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Hippomenes, Pelops and Hercules: Receptions of an Ovidian Sequence in Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris

The motif of bloody trials that suitors must endure to win the hand of a princess as a prize is widespread in Latin literature. Ovid, in epist. 16, lists in sequence the exempla of Hippomenes, Pelops and Heracles, three heroes who, unlike Paris, had the opportunity to obtain their beloved in marriage as the prize of a contest. The Ovidian sequence will continue its fortune in Late Antiquity, in the verses of Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris. Claudian employed the sequence in his Laus Serenae with two political purposes, a clear one and a hidden one. Sidonius, while reusing the sequence, borrows from Claudian the political context in which the examples are inserted and adapts it to his own needs. The aim of the paper is to analyse the different functions of this mythological sequence, Claudian's role in the acquisition of a new political meaning, and Sidonius' intertextual mechanisms.

1. Introduction

The works of Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris are characterized by a dense and intricate intertextual pattern and, in their verses, multiple reminiscences (content citations or verbal echoes) overlap. This feature of the style of these authors, which is part of the general tendency toward intertextuality typical of late antique poetry,[1] has been studied repeatedly, including in recent years.[2]

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[1] Charlet (1988: 75–77) speaks of neoclassicism and neo-alexandrinism regarding late antique Latin poetry. On intertextuality in late antique poetry see also Kaufmann (2017); on late antique poetic style in general see Roberts (1989).

[2] See, e.g., Hinds (2016) in relation to Claudian and Gualandri (2022) in relation to Sidonius Apollinaris.

In relation to Claudian's work the image of a mosaic has been pro-posed,[3] in which different *tesserae* converge. In his poetry, indeed, literary quotations are interwoven, and they are superimposed on each other in in-numerable levels of intertextuality: that often make it difficult to identify a single model. In addition to the Virgilian one, among Claudian's favorite models a prominent role – repeatedly highlighted by scholars[4] – is undoubt-edly played by Ovid, whose presence in Claudian's verses is capillary. The poet's imitation of Ovid is not limited to verbal echoes or to the reprise of *iuncturae*, but also invests the stylistic level, with the fondness for the para-doxical pun that the two poets share, as well as a preference for rhetorical figures capable of conveying it.

Sidonius Apollinaris's style is also strongly intertextual, and in his vers-es references to the classics follow one another almost mechanically, in a profusion of erudition that often exploits the reuse of individual elements that are completely abstracted from their source context.[5]

Both Ovid and Claudian are among the poets most influential on Sido-nius.[6] On the one hand, as is well known, Sidonius is frequently inspired by Claudian, for example in the production of hexameter panegyrics, *praefatio-nes* with an epigrammatic scheme, or in the very structure of the panegy-

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[3] See GUALANDRI (1969: 7–8): 'Si può dire a questo proposito che in lui sia caratteristico il gu-sto e il compiacimento di trascegliere, qua e là, dagli autori più vari, nell'immenso materiale che la sua educazione di letterato gli mette a disposizione, frammenti che, vere e proprie tessere di un variopinto mosaico, vengano a comporre un quadro, non nuovo nelle linee generali del disegno, ma in cui, nei momenti più felici, i vecchi colori sembrano acquistare nuova luce e nuova brillantezza, solo in virtù di nuovi accostamenti'.

[4] The presence of Ovid in Claudian verses has been highlighted as early as EATON (1943), who provided a catalog of parallel passages, distinguishing between 'definitely Ovidian' and 'possibly Ovidian' quotations and quotations in which it is not easy to distinguish between the Virgilian and Ovidian models. CHARLET (1995) approaches the subject more critically, limiting his work to the *Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*. In recent years see, on the topic, the works of HINDS (2016), on the Ovidian influence in *De raptu Proser-pinae*; CHARLET (2018b), on the Claudian mechanisms of Ovid's *aemulatio*, particularly in relation to the theme of *gigantomachia*, extremely fortunate in Claudian; LUCERI (2018), who analyzed the Ovidian presence in some *carmina minora*; PARAVANI (2018), on the influence exerted on Claudian by the *Metamorphoses*.

[5] On the style of Sidonius see CONSOLINO (1974), GUALANDRI (1979). In relation to Sidonius' intertextuality, see especially GUALANDRI (2022).

[6] See e. g. GUALANDRI (2022: 285).

rics, which fuses epic and rhetorical tradition.[7] However, he is also familiar with Ovid, whom he frequently quotes through verbal echoes, even reusing Ovidian compositional mechanisms.[8]

To summarise, both in Claudianus and Sidonius the quotations from Ovid – as well as the reuse of Ovidian compositional mechanisms – are often capillary. Moreover, in Sidonius's work, they are quite frequently mediated precisely by Claudian's intervention.[9]

This article intends to examine the intertextual games that link these three authors from different periods, in relation to the reuse of a specific sequence of mythological *exempla*. Indeed, this sequence, of Ovidian coinage, knew a new fortune in the late antique age. The sequence quotes the *exempla* of three heroes: Hippomenes, Pelops and Hercules. It evolves over time and changes form and purpose depending on the context in which the author lives and works. The article intends to show how, in the history of its reception, Claudian's role is essential, as he, being a link between the other two authors, contributes to the sequence's acquisition of political significance.

2. The origin of the sequence

In the stories of all three heroes mentioned in the sequence, there is a motif widely found in Greek and Latin literature. It is the motif of the bloody competition that the suitors of a princess had to endure to obtain her in marriage, risking their own lives. These were, often, trials forced upon them by the future father-in-law, the king and father of the princess, who for different reasons intended to hinder his daughter's suitors.

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[7] On the adaptation of Claudian models in Sidonius' panegyrics see especially Schindler (2009: 181–215). On Sidonius' *praefationes*, that are of clear Claudian inspiration, see e. g. Bruzzone (2014: 305).

[8] On the presence of Ovid in Sidonius Apollinaris see, e.g., Gualandri (1979: 87–88), who examines two Sidonian passages modeled on the same Ovidian verses, and Montuschi (2001), in which some mechanisms of Sidonian imitation of Ovid are studied; see also Bruzzone (2014) in relation to the presence of Ovid in Sidon. 6.

