid's *Fasti* version of the abduction (*Fast.* 4.449-50) echoes or anticipates the phrasing of a mythologically distinct but analogous moment in Claudian's own Latin gigantomachy (*Carm. Min.* 53.46-7). There is the fact that one of the key locations in which the *DRP*'s Sicilian action unfolds, Mount Etna, is the site of the imprisonment of a prominent defeated Giant: a geographical coincidence fully cashed in late in the extant poem at *DRP* 3.330-56, when Ceres, en route to light her iconic torches at the flames of Etna, will find on the mountain the scene of post-Lucanian horror which is the still-smoking graveyard of the Giants, complete with a display of actual decaying body-parts as victors' spoils.

Finally (as foreshadowed a moment ago), there is the epic's repeated exploitation of gigantomachy as a way of talking about the potential for civil conflict immanent in the divine machinations behind the abduction of Persephone. Although Dis would normally be thought of as lining up with his brother Jupiter *against* the Titans and Giants, the effective containment of so many of the defeated forces in the same chthonic realm as Dis brings with it an inherent possibility for seeing the Underworld god as a potential enabler of a new wave of rebellion on their part. This does not happen in the *DRP*. However, one function of the poem's overt references to gigantomachy is to offer glimpses of a sort of counterfactual history in which it might.

As one instance among many, take the response of the nurse-nymph Electra to the conjecture of Ceres that Persephone's newly discovered abduction is indeed the work of resurgent Giants (*DRP* 3.181-8). 'No', says Electra, 'but I wish that it were, because in that situation we would at least be dealing with a familiar and shared enemy':

> vix tamen haec: 'acies utinam vaesana Gigantum
> hanc dederit cladem! levius communia tangunt…'
> *DRP* 3.196-7
>
> Scarce could [the nurse] thus speak: 'Would that the insane army of Giants had caused this ruin! Common troubles are lighter to bear…'

In other words, behind this exchange we hear Claudian archly invoking the gigantomachy – *his* gigantomachy – as a less traumatic story than the one he actually tells: gigantomachy as an unavailable source of consolation.

Claudianism: (curbs on) rhetorical inflation

Claudian's version of historical epic is an undeniably weighty business. Even though the poems thus defined, or definable, are short by the traditional standards of the genre (one, two or at most three limited-length books each), this *is* epic with the volume control turned up. Claudian does not apologize for bringing the full rhetorical panoply of the genre to wars divine and human, to epicized poems of celebration and denunciation; and thus far my contextualization has worked, by and large, to show how the *DRP* is assimilable to this paradigm. And yet a 'Claudianizing' reading of the *DRP* could work in the opposite way too, reading this as the one epic poem in which Claudian *lightens things up*, taking a holiday from his day-job as a writer of overwrought verse on the cosmic and terrestrial entailments of the imperial court. That is, notwithstanding the undifferentiated charge against *all* Claudianic epic of over-indulgence in big speeches and in set-piece rhetoric seen as excessive by Augustan canons of taste (a charge well framed by Alan Cameron, with comparative statistics on the use of direct speech), there is a good case to be made (even if not here) for a finding that the *DRP* is actually self-consciously *un*inflated by comparison with Claudian's own rhetorical practice elsewhere.

The temptation to read the *DRP* in this way, or at least to offer a promissory note for such a reading, is perhaps sharpened for a critic who finds the poem (when not post-Virgilian, as it often is) to be pervasively post-Ovidian in its sensibility, and hence assimilable to an alternative history of Roman epic which takes its bearings from the *Metamorphoses* rather than from the high moral seriousness of the *Aeneid*. The *DRP* is a story of sexual courtship and coercion; in other words, both in its more playful and in its more disturbing moments, it is the kind of narrative that Ovid had made his own. But with at least one important difference: whereas in the poetics of Ovid (and of the Augustan period more broadly) the expected way to 'lighten' the norms of

epic is to put them into dialogue with the alternative modes of (esp. erotic) elegy, in Claudian's end-of-fourth-century poetic world the opposition between epic and elegy is in most respects long since obsolete.

So before succumbing to the temptation to read the *DRP* in a post-Ovidian context (as I will soon), let me first sketch a complementary approach to the lightness and the eroticism of the *DRP* in terms of a mode more native to Claudian's *oeuvre* – and that mode is epithalamium, wedding song.

Claudianism: epithalamium

The opening episode of the *DRP* (1.32ff.) describes a threat to cosmic order, as heavy and hyperbolic as anything in the traditions of imperial Roman epic. But *why* is there a threat to cosmic order? *Because Dis wants a wife* (33-6). The crisis escalates so rapidly that the Fates are driven to prostrate themselves at the feet of the Underworld king to beg for the future of the universe; yet, at the same time, something soft and sentimental is in play:

> '…ne pete firmatas pacis dissolvere leges
>
> quas dedimus nevitque colus, neu foedera fratrum
>
> civili converte tuba. cur inpia tollis
>
> signa? quid incestis aperis Titanibus auras?
>
> posce Iovem; *dabitur coniunx*.' vix illa; pepercit
>
> erubuitque preces, animusque relanguit atrox
>
> quamvis indocilis flecti…
>
> *DRP* 1.63-9
>
> '…Seek not to dissolve the established laws of peace which we have given and our distaff has spun, and do not overturn the bonds of brothers with the trumpet-blast of civil war. Why do you raise impious standards? Why do you give the unholy Titans open access to the upper air? Ask Jupiter; you shall be granted a wife.' Scarce had [the Fate] spoken; [Dis] desisted and blushed at her prayers, and his fierce temper abated, though unschooled to bending…

Cherchez la femme: the last half-line of Lachesis' speech acknowledges the set-up to be more personal and intimate than had her eleven-line build-up; and, as if to underline the point, Claudian's immediate 'reaction shot' allows the king of the dead to *blush*.