[9] See, e.g., Bruzzone (2014: 322–323, n. 19), who, regarding Sidon. 6, writes: 'all'esperienza di Ovidio si somma quella di numerosi altri scrittori […] marcata e pervasiva la mediazione di Claudiano'.

As is well known, Hippomenes must run faster than Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus, to marry her; Pelops must race his chariot against the king of Pisa Oenomaus to obtain the hand of the princess Hippodamia; Hercules must fight against the river Achelous, the other suitor of Deianira, to obtain her in marriage. The former succeeds in his intent thanks to the stratagem of the golden apples thrown in as a diversion,[10] the second – according to one of the most widespread variants of the myth –[11] achieves his aim by bribing the charioteer Myrtilus and convincing him to tamper with the king's wheels. Hercules finally rips the horn of the river Achelous during the fight.[12]

Ovid, the first author to mention the three heroes together in the sixteenth of the *Heroides*, is the poet who marks the beginning of the story of this sequence of mythological *exempla*. In the letter, Paris writes to Helen to declare his love for her and to attempt to seduce her. At a certain point, he lists the exploits of the three heroes, introduced by the expression *pretium magni certaminis*. This *iunctura* establishes the connection between the protagonists of the *exempla*, who all obtained their princess as the prize of a competition.

> Di facerent pretium magni certaminis esses,
> teque suo posset victor habere toro,
> ut tulit Hippomenes Schoeneida praemia cursus,
> venit ut in Phrygios Hippodamia sinus,
> ut ferus Alcides Acheloia cornua fregit,
> dum petit amplexus, Deianira, tuos
> nostra per has leges audacia fortior isset,
> teque mei scires esse laboris opus.
> Nunc mihi nil superest, nisi te, formosa, precari…[13]

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[10] A full description of the race is in Ov. *met.* 10, 560sqq.
[11] See e. g. Hyg. *fab.* 84; Paus. 8, 14, 11: the hero, before the race, had bribed Myrtilus with the promise to share the kingdom with him (or to give him Hippodamia for the wedding night).
[12] Ov. *met.* 9, 1–97.
[13] Ov. *epist.* 16, 263–271; the text cited is that of Kenney (1996). 'Ah, might the gods make you the prize in a mighty contest, and let the victor have you for his couch! As Hippomenes bore off, the prize of his running, Schoeneus' daughter, as Hippodamia came to Phrigian

The episodes are listed in a rapid succession, without any details, to express the lament of Paris who, unlike Hippomenes, Pelops and Hercules, has no chance to prove his courage or to conquer Helen by winning a competition. The only path left to him is, on the contrary, that of words that of the letter he sends to seduce her and that of pleas.[14]

Ovid's aim, therefore, is to achieve a triple *synkrisis* between the three heroes of the myth and Paris.[15] The procedure of *synkrisis*, which will become typical of the encomiastic and panegyric genre, is thus used here in an elegiac context.[16] The purpose of the comparison, however, is not to show Paris's greater abilities compared to the heroes of the myth, but rather to emphasise his disadvantaged position.[17] This is probably an expedient to amplify and increase the pathos of the letter itself. The letter, and not a competition, is the instrument that will enable Paris to obtain Helen as a prize.

3. Claudian's sequence

In Late Antiquity, the Ovidian sequence of the *Heroides* is given a new lease of life, starting precisely with Claudian.

Claudian's revival of the sequence fits into the context of complex intertextual games and frequent Ovidian quotations that, as has been said, characterise his verses. Claudian, in fact, albeit in a more complex and detailed manner (and, as will be seen, with different aims), in the *Laus Serenae*[18] ex-

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embrace, as fierce Hercules broke the horns of the Achelous while aspiring to thy embraces, Deianira. My daring would have boldly made its way in the face of conditions such as these, and you would know well how to be the object of my toils. Now nothing is left to me but to entreat you' (translation by G. Showerman).

[14] See Kenney (1996: 115): '*mei ... laboris* is predicative and emphatic, contrasting with the entreaties and supplications which are all he can actually offer'.

[15] Note the description of Pelops, referred to as a Phrygian foreigner, just like Paris.

[16] A relationship between the *Heroides* and the *suasoriae* has often been identified: see Jacobson (1974: 322–330). In this epistle, in which Paris expressly intends to convince Helen to follow him to Troy, this relationship is particularly evident.

[17] In the passage, moreover, a comparison between the heroines of the myth and Helen may also be implied, aimed at emphasizing the number of suitors Helen herself had before Paris, in order to praise her indirectly; see e. g. Consolino (1986: 109).

[18] *Carm. min.* 30, 162–180.

pressly recovers the triple *synkrisis* of Ovidian coinage, about four centuries after his predecessor and model.

The *Laus Serenae* is the unfinished panegyric that Claudian dedicates to Serena,[19] Theodosius' niece and adopted by the emperor as his daughter, after the death of his brother. Serena, later, became the wife of Stilicho, who after the death of Theodosius was regent to the young emperor Honorius and, consequently, to the Western Empire. Claudian operates in this political context and, as a propagandist poet (according to Cameron's famous definition) at the Western Court, often directs his verses to convey the political ideology of both Stilicho and his wife Serena.[20]

Carm. min. 30 follows the rhetorical precepts in relation to the composition of imperial panegyric, and traces Serena's life. After recalling her noble family, her homeland, her childhood and growing up, Claudian presents her as ready to marry and describes Theodosius' concern. The emperor is indeed eager to find a husband worthy of his niece and the enormous fortune that such a marriage would bring him.[21] Claudian, therefore, inserts the three mythical *exempla* at this point, in a comparison with Stilicho himself, once again adhering to the rhetorical instructions which prescribed that space should be left within the panegyrics for general or partial comparisons.[22]

This time, to be contrasted in the *synkrisis* are explicitly the ways in which the princesses were obtained in marriage. It is a negative comparison,

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[19] On the *Laus Serenae* see the commentary by Consolino (1986), or the notes by Charlet (2018a: 159–174).

[20] See. Cameron (1970). See also Charlet (1988: 79–80): Charlet identifies triumphalism ('i.e. the confident, celebratory and ceremonial expression of imperial ideology') as the third characteristic trait of late antique Latin poetry (along with neo-Alexandrianism and neoclassicism) and, in relation to Claudian, writes that 'in Claudianus' case it is the praise of the successful policy pursued after Theodosius by Stilicho in the name of Honorius'.

[21] Claud. *carm. min.* 30, 159sqq: *iam nubilis aetas / principe sollicito votis erexerat aulam / incertis quem tanta tori fortuna maneret.*

[22] On the application of the rhetoricians' indications in Claudian's panegyrics, and specifically in relation to the *synkrisis*, see Struthers (1919: 83): 'the rhetores recognize two kinds of comparison, the general where the whole subject is brought into a comprehensive comparison with one of like magnitude, and the partial, where one phase of the subject or a single quality is likened to some other'.

that describes the stratagems and deceptions of the three mythical heroes, which are inferior to the way in which Stilicho was instead chosen as Serena's husband.

> Antiquos loquitur Musarum pagina reges,
> qui dira sub lege procos certare iuberent,
> empturos thalamum dubii discrimine leti,
> (165) et sua crudeles gauderent pignora mortis
> ambitione peti. Curru Pisaea marino
> fugit tela Pelops (nam perfidus obice regis
> prodidit Oenomai deceptus Myrtilus axem);
> Hippomenes trepidus cursu ferroque secutam
> (170) aurato volucrem flexit Schoeneida pomo;
> Herculeas vidit fluvio luctante palaestras
> moenibus ex altis Calydon pretiumque labori
> Deianira fuit, cum pectore victor anhelo
> Alcides fremeret retroque Achelous abiret
> (175) decolor: attonitae stringebant vulnera Nymphae;
> saucia truncato pallebant flumina cornu.[23]

The expression *pretium labori* (v. 172), although not at the beginning of the *synkrisis*, recalls the verse with which Ovid introduced his sequence, speaking of *pretium magni certaminis*. Even the way Claudian chooses to begin his sequence underlines its dependence on other poetic models (*antiquos loqui-*

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[23] Claud. *carm. min.* 30, 162–176; the text cited is that of HALL (1985), apart from the lesson *deceptus* (see below, paragraph 4). 'The pages of the poets tell how ancient kings bade suitors contend on the hard terms of purchasing the bride at hazard of their lives, and rejoiced that death should be the wooer of their daughters. Pelops escaped the weapons of Pisa's king, thanks to the chariot Neptune gave him, for it was Myrtilus who tricked King Oenomaus by withdrawing the lynchpin from the chariot-wheel. Panting Hippomenes got the better of Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus, who followed close on his traces, a sword in her hand, by means of the golden apples. The inhabitants of Calydon watched from their high battlements the struggle of Hercules with the rivergod when, Deianira being the prize of victory, the panting hero shouted in triumph and Achelous paled and shrank away, shorn of his horn, the wound whereof the astonished river nymphs sought to heal' (translated by M. Platnauer).

tur Musarum pagina reges), and it cannot be excluded that the reference is precisely to Ovid, whose citation is sanctioned by several verbal echoes, as well as by the clear resumption of the choice of mythical *exempla* included in the sequence.[24]

The meaning of the *synkrisis*, however, is no longer the Ovidian one, the simple *amplificatio*, but is influenced by the historical and political context in which Claudian writes and is made explicit immediately after the sequence.

> Te non Hesperidum pomis, non amne subacto,
>
> non socerum fallente rota, sed iudice dignus
>
> Augusto variis Stilicho spectatus in armis
>
> (180) accipit et regni dotes virtute paravit.[25]

The three *exempla* are intended to show that there was no competition, no deception, but that it was precisely the future father-in-law Theodosius who considered Stilicho worthy of Serena, thanks to the virtue he had demonstrated.

The purpose of the *synkrisis*, in Claudian, is clearly political. The poet, Stilicho's official propagandist, wants to communicate to the public the general's virtue, his honesty and especially his close relationship with the emperor Theodosius (Serena's adoptive father after and therefore Stilicho's father-in-law).[26] This is clearly intended to legitimize the pre-eminent role played by Stilicho at the Western court.

Claudian clearly takes up from Ovid the choice of the three *exempla*, as well as that of employing them in a triple *synkrisis*, though this time with a political and not elegiac purpose, nor one of mere *amplificatio*.

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[24] See also CONSOLINO (1986: 109).

[25] Claud. *carm. min.* 30, 177–180. 'But it is neither to the apples of the Hesperides nor to victory over a river nor to treacherous tampering with a chariot-wheel that Stilicho owes the winning of thy hand; the emperor himself adjudged him worthy thereof, for that his valour had been proved in countless wars; his own courage won him an empress to wife' (translated by M. Platnauer).

[26] A further and more hidden political allusion is then present in these verses (see below, paragraph 4).

Claudian's intertextual mechanisms are complex, however, and quotations – lexical or content-related – from different authors and works often overlap in his verses. In this case, Claudian takes the sequence of the *Heroides* as his basic model. Of each episode, he then identifies the element on which Ovid focuses on and expands it with more detail. In this procedure, an overlapping of models can be observed, since the lexical choices Claudian uses to expand these episodes are often derived from another Ovidian model: that of the same episode as narrated in the *Metamorphoses*.[27] The dependence on the Ovidian model is thus unequivocally established.

Claudian, therefore, like the Ovid of the *Heroides*, focuses on the race of Hippomenes and Atalanta and on the broken horn of Achelous during the fight with Hercules.[28]

More important than the similarities, however, and precisely because they are placed in such a narrow context of imitation, are the two main differences from the Ovidian sequence, both of which concern the *exemplum* of Pelops.

Firstly, Claudian reverses the order and places the myth of Hippodamia's suitor first. The episode, then, is much more detailed than that of the Ovidian model, and Claudian introduces an important element into his narrative: the presence of Myrtilus, Oenomaus' charioteer, whom Pelops bribes to win the race against his father-in-law. These choices, as will be seen, allow Claudian to add a further, political, and allusive meaning to his sequence.