The same kind of erotic softening informs the passage below, late in *DRP* 2. After the hyperbolic violence and upheaval of the actual abduction, Dis, at the approach of his wedding to Persephone, sheds his traditional force and becomes *unlike himself*:

> …mox ipse serenus
>
> ingreditur facili passus mollescere risu
>
> *dissimilisque sui*…
>
> *DRP* 2.312-14
>
> Soon Dis himself serenely walked in, yielding to the mellow accession of an easy smile, and unlike his normal self…

Is this the *mise en scène* for a cosmomachy, or rather for a poem which is more intimate, erotic and (yes) Ovidianizing in its treatment of divine priorities? In a way; but here is one difference. Whereas in the *Metamorphoses* the sexual aspirations of the gods are in general non-marital or extra-marital, in other words discursively elegiac, in the *DRP* Dis's aspiration is, unequivocally, for marriage. Although Ovidian terms of reference are relevant, another generic context is in play here too: that context, a distinctively Claudianic one, is epithalamium. Such is the suggestive set-up of a recent discussion of the *DRP* by Kevin Tsai; I merely touch here upon the themes of his 2007 treatment.

Consider the following excerpt from Claudian's own wedding song for the Emperor Honorius and his bride Maria, an epithalamium arguably assimilable both in metre and in scope to our poet's epic writings. Ostensibly this passage sets up a kind of generic tension familiar from first-century poetics, with a conflict between the themes and motifs appropriate to martial narrative and those appropriate to a lighter mode defined by eroticism:

> dicere possemus quae proelia gesta sub Haemo
>
> quaeque cruentarint fumantem Strymona pugnae, …
>
> ni prohiberet Hymen. quae tempestiva relatu,
>
> nunc canimus …
>
> *Epithal. Honorio et Mariae* 309-10, 312-13
>
> I could tell of the battles fought beneath the slopes of Haemus, the contests wherefrom Strymon reeked red with gore,… did Hymen the marriage god not forbid it. My song now must be such as befits the occasion…

But with one important difference: despite Claudian's distinction here between what is or is not *tempestiva relatu*, the fact is that in this newly prominent and quasi-epic genre of imperial epithalamium neither martial themes nor erotic themes are inherently inappropriate to the occasion. An emperor's military triumphs (or, in the above passage, those of his regent and father-in-law Stilicho) and an emperor's arrangements for marriage and succession belong impartially to public discourse; the wedding poem for a reigning *princeps* immediately moves gender and erotics from the margins to the centre of the official epic project.

Claudian's personal stake in a genre which comes to enjoy a special vogue in late antiquity is suggestive for the *DRP*: this is a poet whose contemporary experience of court ceremony, in life and in literature, pre-programmes him to retell the rape of Persephone not, or not just, as an Ovidian story of genre-bending misadventure but as the tale of a *royal wedding*, unproblematically central to an enlarged Claudianic epic sensibility. That is not to say that Claudianic epithalamium precludes either sexual or literary playfulness (think of Ausonius' *Cento Nuptialis*, also addressed to an emperor); but it is to say that this is a poetic milieu in which old neoteric and Augustan oppositions between *amor* and *Roma* are now in most respects beside the point.

Claudianism: closure

My final category of 'Claudianism' addresses the very deliberate start and the abruptly inadvertent end of the *DRP*, with the already advertised debt to Philip Hardie now conjoined with an equal one to a well-known article by the late Don Fowler.

(i) epic (dis)closure: *nomen omen?*

It is perhaps no surprise that the first scene of the *DRP* should show such an emphatic focus upon the revelation of what was previously hidden. Vocabulary of opening and disclosure will naturally occur in any epic poem as the bard appeals for divine help to get his plot under way; the imperative form of the verb *pandere* italicized below is entirely in line with generic expectations:

> vos mihi sacrarum penetralia *pandite* rerum
> et vestri secreta poli: qua lampade Ditem
> flexit Amor; quo ducta ferox Proserpina raptu
> possedit dotale Chaos quantasque per oras
> sollicito genetrix erraverit anxia cursu;
> unde datae populis fruges…
> *DRP* 1.25-30

> You [Underworld gods] lay open to me the mysteries of sacred matters and the secrets of your world: with what torch Love made Dis bend; as a result of what act of abduction strong-spirited Proserpina came to possess Chaos as her dowry, and over how many shores her anxious mother wandered on her troubled course; whence grain was given to the nations…

That said, when the project is to reveal a plot formed in the darkness of the Underworld, a plot whose mythic modulations are associated in Greek tradition with the mysteries of Eleusis (*DRP* 1.9-11), the idea of a disclosure of narrative *secreta* may come with especial force. And in Roman epic tradition, specifically, there has always been a dark metapoetic energy associated with any opening up of the Underworld. Given such contexts, Claudian's *pandite …* is perhaps suggestive of more than just a simple request for information.