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[27] See e.g. the v. 163, *qui dira sub lege procos certare iuberent*. The verse owes much to the passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that introduces the myth of Atalanta and Hippomenes, see Ov. *met*. 10, 574: *venit ad hanc legem temeraria turba procorum*. The verse clearly inspires the Claudian one, and the reference to the cruel condition (always indicated by the term *lex*) was also in Ovid, a few lines earlier: *ea lex certaminis esto* (*met*. 10, 572). Ovid, however, called reckless the crowd of suitors, whereas Claudian prefers to emphasise the cruelty of the competition they undergo (*dira...lege*) in a way that is functional to the objective he intends to pursue. Claudian *synkrisis*, in fact, is intended to emphasise the diversity of the way in which Stilicho obtained Serena's hand, rather than the value of the suitors. See also: *empturos thalamum dubii discrimine leti* (v. 164), that recalls Atalanta's doubts in Ov. *met*. 10, 611–613 (*quis deus... /...caraeque iubet discrimine vitae / coniugium petere hoc*); *Schoeneida* (v. 169) and Ov. *met*. 10, 609 (in which the girl is referred to by the nominative *Schoeneia*); the nexus *pectore anhelo* (v. 173) and Ov. *met*. 9, 59, in which Achelous is called *ahnelanti*: Claudian, here, recovers the same term and attributes it to Hercules, as noticed CONSOLINO (1986: 114).
[28] In these cases, he uses the same terms as Ovid: see *cursus* and *cornua* in Ov. *epist*. 16, 265 and 267; *cursu* and *cornu* in Claud. *carm. min*. 30, 169; 30, 176.

In a clearly Ovidian-inspired context – in which there are more than one intertwining Ovidian models – Claudian's intervention acts on subtle but essential differences to adapt the sequence to his own needs as a propagandist poet.

4. The hidden political significance in Claudian's sequence

Let us consider Claudian's sequence more closely, and in particular the *exemplum* of Pelops, which Claudian chooses, unlike Ovid, to place first.

> …curru Pisaea marino
> fugit tela Pelops (nam perfidus obice regis
> prodidit Oenomai deceptus Myrtilus axem).[29]

In relation to v. 168, many modern editors believe that there is a problem in the text given by the manuscripts. These all give the lesson *deceptus*, with the participle in the nominative referring to Myrtilus, the charioteer of Oenomaus. Indeed, in the myth, Pelops bribed Myrtilus by promising him half the kingdom if he agreed to tamper with the wheel of Oenomaus' s chariot. After his victory, however, Pelops did not keep his promise, and killed Myrtilus. Myrtilus, therefore, the deceiver of Oenomaus, was himself deceived by Pelops.

However, the nominative *deceptus* is today discarded by most editors and commentators, who prefer Heinsius' correction: *deceptum*.[30] In this way, the participle is grammatically agreed with *axem* and referred by enallage to Oenomaus.

The participle grammatically agreed with Myrtilus, in fact, entails some problems on the stylistic and content level.

First, from a stylistic point of view, the nominative creates an imbalance in vv. 167–168,[31] in which two adjectives refer to Myrtilus (*perfidus* and *de-*

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[29] Claud. *carm. min.* 30, 166–168.
[30] So do, for example, Hall (1985) and Consolino (1986).
[31] Consolino (1986: 111–112).

ceptus) and not one to *axem*, and this is unusual in Claudian, who is always careful to seek balance in his verses.[32] Heinsius' intervention restored this balance within the verse and allowed *deceptum* to be referred to *Oenomai* with an enallage entirely consistent with the poet's style.

In addition to the stylistic reason, agreeing the participle with Myrtilus entails a further problem, which has contributed to the scholars' decision to adopt Heinsius' correction. The nominative *deceptus* presupposes Claudian's reference to the later development of the myth, and scholars argued that the reference to the deception perpetrated by Pelops after the race is forced, because Claudian's focus, here, should be just on the race, to pursue the intentions of the *synkrisis.* Also on a content level, therefore, it seems necessary to refer the participle to king Oenomaus, either explicitly[33] or with an enallage.

Other hypotheses that have been formulated to amend the passage and solve the problem posed by the given *deceptus* include Heinsius' second proposal, which associated Myrtilus, along with *perfidus*, with the nominative *deceptor* (a neologism coined by Seneca in relation to the charioteer).[34] The form implies an active meaning, hence the solution of the content-related problem, but doesn't explain the imbalance of the verses. Among modern editors, the only one to maintain the codices' lesson, together with the usual passive meaning of the perfect participle, is Charlet, who assumes – as Birt had already done –[35] that the poet is indeed referring to the deception suffered by Myrtilus.[36] Nevertheless, not even Charlet provides an explanation for his choice.

However, it is possible to assume a more specific response to both arguments against the form *deceptus*. This form, indeed, might be functional to communicate a hidden political meaning.

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[32] Claudian, indeed, often seeks such balance in his verses and prefers hexameters composed of two pairs of nouns and their epithets, not infrequently combined in a golden verse. See Fo (1982: 143–148).

[33] Jeep (1876–1879: 65) conjectured *decepti.*

[34] Sen. *Thy.* 140.

[35] Birt (1892: 325): *Sed enim Myrtilus a Pelope revera postea deceptus est, idque simul indicasse voluit poeta*.

[36] Charlet (2018: 170): 'le trompeur Myrtile fut à son tour trompé et tué par Pélops'.

If one considers the possibility that the poet's intention is to highlight not only Pelops' chariot race, but also – and perhaps even more – the deception that the hero had perpetrated against Myrtilus himself, both arguments in support of *deceptum* lose their meaning.

The creation of the imbalance in the verse would depend on a precise choice by Claudian and would be motivated precisely by the desire to place greater emphasis on the deception suffered by Myrtilus. Such an expedient would not be new to Claudian, who also elsewhere seeks the audience's attention through a departure from the customary, which is exploited to give emphasis to the passage.[37]

The intentionality of the imbalance is confirmed by the paradoxical linguistic play that the participle makes when grammatically agreed with Myrtilus. *Deceptus* would actually be the second adjective referring to Myrtilus in the space of two verses, but it would create with *perfidus* a perfect contrast of an antithetical nature that is well suited to Claudian's fondness for the paradoxical and its realisation using rhetorical figures (such as antithesis and oxymoron).[38] The charioteer, who betrayed and deceived Oenomaus by tampering with the chariot wheel, had in turn been deceived by Pelops.