This emphasis seems to be confirmed by Dis's own use of a cognate verb less than a hundred lines later as he countenances a rather more radical kind of 'disclosure' of the contents of the Underworld pole:

> 'si dictis parere negas, *patefacta* ciebo
> Tartara…'
> *DRP* 1.113-14
>
> 'If you [Jupiter] refuse to obey my [Dis's] words, I will lay open and stir up Tartarus…'

Now, the *DRP* (at least in its extant portion) is not really about to deliver on this threat to rip open Tartarus. The vocabulary of opening and the vocabulary of closing are opposites which tend to attract in epic metanarrative contexts; and as it happens the early scenes of the *DRP* are notable not just for energy unleashed but for energy *shut down*. We have already registered the first moment at which Pluto backs away from a threat to blow everything open (1.67-9, quoted in the previous section). Consider now the simile applied to that early turning-point:

> …ceu turbine rauco…
> …si forte adversus aenos
> Aeolus obiecit postes, vanescit inanis
> impetus et fractae redeunt in *claustra* procellae
> *DRP* 1.69, 73-5

[*storm-wind simile as Dis's anger rises and then abates*]

…as when with strident storm…
…if Aeolus chances to shut the bronze doors against it, the violent attack vanishes
into emptiness and the gales return broken to the closure of their prison

In a miniature of the first narrative scene of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Claudian's simile unleashes a storm and then closes it down. And the final phrase in the simile may give us pause: *redeunt in claustra procellae*. Like any good epic poet, Claudian knows how to manipulate the vocabulary of opening and closing. However – and this is where the reanimation of old *topoi* comes in – not every epic poet is *by name* a Claudius Claudianus, etymologically interpretable, that is, with double reinforcement, as a … 'closer'.

So can that initial request for disclosure (*pandite…*) perhaps be reread as hinting antiphrastically at a kind of *sphragis*, a programmatic 'signature', in the opening invocation of Claudian's epic?

vos mihi sacrarum penetralia *pandite* rerum…

The Underworld gods are asked to 'open' the secrets of their realm to the 'Closer'… who will thenceforth exercise his eponymous authority over the poetics of opening and of closing alike.

(ii) closure and continuation: epic end(lessness)

What I am envisaging, then, is an artistically managed tension at the start of the *DRP* between vocabularies of opening up and of shutting down. Even more than other epics, the *DRP* is so configured as to sustain interest in such a thematic: a more extended treatment than this would address the programmatically advertised interruption in the poem's composition between its first and second books (an interruption which has attracted more scholarly attention for the clues it offers to the dating of the work than for its no less interesting artistic entailments). But not all crises of closure are fully controllable by poets; and 448 lines into its third book the *DRP* stops abruptly forever in mid-course. It is, quite simply, an unfinished epic – whether left incomplete by its poet's illness, death or (on the earlier of two envisaged datings for the *DRP*) diversion to some other enterprise.

In the grand scheme of things, it is appropriate that Claudian will at the unfinished end of the *DRP* join the ranks of Latin epic poets ambushed by death or other mishap into a final problematization of epic closure; an accidental series which is itself

programmed into a kind of intentionality by the inaugural example of Virgil, with his biographically underwritten failure to apply the *summa manus* to the *Aeneid*. In different ways, the *Metamorphoses*, the *Bellum Civile* and the *Achilleid* are key members of this series (see *Tristia* 1.7 for the case of the *Met.*); a millennium later the Virgilian law of incompletion will haunt Petrarch in a lifetime of work on his *Africa*. What then of the end of the *DRP*?

Fifteen lines before it falls silent, the *DRP* offers a fresh narrative start, with the hint of a Contean 'middle proem', as Ceres announces her quest for the abducted Proserpina:

'…qua te parte poli, quo te sub cardine quaeram?
quis monstrator erit? quae me vestigia ducent?
qui…? quis…? quae…?
ibo, ibo, quocumque *pedes*, quocumque iubebit
casus…'

DRP 3.428-33

'…In what part of the world, beneath what quarter of heaven, should I seek for you? Who will be my guide? What tracks will lead me? What…? Who…? What…? I will go, I will go, wherever my feet, wherever chance will bid me …'

The goddess's programme for her search looks very much like a programme for another book (or more) of the *DRP*. All the more reason to see the abrupt end of the epic just a few lines later as in every way an accident, in no sense a moment of stylized closure:

antra procul Scyllaea petit, canibusque reductis
pars stupefacta silet, *pars* nondum exterrita latrat
DRP 3.447-8 (epic breaks off here)

[The torch-light] reaches the cave of Scylla some way off: she draws back her dogs, some of which are silent with amazement, while others bark, not yet terrified

And yet…, as more than once elsewhere in the Latin epic tradition, so that it almost becomes a trait of the genre, *does* the moment of interruption come with a tantalizing hint of self-conscious shaping, an apparent editorial marking of the epic's endless end, even though such marking should in principle be unavailable?

Tracing the ruts of Dis's chariot wheels, Ceres makes her way across Sicily from the flowery meadow associated with the rape. As she crosses the coastline the light from her torches strikes both the Italian and the Libyan shores; and then, in the last sentence before the final interruption, it reaches into the cave of Scylla.

With Scylla, then, we abruptly take our leave of the *DRP*. This may be suggestive in itself: because of the well-known and often advertised confusion or conflation of two different mythological bearers of this name (the dog-girt sea-monster and the daughter of Nisus), references to Scylla evolve into something of a *locus classicus* of staged or self-conscious break-down for Latin poets; especially, as it happens, for Ovid … whose own catalogue of Ceres' wanderings in the *Fasti* includes an arch reference to the so-called *Nisei, naufraga monstra, canes* (*Fast.* 4.500).

But for my immediate (and non-Ovidian) purposes here I want to look not at the *sense* of the final line but at its *rhetorical shape*. For connoisseurs of accidently unfinished epics, is it not a little piquant that this one should break off with a *pars … pars …* construction? Even more, a *pars … pars nondum …* construction? Here we stand, as so often in Latin epic, only this time differently, poised between closure and continuation. Part 1 of the *De Raptu Proserpinae* is over; Part 2 has 'not yet' begun.

II. OVIDIANISM IN THE *DRP*

It is time now to pick up my unfinished business from twenty-five years ago, and to tune more closely into Claudian's readings of Ovid in the *DRP*. A comprehensive survey would make for a longer lecture than any of you have signed up for here. In search of some key elements, then, I have decided to focus (like an American real estate agent) on *location*, *location*, *location*. What is coming up is some Sicilian geography, some landscape ecphrasis, and (in honour of Housman) a moment of textual criticism. I will be concentrating on Claudian's specific inheritance from Ovid of the traditions of the *locus amoenus*, the 'lovely landscape' of set-piece rhetorical description.

Return to Enna

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone is abducted from the 'Nysian plain' (*H.Dem.* 17), most famously identified in antiquity with a place in Caria; elsewhere, more than a dozen sites all over the Greek world lay claim to the geographical association. In later Greek and in Roman sources a Sicilian version prevails, and every Latin writer (even a Latin writer by cultural adoption, like Claudian) can name the specific spot where the rape happened: right in the middle of Sicily, within sight of the *umbilicus* (or 'navel') of the island, Enna or Henna. The place is hardwired into the history of Latin literature: not just in Ovid, of whom more in a moment, but as the subject of the most famous *locus amoenus* in Latin prose, in Cicero's *Fourth Verrine*, and (eventually) as the anti-type to the garden of Eden in a famous passage of *Paradise Lost*, to be quoted later.

But what's odd is this: if you are using any of the ranking modern editions of the *De Raptu Proserpinae*, Barrie Hall's virtuoso 'Cambridge orange' or later Teubner, J.-L. Charlet's Budé, or Claire Gruzelier's fine Clarendon commentary, you will look in vain for *any reference* to 'that fair field of Enna'. Instead, the abduction happens from a rather higher eminence in Sicily: not Enna, a lowish flat-topped hill surrounded by all the traditional fixings of a *locus amoenus*, but Etna, a towering and flame-spewing volcano which more naturally gravitates towards the opposite tradition of the *locus horridus*. The older modern editions had Enna, but the canonical site of Persephone's abduction has now been erased from Claudian's poem. Why?

Well, the first thing to say is that Etna as well as Enna *has always* had a part to play in the Sicilian version of the rape – it is from the fires of Etna that Ceres will ignite her torches to begin her nocturnal searching for Persephone – and it is also a fact that Etna will play a bigger part in Claudian's version of the myth than in any heretofore. But what we need to understand (and this is a point on which I postpone discussion until

fuller publication of this material) is that the *DRP* offers a *pointed contrast* between Enna and Etna – which we lose if we edit Enna out of the text.

The second thing to say is that Enna (*Henna*) and Etna (*Aetna*), along with their derivatives, do indeed make for an easy orthographical and paleographical confusion (of which I will offer a confusing representation a little below, in an *ad hoc* apparatus to my quotation of *DRP* 1.122); and, Etna being the more famous name, the medieval scribal tradition tends to do exactly what we would expect and to assimilate the lesser-known name to the more famous one, Enna to Etna. We find the same confusion in the manuscripts of Ovid. So in Ovid the editors tidy things up, and pick Enna over Etna whenever the mythic and geographical context requires it: why not in Claudian?

The short answer, I think, is that Claudian is taken to be a *more careless reader* of literary and mythic tradition than a learned first-century poet like Ovid. And this is where I have to remind you of Claudian's image problem, with which I began. Like Cicero or like Ovid, *we* know that the abduction should happen in Enna; but, the argument goes (and I exaggerate for rhetorical effect), Claudian, afflicted with the enfeebled mind of a poet writing in the last decadent throes of Latin classicism, anticipates the geographical simplifications of the medieval scribes, and indeed of the medieval tradition more broadly, and allows a slippage whereby all action in Sicily gravitates towards Etna.