A further element that might suggest the poet's intentions is given by the juxtaposition of the terms Pelops and *perfidus* in v. 167, which appear divided by *nam* alone and concordant in the case, while the mention of the charioteer, although the adjective actually refers to him, is postponed to the next verse. In the immediacy of the recitation for which the panegyric was intended, therefore, what must have been evident to the audience was the juxtaposition of Pelops and *perfidus*. *Perfidus* is, properly, the one who breaks the *fides*, that means not only 'trust', but also 'promise'.[39]

The image is not new, however, and Hyginus, for instance, also expressly depicted Pelops as *perfidus*.

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[37] Ceccarelli (2004: 101) notes how, from a metrical point of view, Claudian often deviates from the norm to demand the reader's attention.

[38] See Fo (1982: 165–172): the scholar points out oxymoronic techniques among Claudian's main stylistic features.

[39] *ThLL* (*fides*: 663, 31).

Itaque Myrtilo aurigae eius persuasit regnumque ei dimidium pollicetur si se adiuvaret. Fide data Myrtilus currum iunxit et clavos in rotas non coniecit; itaque equis incitatis currum defectum Oenomai equi distraxerunt. Pelops cum Hippodamia et Myrtilo domum victor cum rediret, cogitavit sibi opprobrio futurum et Myrtilo fidem praestare noluit eumque in mare praecipitavit, a quo Myrtoum pelagus est appellatum.[40]

Claudian's desire to emphasise the deception carried out by Pelops – a necessary statement if one accepts *deceptus* – can be explained if one thinks of the consequences that this deception, in the myth, entailed. Pelops, by betraying his promise to Myrtilus, had in fact drawn the curse of the dying charioteer to his house, condemning his own sons Atreus and Thyestes to ruin and being himself at the origin of the discord between the two brothers. Sophocles, in the chorus of *Electra*, explicitly attributes the reason for the misfortunes of the family to this deception, and the same idea appears in Euripides;[41] the version of the myth given by the tragedians was undoubtedly the most widespread.

In addition, the desire to allude to the tragedy of Atreus and Thyestes is implicit in the very choice of quoting Myrtilus in the few verses that summarise the myth of Pelops; in fact, Pelops would not need to be provided with the deception of Myrtilus to win, because the horses given to him by Neptune would suffice: the charioteer's narrative function is precisely, traditionally, that of being the mythical cue for the curse of the Pelopides. He is in fact mentioned by Seneca in the *Thyestes*, whereas he is absent from Pindar's version of the myth,[42] in which the whole narrative is aimed at giving the hero lustre. Not even the models from which Claudian draws inspiration for these verses mention the charioteer.[43] Consequently, his citation is a conscious and therefore most significant Claudian innovation.

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[40] Hyg. *fab*. 84.
[41] Soph. *El*. 504–515; Eur. *Or*. 989–996.
[42] Pind. *Ol*. 1. Among the versions of the myth in which Myrtilus is absent see also Om. *Il*. 2, 100–108, in which just the leading role of Pelops is emphasized; see Dolcetti (2011: 81).
[43] See not only Ov. *epist*. 16, 266, but also Stat. *silv*. 1, 2, 41–42: *hanc propter tanti Pisaea lege trementem / currere et Oenomai fremitus audire sequentis*.

The *synkrisis* between Stilicho and Pelops should then be read on a two-fold level and would suggest a superiority of Stilicho not limited to the favourable judgement of his father-in-law, with which he obtained the hand of Serena (178–179: *iudice digus / Augustus*), nor to a generic concept of virtue that would have allowed him to merit such a judgement (180: *regni dotes virtute paravit*). Unlike Pelops, Stilicho is not guilty of any deception and he cannot, as a result, be in any way the cause of fraternal discord.

 Consequently, in these verses, it is possible to read on the one hand the wish for concord between the brothers Arcadius and Honorius, as a contrast to the well-known discord between the Pelopids, and on the other hand the promotion of Stilicho as regent of both sons of Theodosius, instead of Honorius alone. The theme of the regency of both the emperor brothers is indeed central to Stilicho's propaganda, and Claudian frequently refers to it, both explicitly[44] and allusively, exploiting *exempla* (positive or negative) of fraternal relations, drawn from myth or reality.[45]

Although Stilicho is not the natural father of the two emperor brothers, he implicitly reveals himself, in this *exemplum* of the *synkrisis*, to be fit to fill the role upon Theodosius' death. If at the origin of the discord between Atreus and Thyestes was the deception of Pelops, Stilicho's behaviour, quite different from that of the mythological hero, made him by contrast a worthy regent of the two *Augusti* and the legitimate guarantor of their concord (and consequently of the harmony of the Empire).

Furthermore, a pun very similar to Claudian's one, precisely in relation to Myrtilus, can be found in the *Thyestes*, where Seneca defines *Myrtilus* with the two antithetical adjectives *proditus* and *deceptor*: *proditus occidit / deceptor*

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[44] See. *III Cons*. 142–162, in which Claudian describes Theodosius' dying act of appointing Stilicho as regent for both his sons. On the *commendatio* of Theodosius see also Cameron (1969); Cameron (1970: 49–50).

[45] Among the numerous fraternal pairs mentioned in Claudian verses see e. g. Jupiter and Pluto in *rapt. Pros.*, the Catanian brothers of *carm. min.* 17, or the Dioscuri, often cited as an *exemplum* par excellence of fraternal love; the poet also alludes to the episode of Atreus and Thyestes in *Gild.* 397–402, in which the Pelopides are compared to Gildon and his brother Mascezel, in the implied wish that the relationship between the Augustan brothers would be of a different kind.

domini Myrtilus.[46] Claudian would take up the Senecan model in the antithetical play, varying the terms used to realise it to suit his own purposes: the term *perfidus* is, in fact, particularly pregnant,[47] especially when juxtaposed with the term Pelops (see above). Claudian's choice to employ this precise adjective may have been prompted by the desire to recall here, even more explicitly, the idea of the betrayed *fides*, from which he categorically excludes Stilicho.