So as to begin to take the measure of Claudian as a post-Ovidian poet of the *locus amoenus*, let us consider a couple of these disputed Enna-or-Etna passages:

> viderat herboso sacrum de vertice vulgus
> *Aetna/Henna* parens florum curvaque in valle sedentem
> compellat Zephyrum: 'pater o gratissime veris,
> qui mea lascivo regnas per prata meatu
> semper et adsiduis inroras flatibus annum…'
> *DRP* 2.71-5

> Etna/Enna, mother of flowers, had seen the sacred throng from her grassy summit and addressed Zephyrus, who was sitting in the curve of the valley: 'O most gracious father of the springtime, you who ever hold sway through my meadows on your playful course, and bedew the year with ceaseless breaths…'

The landscape from which Persephone is stolen is such an iconic part of the myth that in Claudian it is almost one of the main characters. Indeed, as the poet sets the scene for the abduction, he gives it a voice: this speaking *locus amoenus* gives a pep-talk

to the West Wind, Zephyrus, urging him to put in some extra effort in order to make her pleasance as pleasant as possible (*DRP* 2.73-87). What, then, is the name of this speaking landscape? ***Aetna*** *parens florum*, as in all current texts, or ***Henna*** *parens florum*?

And the answer is … *Henna*, of course: that is where all the flowers are to be found in the mainstream Latin tradition of the myth (Ovid preceded by Cicero). Only through the undervaluing of Ovid as a source could *Aetna* ever have had traction. Just below, something close to allusive proof emerges when Claudian offers a near-citation of the corresponding landscape description in the *Metamorphoses*:

> *haud procul* inde *lacus* (*Pergum* dixere Sicani)
> panditur …
> *DRP* 2.112-13

> *haud procul* Hennaeis *lacus* est a moenibus altae,
> nomine *Pergus*, aquae…
> Ovid, *Met.* 5.385-6

> Not far from there extends a lake (the Sicani have called it Pergus)…
> Not far from Enna's walls is a lake, Pergus by name, of deep water…

The emphases above tell the story. 'Not far from there' is a lake named Pergus, *haud procul inde lacus*. Not far from *where*? From Etna? No, of course, from Enna, as in the passage's Ovidian model… which is also, by the way, the right answer in terms of Sicilian geographical reality:

> Enna to Lago di Pergusa: 7 km
> Etna to Lago di Pergusa: 70 km

Another intertextual moment in the passage points in the same direction:

> forma *loci* superat flores: curvata tumore
> parvo *planities* et mollibus *edita* clivis
> creverat in collem…
> *DRP* 2.101-3

> Henna autem … est *loco* perexcelso atque *edito*, quo in summo est aequata agri *planities*…
> Cicero, *Verr.* 4.107

The beauty of the location surpassed the flowers; the plain, rounded in a slight swell and raised with gentle slopes, grew into a hill

Now Enna … is in a very lofty and raised location, topped by a levelled area of plain

Again, does the Roman tradition of the abduction of Persephone allow us to name the Sicilian *locus* characterised by a raised plain, an elevated *planities*? Yes indeed, and this time the answer is suggested by Claudian's close verbal tracking not of Ovid but of Cicero: and again the answer is Enna, not Etna.

If the implicatedness of the *DRP* in Latin literary tradition strongly indicates Enna rather than Etna, that answer may be independently confirmed by a bad Greek pun on the occasion of the very first mention of Enna (or Etna) in the *DRP*. I'm not sure how Housman would feel about the following argument (well, I think I am, but let me proceed anyway …). Here, along with the promised rough guide to the orthographical tradition, is the passage in question:

Aetnaeae/Hennaeae Cereri proles optata virebat
unica nec tribuit subolem Lucinam secundam
fessaque post primos haeserunt viscera partus;
infecunda quidem, sed cunctis altior extat
matribus et numeri damnum Proserpina pensat
DRP 1.122-6

variants *Aetnaeae* [*(a)et(h)n(a)e(a)e*] Hall, Charlet, Gruzelier
Hennaeae [*(h)en(n)(a)e(a)e*] Heinsius, older editors

Ceres of Etna/Enna had a single child, long-wanted and fresh in youth. Lucina granted her no second offspring and her womb, exhausted after the first birth, seized up; unfruitful she might be indeed, but she stood higher than all mothers and Proserpina outweighed the loss of numbers

In the opening line above, is Ceres given an epithet from Etna (*Aetnaea*) or from Enna (*Hennaea*)? On this occasion cult can be argued to combine with literature to strengthen the case for Enna. But even if we accept (as I do not) the nay-sayers' likely rejoinder that Claudian is a slapdash reader of both literature and cult, one thing that we cannot take away from this Alexandrian-born poet is his bilingualism. And to a Greek speaker with a taste for a pun, what does the Latin epithet *Hen-naea* suggest? Yes, 'oneness'.

Hence my pattern of underlinings in the passage above. On Claudian's paronomasial hint, Henna's goddess Ceres is 'number one'. The pun in *Hennaeae* is activated and glossed by *unica* directly below it, and by a lingering numerological hang-over in the phrasing of the rest of the sentence: we are introduced to the 'unique' daughter of Ceres 'goddess-of-ἕν' (who had no 'second' offspring after her 'first' birth); as long as she has Proserpina, Ceres finds 'balance' in her 'numerical loss'. A bad pun, to be sure, but it underscores the case for reading Enna over Etna in this first programmatic announcement of the *DRP*'s poetics of place. And maybe not *such* a bad pun (in my world, there are no bad puns, only puns waiting to be redeemed): the odd thing is that Claudian will keep coming back to it as his epic progresses. An especially interesting *ingeminat* awaits us later, at *DRP* 3.220-2; but first it is time to gather some flowers.

Anthology

Every writer who recounts the rape of Persephone takes up the rhetorical challenge to offer a *tour-de-force* description of the flowery meadow in which the abduction takes place. For a late-comer to the tradition like Claudian, how can the bouquet of flowers gathered by the victim and her friends do anything but proliferate, whether in length or in ornamental detail? But a few specific items stand out. As the main group of goddesses and nymphs advances into the field, the two first-plucked blooms recapitulate *Ovid's* abbreviated two-flower catalogue in the equivalent scene in *Metamorphoses* 5:

pratorum spoliatur honos; haec lilia fuscis
intexit violis …
DRP 2.128-9

…quo dum Proserpina luco
ludit et aut violas aut candida lilia carpit
Ov. *Met.* 5.391-2

The glory of the meadows was despoiled: this nymph wove lilies together with dusky violets…

While Proserpina was playing in this grove and plucking either violets or white lilies

So does Claudian 'gather' his flowers from Latin meadows only? *No.* The last two blooms in the *DRP* catalogue repeat the last two blooms of the Greek Ur-catalogue in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the hyacinth and the narcissus – with the 'translation' flagged by a parallel use of enjambment:

te quoque, flebilibus maerens Hyacinthe figuris,
Narcissumque metunt, nunc incluta germina veris,
praestantes olim pueros: tu natus Amyclis,
hunc Helicon genuit; te disci perculit error,
hunc fontis decepit amor…
DRP 2.131-5

…ἠδ' ὑάκινθον
νάρκισσόν θ', ὃν φῦσε δόλον καλυκώπιδι κούρῃ
Γαῖα Διὸς βουλῇσι χαριζομένη πολυδέκτῃ
Homeric Hymn to Demeter 7-9

You also they harvested, Hyacinthus, mourning with your letters of lamentation, and Narcissus – now famous buds of spring, once preeminent boys: you were born at Amyclae, him Helicon begot; you the errant discus struck, him love of the pool beguiled…

…and the hyacinth and the narcissus, which Earth made to grow as a snare for the maiden with eyes like buds, at the will of Zeus and to please the Host of Many

Now, while a hyacinth is also found among the flowers gathered by the Persephone of *Fasti* 4, the narcissus occurs in neither Ovidian list, being associated rather with the myth's Attic and non-Sicilian traditions. In one sense, then, we can here see Claudian reaching with his catalogue-closing blooms across a full millennium of literature, and back from his adopted language to the language of his birth, to reconnect in the *Homeric Hymn* with the earliest origins of the story he tells anew. In another sense, however (and despite its absence from the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* catalogues), the narcissus is by now, irrevocably, *Ovid's* flower… and Ovid's *myth*.

This is a good place to sketch a broader thought about Claudian's epic Ovidianism in the *DRP*, which goes well beyond specific correspondences with Ovid's twin versions of the Persephone myth. Claudian's poem sees the world at large in a post-Ovidian way. And his landscapes, even where they are not picking up details from *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fasti* 4, are post-Ovidian landscapes: in their aesthetic configuration, in their immanent potential for violence, in their points of metamorphic access to myths which have now become, as they will be for the next thousand years and more, Ovid's myths.

That is to say, although the narcissus is not in the catalogue of Persephone's flowers in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or *Fasti*, it does *very Ovidian work* in the Claudianic passage.

When Claudian 'animates' the story of the boy behind the narcissus, and the boy behind the hyacinth too (*DRP* 2.133ff. above), he unlocks the whole image-repertoire of the Ovidian mythic landscape. And it is hardly by accident that, outside the main catalogue, the flower plucked a little earlier in Claudian's text by Venus, the instigator of the flower-gathering expedition, is the anemone, 'the sign of her own grief', as Claudian puts it (*DRP* 2.122-3): that is, the bloom formed from the blood of the dead Adonis. Narcissus, Hyacinthus, Adonis: three old myths (one of them very old). But *even* for a poet born in the Greek east, these myths by now spell *Metamorphoses* 3, 10 and 10. Ovidian variations upon themes of nature and erotics, violence and loss, death and negotiation between worlds; remember too that in Ovid the myths of Hyacinthus and Adonis are part of the cycle of songs sung by Orpheus after his own near-miss failure to mediate between the Lower world and the Upper.