The Senecan tragedy was, moreover, well known to Claudian,[48] and the quotation of the verse is grafted here onto the Ovidian model, in a procedure of overlapping of the two models – Ovidian and Senecan – that has also been identified elsewhere in the poet's works.[49]

It is easy to assume, then, that in these verses Claudian intends to quote the Senecan verse, with a pun entirely consistent with his own style. Consequently, it is also possible to assume Claudian's desire to refer to *Thyestes*, the very tragedy centred on the discord between the Pelopides.

The model of the *Thyestes*, together with the consideration of the consequences that, in the myth, the deception perpetrated by Pelops on Myrtilus entailed, thus contribute to the interpretation of these Claudian verses and suggest a possible ideological motivation behind the poet's stylistic choices.[50]

To summarise, the emphasis on Pelops' deception might be a political allusion, perfectly consistent with the poet's allusive style and which must have been easily understood by an educated audience aware of the historical moment in which they lived, as well as of Stilicho's claims, which were constantly publicised by Claudian in his works.

Pelops behaved as a *perfidus* and was the cause of fraternal discord, whereas Stilicho would never do so. For this reason, Stilicho was the perfect

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[46] Sen. *Thy*. 139–140. 'Myrtilus fell, / his own master's betrayer betrayed' (translation by A. J. Boyle).

[47] The concept of *fides* plays an essential role in the Senecan Thyestes, in which the noun *fides* occurs 18 times, see BOYLE (2017: 124); the very term *perfidus* is attributed by Atreus to his brother (*Thy*. 235).

[48] Cf. Claud. *Gild*. 397–402; 180–184, and the pattern of Sen. *Thy*. 778–781.

[49] See WARE (2004: 101).

[50] This allusion to a theme dear to Claudian and significant in the ideology of Stilicho and Serena, however, would be lost if one were to discard the manuscripts' lesson, *deceptus*, preferring Heinsius' correction.

guarantor of harmony between the brothers Honorius and Arcadius. This is what Claudian intends to communicate, with the aim of propagating Stilicho's ideology on a further level.

5. Sidonius Apollinaris' sequence

Sidonius Apollinaris, whose tendencies towards intertextual references have been discussed above, employs the sequence three times. Indeed, one of the characteristic features of Sidonius' style is that he often rewrites, and reworks material already employed elsewhere in his own poetry.

 In the reuse of Ovid's *synkrisis*, however, Sidonius makes choices that denote a clear dependence on Claudian, who thus proves to be the mediator between Ovid and Sidonius. The sequence of *exempla* appears first in the epithalamium for Ruricius and Iberia and in the *praefatio* of that for Polemius and Araneola.[51] Sidonius, in his epithalamia, is inspired by the tradition that, starting with Statius, finds its most famous exponent in Claudian. They are indeed composed for weddings that actually took place, enriched with mythological and divine *exempla*. These epithalamia both belong to the poet's disengaged production, that of the so-called *nugae*, which, although characterised by marked celebratory elements, have no political purpose.

 In the epithalamium for Ruricius and Iberia, Sidonius reproposes the *exempla*, quoting Pelops, Hippomenes and Achelous in a dry list and three nominal syntagmas. The myths have, here, for the first time in the history of the sequence, the function of positive rather than negative *exempla*. In the context of the epithalamium, in fact, Venus intended to praise the beauty of the bride-to-be, by stating that the three heroes would also contend for Iberia with all sorts of competitions. In this case, therefore, the comparison with myth ennobles reality[52].

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[51] Sidon. *carm.* 11, 86–87; 14, 10–20.
[52] See MONTONE (2015: 96).

Te quoque multimodis ambisset, Hiberia, ludis,

axe Pelops, cursu Hippomenes luctaque Achelous,

Aeneas bellis spectatus, Gorgone Perseus.[53]

In the *praefatio* for the epithalamium for Polemius and Araneola,[54] then, Sidonius recovers the sequence, extending and readjusting it to his own new requirements.

(10) Non hic impietas, nec hanc puellam

donat mortibus ambitus procorum;

non hic Oenomai cruenta circo

audit pacta Pelops nec insequentem

pallens Hippomenes ad ima metae

(15) tardat Schoenida ter cadente pomo;

non hic Herculeas videt palaestras

aetola Calydon stupens ab arce,

cum cornu fluvii superbientis

Alcides premeret, subinde fessum

(20) undoso refovens ab hoste pectus.[55]

In this case, Sidonius follows the Claudian model more closely, for he discredits the examples of myth in favour of reality. Here too, however, the function of the *synkrisis* is aimed above all at the exaltation of the maiden to be praised.

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[53] Sidon. *carm.* 11, 86–88; the text cited, here and elsewhere, is that of ANDERSON (1936). 'Her also would men have wooed by all manner of exploits, Pelops attesting his prowess by his chariot, Hippomenes by running, Achelous by wrestling, Aeneas by wars, Perseus by the Gorgon' (translated by W. B. Anderson).

[54] This epithalamium, composed around 461, is preceded by a bipartite *praefatio*, consisting of a dedicatory epistle and 30 verses.

[55] Sidon. *carm.* 14, 10–20. 'Here there is no unnatural enmity; this girl is not being bestowed through the deaths of rival suitors. Here no Pelops listens to the bloody terms of Oenomaus in the racing-ground; no Hippomenes pale with dread at the lower turningpoint of the course retards the maid of Schoeneus with thrice-falling apple; not here does Calydon behold in amazement from her Aetolian height the wrestling of Hercules, when he forced down the horn of the arrogant river, refreshing his breast ever and anon from his watery foe' (translated by W. B. Anderson).

What is most interesting to appreciate the evolution of *synkrisis* in a political sense – and thus Claudian's mediation – is, however, the way in which the three heroes appear quoted together in Anthemius' panegyric, which belongs to a genre and is written for a quite different context than that of the epithalamians. It is, in fact, the panegyric Sidonius wrote for the Western emperor Anthemius in 468.

In the verses considered here, the object of the poet's attention is Ricimer, the Goth general who had assumed power under Avitus and then maintained it, remaining the effective holder of power even under Anthemius' reign. To facilitate cohesion between the emperor and Ricimer, the latter had married the emperor's own daughter, Alypia.

At this point in the panegyric, the personification of Rome is described as asking the personification of Aurora to have the eastern nobleman Anthemius as Emperor of the West. To this public request, she then adds another request of a private nature, and hopes for the marriage that will seal the agreement, making Anthemius and Ricimer kin.[56] This marriage, precisely because of the consequences it would entail (at least in Sidonius' hopes), would therefore be superior to those of myth.

Rome, therefore, through the *synkrisis*, wants to discredit famous weddings in favour of the union between Alypia and Ricimer.

> (487) …Circumspice taedas
> antiquas: par nulla tibi sic copula praesto est.
> (490) … reparatis Pisa quadrigis
> suscitet Oenomaum, natae quem fraude cadentem
> cerea destituit resolutis axibus obex;
> procedat Colchis prius agnita virgo marito
> crimine quam sexu; spectet de carcere circi
> (495) pallentes Atalanta procos et poma decori
> Hippomenis iam non pro solo colligat auro;

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[56] Sidon. *carm.* 2, 483–484: *adice praeterea privatum ad publica foedus: / sit socer Augustus genero Ricimere beatus*.

Deianira, tuas Achelous gymnade pinguis
illustret taedas et ab Hercule pressus anhelo
lassatum foveat rivis rivalibus hostem.
(500) Quantumvis repetam veteris conubia saecli,
transcendunt hic heroas, heroidas illa.
Hos thalamos, Ricimer, Virtus tibi pronuba poscit…[57]

Sidonius' structure and words are the same as Claudian's. Let us observe the very beginning of the sequence, with the *iunctura taedas/antiquas* which recalls the *antiquos…reges* in Claudian's first verse, the terms *poma* and *auro*, which cite Claudian's *aurato pomo* (v. 170), the identical choice of *anhelo* in the narration of Hercules' episode (v. 173), the term *fraude*, which recalls that idea of deception on which Claudian had insisted so much, and above all the nexus *axibus obex*, which cites Claudian's words *obice* and *axem* (vv. 167–168). The term *obex*, which in Latin properly means 'obstacle' or 'impediment', had in fact assumed in Claudian a really specific meaning, not attested before:[58] that of the 'tinder' of the wheel, i. e. the awl that served to prevent the wheels from slipping out of the chariot.[59] Sidonius uses, here, the same meaning of *obex*, specifying moreover that the *obex* used by the

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[57] Sidon. *carm.* 2, 487–502. 'Survey the nuptials of olden time, and no union such as this event can offer itself to thy view. […] let Pisa bring back her four-horse chariot and revive Oenomaus, who fell by a daughter's guile, when the waxen linch-pins betrayed him, unloosing the axles; let the maid of Colchis come forward, who was brought to her husband's knowledge by her crime before he knew her as a woman; let Atalanta gaze on her pale suitors from the starting-place in the circus and no longer gather the apples of the comely Hippomenes for their gold alone; let Achelous, with the oil of the wrestling-school upon him, glorify the nuptials of Deianira, and, clasped tightly by the panting Hercules, refresh his wearied adversary with spiteful spate: recall as I may the marriages of the olden time, this man excels all the god-descended heroes, she the heroines. Valour hath this union in her charge' (translated by W. B. Anderson).

[58] *ThlL* (*obex*: 65, 77–79).

[59] In the acquisition of this technical meaning, the Greek term ἔμβολον, that is symmetrical to *obex* in etymology, may have played an essential role. The term had been used in Pherec. *FGrHist* 3, F37, in the same context and exactly with the meaning of tinder of the wheel. Moreover, this is the first attestation of the variant of the myth that ascribed Pelops' victory to treachery rather than to winged horses, see Dolcetti (2011: 84). Claudian, who had Greek as his mother tongue, might have had this passage in mind by adding the meaning of ἔμβολον to the signifier *obex*.

charioteer was made of wax, and that this is the reason why the axles came off the wheel.[60] The description of Pelops' *exemplum* is in general, among the three in the sequence, the closest to Claudian's dictation.

Among the major differences from Claudian's sequence, however, is the fact that Sidonius accentuates the negative connotation of the examples, not least through the inclusion of that of Medea and Jason alongside the other three. One can then observe a change of perspective, which shifts here to women. It is in fact Hippodamia, Oenomaus' daughter, who deceives her father, while there is no mention of Myrtilus.

The aim of the sequence, which once again exploits negative *exempla*, is to show how Alypia and Ricimer are the true heroes, because their marriage can save the empire. The political ideology present in these verses is made evident by the final *sententia*, which features a chiasmus and an etymological figure to emphasise the concept (v. 501).[61] Sidonius, therefore, saw this marriage as an omen for the concord of the empire and hoped that the private *foedus* would be strengthened by the *adfinitas*, the marriage bond between Ricimer and Anthemius' daughter.

On all three occasions when he employs the sequence, Sidonius takes the order of the *exempla* chosen by Claudian, not that of Ovid, and places the episode of Pelops first. There are, then, all three times, many lexical reiterations of the Claudian model. In the first case we are dealing with nominal syntagmas, in which the episode is evoked with a single term (the tampered axle of the wheel, the race, the fights); in the second case, the Claudian take is more evident, especially in the case of the Hercules episode: Sidonius, like Claudian, chooses to narrate it from the point of view of Calydon, who watched the fights from above (*moenibus ex altis* in Claudian; *aetola Calydon ab arce* in Sidonius). In Anthemius' panegyric, the point of view is that of the women, but Sidonius does not renounce the lexical references to his Claudian model, which is particularly evident.

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[60] Claudian, on the other hand, does not specify the way Myrtilus tampered with the *obex*, but uses the generic verb *prodidit*, which again evokes (as *perfidus* and *deceptus*) the idea of deception.

[61] See MONTONE (2015: 97).

One can observe, therefore, in the three examples of Sidonius' rendering of this sequence, a gradual rapprochement to the Claudian model, which, not coincidentally, becomes stronger precisely in the *Panegyric of Anthemius*, the only one of the poems to have a clear and explicitly political meaning. It is here, indeed, that Sidonius is interested in employing a political function of the *synkrisis*, similar to Claudian's, although the propagandistic and practical purpose of Stilicho's official poet is replaced by a more general wish for concord, in an extremely dramatic historical moment for the Empire.