Upper Enna and Nether Enna

You may remember that earlier in my lecture I suggested that Claudian's poetic investment in the essential compatibility of the Western and Eastern Empires may have coloured his version of the duality between the Upper and the Nether worlds, and led him to imagine in the *DRP* a kinder and gentler version of Hell.

Let me now pick up that thought. As Dis tries to make Proserpina feel good about her imminent wedding, from his lips we learn of an Underworld which is not the negative antitype of the world above, but rather its double, equal and indeed improved:

'…amissum ne crede diem: sunt altera nobis
sidera, sunt orbes alii, lumenque videbis
purius Elysiumque magis mirabere solem
cultoresque pios…

…nec mollia derunt
prata tibi; Zephyris illic melioribus halant
perpetui flores, quos nec tua protulit Henna…'
DRP 2.282-5, 287-9

'…Do not believe that you have lost the daylight. We have other stars and other orbs, and you will see a purer light and wonder rather at the sun of Elysium and its righteous inhabitants…

Nor shall you be without soft meadows; there to kindlier Zephyrs breathe perpetual flowers, such as not even your Enna has produced…'

Where one might expect to find here a *locus horridus* to contrast with Proserpina's Upper-world *locus amoenus*, it turns out instead (on Dis's narrative) that the Underworld can replicate or even surpass the Upper world: other stars, another sun, a purer light, and – the big moment for landscape-watchers – soft meadows, warm Zephyrs and perpetual flowers: in short (and with traces of Ovidian language) *another Enna, but a better one*.

So we're back to the numerology of *Hen-na*, doubling the place of one-ness. And here's the thing. In the Persephone tradition, there is *always* more than one Enna. This is a *locus* which is *always* being measured against other rhetorical and geographical versions of itself, against other *loci* and *loca*: Claudian's Enna versus Ovid's; Claudian's or Ovid's versus Cicero's; in Ovid, the *Metamorphoses* version against the parallel version in the *Fasti*. More exotically, the poetic tradition never ceases implicitly or explicitly to pit this western location for the abduction against older eastern locations, from the valley of the Cayster in Asia Minor to Eleusis in Greece:

> haud procul Hennaeis lacus est a moenibus altae,
> nomine Pergus, aquae; non illo plura Caystros
> carmina cycnorum labentibus edit in undis
>
> Ov. *Met.* 5.385-7

> …θεὰ δ' ἐπεμαίνετο χώρῳ
> ὅσσον 'Ελευσῖνι, Τριόπᾳ θ' ὅσον ὀκκόσον Ἔννᾳ
>
> Callimachus, *Hymn to Demeter* 29-30
>
> Not far from Enna's walls there is a lake of deep water, Pergus by name; no more productive in swan-song are the gliding streams of the Cayster
>
> And the goddess was as madly fond of the [grove of Dotium] as of Eleusis, as fond of Triopas as she was of Enna

In a sense, then, Dis's assertion of a competing underworld rival to Enna falls into a habit of comparison already programmed into the Persephone myth's poetics of place. And this is where I'd like to call to mind those celebrated lines of Milton's in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost*:

> …Not that fair field
> of Enna, where Proserpin gathering flowers
> Herself a fairer flower by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world…
>
> …might with this Paradise
> Of Eden strive.
>
> Milton, *PL* 4.268-72, 274-5

In Milton, as in Claudian, a better version of Enna is to be found, and again (as in Claudian) it is to be found in a better world: not this time in hell, but in an earthly heaven.

***Omnia iam vulgata* (Virg. *Geo.* 3.4)**

Can there be anything more to say about *ecphrasis loci* in the *DRP*? From the third, unfinished book I offer you a final pair of self-reflexive gestures (post-Ovidian and perhaps also post-Flavian in their affect) wherein the very tradition of praise for the flowery meadow can now be felt to *invade the plot*. Let me explain. What we see in both these passages, of which I here quote the first, is a marked case of literary belatedness:

> '…timeo ne fama latebras
> prodiderit leviusque meum Trinacria celet
> depositum. terret nimium vulgata locorum
> nobilitas…'
>
> *DRP* 3.118-21
>
> '…I am fearful in case rumour has revealed [my daughter's] hiding-place and Trinacria too carelessly conceals my trust. The fame of the place, too widely publicized, terrifies me…'

At this point it is impossible for a reader to experience the Sicilian field without experiencing *the rhetorical tradition which constitutes* the Sicilian field: for Claudian, Proserpina's meadow is an ecphrastic meadow, experienced not just as an evocation of nature but as an evocation of virtuoso rhetorical description. And this seems to be the experience of Claudian's characters too. In the passage above, Ceres (travelling abroad) has just had a nightmare vision which hints that all is not well back in Enna. When she wakes up she tells her host (Cybele) that she needs to go back to Sicily to check up on her daughter: the Sicilian *locus amoenus* in which she had left Proserpina doesn't seem so safe any more. Why not? Because it is too well known, *nimium vulgata*. *Why* is it

too well-known? Well, Claudian's allusion to the famous poetological catch-phrase in my header – Virg. *Geo.* 3.4 *omnia iam vulgata*, 'everything (besides) has already been published' – tips his hand here. It is too well-known because it is a *locus classicus* of ecphrastic landscape description, made famous by the virtuosity of Cicero and Ovid; you can't hope to hide your daughter in one of the most celebrated locations in Latin literature. And why is this 'terrifying'? In part, because Ceres (like Claudian and his readers) has 'read' the *Metamorphoses*: bad things always happen to young virgins in beautiful landscapes.