6. Conclusions

As mentioned above, the complexity of the intertextual network used by Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris has already been extensively studied, as well as the mediating role Claudian often plays between Ovid and Sidonius.[62]

In continuing the late antique fortune of Ovid's elegiac sequence, Claudian followed a procedure typical of his style: he quoted one of his favourite models and reworked the original examples by adding details; he then introduced an explicitly political meaning, that of showing the virtue of Stilicho and, especially, his good relationship with Theodosius. Alongside this, Claudian inserted a further political allusion, this time implicit, to a theme very dear to Stilicho's ideology. In this way, he has sanctioned the transition of this sequence, born in an elegiac context and aimed essentially at *amplificatio*, to the political sphere. The role of the late antique poet is thus essential not only for the continuation of the fortune of the *synkrisis*, but also for its evolution in the political sense.

The intertextual link between Claudian and Ovid is clearly intentional here, but the allusion can be defined as non-referential, since it merely recalls the passage of the Augustan poet, while omitting the hypotext:[63] it

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[62] See e. g. ROSATI (2004), who studies the way in which Claudian and Sidonius transform the myth of Arachne from the model of Ov. *met*. 6, 1–145.

[63] On the terminology related to intertextuality, and in particular on the distinction between referential and non-referential allusions, see e.g. GUALANDRI (2022: 280–281): 'I shall therefore employ "intertextuality" as a broader term simply indicating that there is a relation-

was Claudian who added a deeper and additional meaning to the Ovidian sequence.

Drawing conclusions about Sidonius' mechanisms for reusing the sequence is more complex. His reuse of the (two) models deserves, therefore, a few more observations, to understand whether the Late Antique poet's greater fidelity to the Claudian rather than the Ovidian model is accidental (and perhaps due solely to the greater amount of detail in Claudian's text) or implies an intentional reference to the political hypotext introduced by Claudian in his verses.

In analysing Sidonius' intertextual mechanisms, it is never easy to establish whether the reminiscences are deliberate or unintentional, nor to identify a clear preponderance of one model over another, since the overlapping of quotations often makes them inseparable.[64] It is even more difficult to establish whether these are referential or non-referential allusions.

On the one hand, Sidonius' audience could have had an insufficient cultural level to recognize the authors quoted by the poet, or even to appreciate a possible reference to the hypotext.[65] On the other hand, it is possible that the Sidonian quotations, although difficult for the audience to decipher, should in any case be considered intentional and at times also referential.[66]

The preference Sidonius shows for the Claudian model over the Ovidian one is made evident from the order in which the *exempla* are presented. The Claudian order is chosen by Sidonius in all three cases of reuse of the sequence, even where the political context is entirely absent. This suggests

ship between a text and an earlier text, which may be either unconscious on the author's part (determined by pure involuntary memory), or conscious and deliberate; in the latter case, I shall conform to current usage by speaking of "allusion". It might, in fact, prove useful in this context to observe the distinction […] between "referential" allusions […] which attain meaning precisely from the texts which they evoke […] and allusions which, while clearly constituting intentional reminiscences, are not enriched by the hypotext'. In general, on intertextuality and allusions, see CONTE–BARCHIESI (1989).

[64] GUALANDRI (2022: 281).

[65] See GUALANDRI (2022: 282): 'we must not forget, though, that not every member of Sidonius' public, however learned, would have found him easy to follow'.

[66] See e. g. GUALANDRI (1979: 85), who identifies the complex and hidden interplay of references as one of the elements that most characterises Sidonius' style: 'un minuzioso lavorio che […] con i suoi riferimenti celati sembra voler sfidare gli amici […] ad una sorta di gara'.

that the *synkrisis* was taken up by Sidonius precisely through the mediation of Claudian. In addition, a referential context – which is absent in the first two cases – is suggested by several elements in the third reuse.

Let us first consider the different context in which the panegyric was realised, and the different purpose for which it was composed,[67] which itself embodied a political purpose.

In the panegyric of Anthemius, then, Sidonius left more room for Claudian lexical borrowings precisely in the example of Pelops. This element, given the political significance that the episode conveyed in the *Laus Serenae*, does not seem accidental.

Finally, of note is the way the *synkrisis* is introduced by the three authors, which makes the purpose of the sequence clear from its very incipit.

Ovid had introduced the three *exempla* with a reference to the competition that the suitors had to sustain (*pretium magni certaminis*), and that Paris was denied.

The element that Claudian chose instead to present as unifying the three *exempla* was that of the kings, the future fathers-in-law of the suitors (*antiquos loquitur Musarum pagina reges*). He had thus made it clear what was the main reason that made Stilicho superior to the heroes of myth: it was not only his military virtue or his demonstrated honesty, but rather the privileged relationship he could boast with Serena's adoptive father, Emperor Theodosius himself.

Sidonius, who in *carm*. 11 and *carm*. 14 had neglected to indicate a specific purpose, in *carm*. 2, 487–488 inserted in the first verses of the *synkrisis* the reference to the wedding itself, i. e. precisely to what interested him the most (*circumspice antiquas / taedas*). He thus sanctioned a direct dependence on the practical purpose that Claudian had introduced into his own sequence, but also vindicated the new purpose to which he had shifted the political meaning.

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[67] Sidonius had been commissioned by the Roman senate to write a panegyric for the new emperor: on the historical context in which the poem is composed see e. g. Montone (2015: 4–5).

Sidonius' intertextual work, in the case of the *Panegyric of Anthemius*, might thus be included in the field of referential allusions; in this kind of allusions, the author intends to recall a precise meaning of the text quoted, to enrich his own. This passage, of course, can only and exclusively be considered in relation to the Claudian model: it is of Claudian that Sidonius intends to recall the political context, taking to a further level the very sequence that he evidently appreciated, and which up to that time he had exploited only as a non-referential allusion. The different literary genre in which the panegyric was inscribed, as well as its different objective, made Sidonius feel the need to take up the sequence once again through the mediation of Claudian, while also grasping, this time, its political significance.

In doing so, he always kept the reference to Claudian clear, but he adapted the significance to his own needs. He left out the underlying allusions to Pelops' unfaithfulness and to the discord between brothers, because anything related to this was not part of either Anthemius or Ricimer's political programme. Instead, Sidonius specified, from the very beginning of the sequence itself, what was his new – but still political – objective: to emphasise the importance of the marriage that was supposed to safeguard the peace.

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