More in this vein of late-antique postmodernism follows a hundred lines later, in the middle of the extended speech in which the nurse Electra gives Ceres the grim news of her daughter's misadventure:

> '…prima Venus campos Hennaeaque rura maligno
> ingerit adfatu. vicinos callida flores
> ingeminat meritumque loci velut inscia quaerit …
> dum loca miratur, studio dum flagrat eundi,
> persuadet…'
> *DRP* 3.220-2, 226-7
>
> '…Venus first with evil speech pressed on her the fields and countryside of Enna. She slyly redoubled her mention of the nearby flowers, and asked about the merits of the locale as if ignorant…
>
> While she marvelled over the place and burned with eagerness to go, she persuaded [Proserpina]…'

For Claudian, Venus is the fixer to whom Jupiter gives the job of luring Proserpina into the meadow to set her up for abduction; and in this passage we see that she does it by *praising the place*, by engaging in what the Romans call *laudes loci*: once again, just as in the earlier Book 3 passage, the meadow itself has become inseparable from the rhetorical tradition of the meadow. In this new twist to the meta-ecphrastic plot, Venus disingenuously affects to be that unimaginable someone who at this point in literary history is *unaware of* Enna's fame as a *locus amoenus*: therefore she quizzes Proserpina about the merits of the location, and thus in effect makes her interlocutor complicit in *rhetoricizing the scene* of her own imminent abduction.

In this metaliterary context the verb *ingeminat* is worth a second look. Venus 'redoubles' her mention of the nearby flowers, praising them again and again. But for

us as readers too, this is quite literally a 'redoubling' of the description of the flower-meadow, because the *DRP* 3 scene is a kind of 'messenger's speech' which repeats and retells for the benefit of the late-arriving Ceres the flower-plucking scene which *we* have already read in 'real time' back in *DRP* 2.

Venus's *ingeminat* can make us think about *intertextual* repetition and retelling too. Metaliterarily, Venus is 'redoubling' the descriptions of Enna's flowers in Claudian's literary predecessors, especially Ovid and Cicero; for his part, Ovid had already 'redoubled' the flowers in his own work by presenting *two* Ennas, in *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fast.* 4; and all these Latin versions of Enna had already 'redoubled' an original Greek catalogue of flowers in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* – which was itself already doubled because in the *Homeric Hymn*, just as in Claudian, the flower-plucking scene is told *twice*.

And finally, we're back to the mathematics of *Hen-na*: yet again, Claudian has been unable to name the place without playing on its purported etymological 'oneness': Venus 'first', *prima*, asks Persephone about the *Hen-naea … rura*, and then 'redoubles' her request, *ingeminat*: Henna multiplied by two, and then multiplied by two again, until there are too many Hennas: unless of course you read *Aetnaea* in line 220, in which case you need never think of my pun again.

Anyway, on any reading Ceres is right to be afraid. In terms of the bad ending programmed for Persephone, the narrative is burdened by too much praise of too many flowers plucked in too many worlds: *nimium vulgata …*, indeed. This is what it is to experience a myth which for Claudian is already haunted by more than a millennium of cultural memory. Like Ceres, we end the unfinished poem on the track of Persephone … *but which track, and which Persephone …?*

Envoi

Claudian, a poet with pagan leanings in a Christian court, a poet contemporary with (say) Prudentius, stands at the threshold between another pair of worlds not mentioned in the promotional announcement of my lecture: the pagan and the Christian. In Claudian's own time, and in the generations following his death, *what was it like* for a Christian reader to read the *DRP*? In a just-published article, Catherine Ware has posed this question… and her interesting answer is that such a reader *might just* find a way to read *DRP* as a Christian martyr-narrative. More than a millennium before Milton, the question of how to achieve a specifically Christian transformation of the Ovidian tradition is already coming on to the agenda – for Claudian's readers if not for Claudian himself.

In an early draft, I had thought of ending my lecture with the conceit whereby Claudian's Underworld is outfitted with its own version of the Evening Star, Hesperus (*DRP* 2.361), which acquires here more upbeat associations than it usually has in the Persephone myth, and allows the poet's hellish but oddly happy version of a royal wedding to move towards its conclusion. Instead, however (to see us off to the post-lecture reception), let me close by reading to you some lines on Hesperus not by Claudian but by Housman – from *Epithalamium*, after Sappho fr. 104:

Happy bridegroom, Hesper brings
All desired and timely things.
All whom morning sends to roam,
Hesper loves to lead them home.
Home return who him behold,
Child to mother, sheep to fold,
Bird to nest from wandering wide:
Happy bridegroom, seek your bride.

A. E. Housman, *Last Poems* (1922)

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Department of Greek and Latin, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT