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"Nec sidera pacem semper habent" : gigantomachy as "modus interpretandi" of reality in Claudian's poetry

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*Nec sidera pacem semper habent*¹
Gigantomachy as *modus interpretandi*
of Reality in Claudian's Poetry

[...] ipsumque Iovem turbante Typhoeo
si fas est, tremuisse ferunt [...]²

Abstract: The article is devoted to the presentation of topos of gigantomachy in the light of political allusions that can be found in Claudian's *Panegyrics*. In parts: *III Cons. Hon.* 158—162, *IV Cons. Hon.* 527—538 and *VI Cons. Hon.* 184—192 the rhetor used the motif of fights of gods with the Giants in the context of praising Stilicho's leadership skills (*III Cons. Hon.*), Honorius's shooting abilities (*IV Cons. Hon.*), and also as a form of Alaric's criticism (*VI Cons. Hon.*). The common ground of all statements in which the author used the concept of unification of the myth and history is the presentation of contrast between the barbarian wildness and political ideology of the empire.

Key words: Claudian, *Panegyrics*, Gigantomachy, myth, politics, alegoresis

One of the characteristic features of Claudian's work was a continuous reference to myths, considered by the ancient as the source of reliable information or some kind of knowledge.³ A rich repertoire of the stories about gods constitutes a well-known *loci communes* of ancient literature, often used as an ar-

¹ Claud. *Goth.* 62—63.

² *Ibidem*, 63—64.

³ Cf. W. Burkert: "Antiker Mythos — Begriff und Funktion." In: *Antike Mythen in der europäischen Tradition*. Ed. H. Hofmann. Tübingen 1999, pp. 11—26.

gumentation scheme or an established perspective of certain topics.⁴ In the context of description of wars and threats from the barbarians in the works of the rhetor from Alexandria there is a topos of gigantomachy symbolizing a rebellion of the powers of chaos against the order, wildness against civilization.⁵

In the present article we shall analyse the way Claudian referred to the motif which in his works constituted an allusion to Alaric's attacks on Italia, referring to the threat from Gildon or suggestion of the attempt to usurp power by Maximus and Eugenius during Theodosius the Great's life. In the discussion we shall omit the motif of gigantomachy as a strictly mythological topic, that is why in the work the interpretation of topos numerously mentioned in *De raptu Proserpinae* poem as well as the content of Claudian's Greek and Latin *Gigantomachy* are omitted. Due to the narrow extent of the present article we are forced to omit sequences which require a detailed analysis: VI *Cons. Hon. Praef.* 13—26, VI *Cons. Hon.* 44—45 as well as *Goth.* 61—66. The field of observation will be narrowed to the analysis of topos perception in parts: III *Cons. Hon.* 158—162, IV *Cons. Hon.* 527—538 and VI *Cons. Hon.* 184—192, paying attention to how the historic determinants as well as the widely understood idealization tendency, associated with Claudian's panegyric work, influenced the shape of the established perspectives of the motif.

The first mention about the Giants (taking into consideration the chronology of the works) appeared in a panegyric on III consulate of Honorius August. In the second part of the work Claudian describes the moment of meeting Theodosius with Stilicho. The dying emperor, in a secret conversation, entrusts the leader with his minor sons', Arcadius and Honorius, care:

[...] Iamiam securus ad astra
te custode ferar; rupta si mole Typhoeus
prosiliat, vinclis Tityos si membra resolvat,
si furor Enceladi proiecta mugiat Aetna,
opposito Stilichone cadent.⁶

Theodosius's *ultima dicta* constitute a praise of Stilicho's abilities. The emperor calls the leader a guard (*te custode*),⁷ which on one hand is to indicate the effectiveness of the actions of the Roman army main leader (*opposito Stilichone cadent*),⁸ and on the other to augur prosperous future for the brothers (*securus ad*

⁴ Cf. M. Głowiński, T. Kostkiewiczowa, A. Okopień-Sławińska, J. Sławiński: "Loci communes." In: *Podręczny słownik terminów literackich*. Ed. J. Sławiński. Warszawa 2002, p. 163.

⁵ Cf. I. Gualandri: *La poesia di Claudiano tra mito e storia*. In: *Cultura latina pagana fra terzo e quinto secolo dopo Cristo*. Firenze 1998, p. 116.

⁶ Claud. III *Cons. Hon.* 158—162.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 159.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 162.

astra ferar).⁹ Although it can be assumed that the mentioning the threat from the Giants' side Theodosius had Alaric on his mind, then it appears the panegyrist's intentional action to express the fears concerning the empire's future fate by means of mythological allusion, and leaving the interpretation of the view symbolism to the audience.

The mention about Stilicho's victory over the Giants is a climax of glorifying the leader's successes. The thought expressed in Theodosius's last sentence is connected with the first part of the speech in which the war issue was signalled. The dying emperor described Stilicho with the epithet *bellipotens*, which means somebody "superior in fight" and "powerful in war."¹⁰ This expression, I believe, is to present *virtus militaris* of the emperor's army leader. *Magister militum*, whom the emperor addresses, during Theodosius I's reign apparently reached the highest military and official positions which must have influenced his presentation in literature. A change of this picture could have been caused by an exceptionally unsuccessful expedition against Alaric in the autumn of 395, which is however not mentioned by Claudian.¹¹ Maybe the analysed part of panegyric was created already during Theodosius' life or right after his death, still, it cannot be forgotten that intentional omitting in a speech information concerning unfavourable events from history was to serve the general laudatory tendency of a piece of work. Focusing on the leader's particular virtues is visible in the not mentioned *expressis verbis* comparison of Stilicho to Jupiter. By analysing Claudian's perception of war we can easily notice the similarities between the role of Vandal in the war with the barbarians and Jupiter's deeds, who tamed the Giants.

Claudian formulates a thought that whatever dangers might face the empire, they will disappear if in the moment of threat Stilicho appears (*opposito Stilichone cadent*).¹² This idealistic view results from the fact that panegyric, as "ex genere optimistic"¹³ piece of work was to represent content filled with a successful vision of the future. Contrary to D. Romano¹⁴ and P. Fargues' opinions,¹⁵ who put Claudian's propaganda activity to the years of 397—398 AD, we can assume that flattering words included in the dying emperor's speech constitute an announce-

⁹ Ibidem, 158.

¹⁰ Cf. *Słownik lacińsko-polski*. Vol. 1. Ed. J. Korpanty. Warszawa 2001, p. 241.

¹¹ Cf. A. Cameron: *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*. Oxford 1970, pp. 43, 160—161. Let us add that the panegyric on III consulate of Honorius Augustus was delivered in January 396, which means already after the failed expedition.

¹² Claud. *III Cons. Hon.* 162.

¹³ G. Żurek: "Motyw Złotego Wieku w twórczości Klaudiana." *Meander* 1973, vol. 28, p. 290.

¹⁴ D. Romano: *Claudio*. Palermo 1958, p. 71. Quoted after: A. Cameron: *Claudian...*, p. 45.

¹⁵ P. Fargues: *Claudian. Études sur sa poésie et son temps*. Paris 1933, p. 18. Quoted after: A. Cameron: *Claudian...*, p. 45.

ment of writing works by Claudian in accordance with Stilicho's policy and expectations.¹⁶ Introducing to the laudatory speech a statement ascribed to Theodosius is to support the panegyrist's argumentation who, by means of a simple rhetoric trick, presented his personal opinion on Stilicho's election as the emperor's offspring's protector. After Theodosius's death the rhetor from Alexandria gave his talent to the service of outstanding persons from Honorius's court and wrote his works to present the Vandal leader in a favourable light. Such a function needs to be ascribed to the myth about the Giants in which in a hyperbolic tone the rhetor exhibited Stilicho's warlike nature.

Apart from the visible praise of the empire regent¹⁷ as a brave leader, in the speech of the dying leader one can see a visibly drawn concept of the state.¹⁸ It shall be led by Stilicho, who will take over Theodosius' duties (*tu curis succede meis*).¹⁹ In such a way the idea of the country's unity is emphasized because the pillar of the empire will be one man — emperors' carer assigned by the ruler. Following Theodosius' expectations he will be a guarantee of the stability of the united empire: *tu curis succede meis, tu pignora solus / nostra fove: geminos dextra tu protege fratres*.²⁰ A. Cameron emphasises here using the personal pronoun *tu* and pronoun adjective *solus*.²¹ The idea of appointing Stilicho as the carer of Theodosius' both sons, and therefore also of Arcadius, can be found in book II of invective against Rufinus: [...] *iamque tuis, Stilicho, Romana potentia curis / et rerum commissus apex, tibi credita fratrum / utraque maiestas geminaeque exercitus aulae*.²² A similar overtone has a thought expressed in Zosimos' *New History*: ἔλεγε γὰρ ἐπιτετράφθαι παρὰ Θεοδοσίου τελευτᾶν μέλλοντος τὰ κατ' ἄμφω τοὺς βασιλέας ἔχειν ἐν πάσῃ φροντίδι.²³ In his relation the Byzantium historian could rely on Claudian's texts, which, in the view of the modern experts on antiquity, remain almost the only source of historical information.²⁴ According to A. Cameron, also chroniclers used Claudian's work, often having in mind the criterion of historical reliability, frequently beginning their relations with the expression typical of historiography: *hoc tempore Claudianus poeta innotuit*.²⁵

¹⁶ Cf. A. Cameron: *Claudian...*, pp. 40—45.

¹⁷ That is Stilicho's, who was exercising power during Honorius's minority.

¹⁸ Cf. Ch. Gnilka: "Claudian: Panegyriker oder Propagandist?" In: I d e m: *Philologische Streifzüge durch die römische Dichtung*. Münster 2007, pp. 202—203.

¹⁹ Claud. *III Cons. Hon.* 152.

²⁰ Claud. *III Cons. Hon.* 152—153. Cf. D. Brodka: "Idea Rzemu w literaturze rzymskiej późnego antyku." *Nowy Filomata* 1998, vol. 2, pp. 81—97.

²¹ Cf. A. Cameron: *Claudian...*, p. 43.

²² Claud. *Ruf.* II 4—6.

²³ See: S. Olszaniec: *Comites consistoriani w wieku IV. Studium prosopograficzne elity dworskiej cesarstwa rzymskiego 320—395 n.e.* Toruń 2007, p. 460.

²⁴ See: T. Kotuła: *Barbarzyńcy i dworzanie. Rzym i barbarzyńcy w dworskiej literaturze późnorzymskiej*. Kraków 2004, p. 98.

²⁵ Cf. A. Cameron: *Claudian...*, p. 35.

However, S. Olszaniec pays attention to the fact that in the concept of the dying ruler the carers (ἐπίτροποι) of Honorius and Arcadius were to be both Stilicho as well as Rufinus — the former in the western part of the empire, the latter one in the eastern.²⁶ He finds such information in the historian Nicephore Caliste (*Historia Ecclesiastica* XIII 1) and John of Antioch (*Fragmenta* 188, 190). Eunapius of Sardis put the issue in a similar way. According to him “Theodosius’s sons had the titles of imperators, but the real power belonged to Stilicho in the West and Rufinus in the East” (*Fragmenta* 62, 64), as well as Zosimos, who writes: “When the highest power was passed to Arcadius and Honorius it seemed that they rule only nominally; the whole true power was for Rufinus in the East and in the West everything depended on Stilicho’s opinion.”²⁷ Therefore, it needs to be stressed that the majority of opinions, especially of historical nature, concerning the division of power between Stilicho and Rufinus allows to presume that the part of Theodosius’ speech (*III Cons. Hon.* 152—153) is only one of the elements of a longest laudation of the Roman leader. The myth about Giants serves the same function, which is here not the only element separated from reality. Both using the form of *solus* and the intentional hiding by the rhetor of the true failures of Stilicho as well as doubts concerning the factual course of Theodosius’ meeting with the leader (if the conversation described by Claudian actually took place which is indicated by C. Schindler²⁸) allow only to confirm opinions that “panegyrics of the late ancient period included maximum of flattering rhetoric and minimum of confirmed facts.”²⁹ Against the idealization tendency which was associated with the whole panegyric work of that period the widely discussed issue of “reliability” of Claudian’s sources is also lost. According to H. Schweckendiek: “[...] kein Zeitgenosse von einem Panegyrikos eine wirklich objektive Darstellung erwartet hat. Das war nicht Aufgabe dieser Gattung, und dessen waren sich alle Beteiligten bewußt.”³⁰

Another mention about the Giants appears in panegyric on IV consulate of Honorius Augustus. In the part πράξεις Claudian meticulously lists the emperor’s virtues, showing him as an excellent archer:

Quae vires iaculis vel, cum Gortynia tendis
spicula, quam felix arcus certique petitor
vulneris et iussum mentiri nescius ictum!³¹

²⁶ S. Olszaniec: *Comites consistoriani...*, pp. 458—459.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 459.

²⁸ C. Schindler: “Der Panegyrikos auf das dritte Konsulat des Honorius.” In: E a d e m: *Per carmina laudes. Untersuchungen zur spätantiken Verspanegyrik von Claudian bis Coripp.* Berlin—New York 2009, p. 88.

²⁹ A. Cameron: *Claudian...*, pp. 41—42.

³⁰ H. Schweckendiek: *Claudians Invektive gegen Eutrop (In Eutropium)*. Hildesheim—Zürich—New York 1992, p. 9. On historical reliability of Latin laudatory speeches of the collection *Panegyrici Latini* and Claudian’s works see: M. Cytowska, H. Szelest: *Literatura rzymska. Okres cesarstwa*. Warszawa 1992, pp. 497—498, 519—545.

³¹ Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.* 527—529.

The continuation of Honorius' praise is a bold comparison of his archery skills to Heracles', who tamed the Giants, skills as well as Apollo's, who killed Python:

Scis, quo more Cydon, qua dirigat arte sagittas
 Armenius, refugo quae sit fiducia Partho:
 sic Amphioniae pulcher sudore palaestrae
 Alcides pharetras Dircaequae tela solebat
 praetemptare feris olim domitura Gigantes
 et pacem latura polo, semperque cruentus
 ibat et Alcmenae praedam referebat ovanti;
 caeruleus tali prostratus Apolline Python
 implicuit fractis moritura volumina silvis.³²

Lines 518—564 of the panegyric concern emperor's τὰ κατὰ σῶμα, therefore praising the physical appearance (περὶ κάλλους) and fitness (περὶ ῥώμης).³³ Claudian mentions the skills in javelin, archery, wrestling and chariot riding.³⁴ The areas of competition mentioned by the rhetor, where one could show their physical prowess, constituted an almost comprehensive system of training of a young emperor and perfect preparation to stand war difficulties. Forms of conducting fights in which Honorius excelled are most of all associated with Olympic disciplines which allows to guess the sources Claudian used. Pindar's odes, called epinikia, meaning "works for victory"³⁵ provide numerous famous descriptions of sports undertakings and victories. As A. Szastyńska-Siemion³⁶ emphasizes, this kind of songs could have concerned war, political or sports victories, but Pindar's works are mainly songs honouring the best participants of the great Panhellenic Games.

The topos interesting for us appears in the I Nemean Ode (93—97), in which Pindar mentions Tiresias who prophesized Heracles' victory over the Giants: "[...] when on the Flegrean Plain / the gods will stand to fight with the Giants / from the arrows of his shootings / the ground will be covered with their gorgeous hair [...]"³⁷ Then, in lines 33—42 VI of the Isthmian Ode he writes about Heracles' deeds during the expedition against Laomedon as well as about defeating Alcyoneus,³⁸ one of the Giants, on the Flegrean Plain: "He took the town of Perga-

³² Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.* 530—538.

³³ Cf. L.B. Struthers: "The rhetorical structure of the Encomia of Claudius Claudian." In: *Harvard Studies* 1919, vol. 30, p. 78; J. Lehner: *Poesie und Politik in Claudians Panegyrikus auf das vierte Konsulat des Kaisers Honorius*. Königstein 1984, p. 16.

³⁴ Cf. L.B. Struthers: *The rhetorical...*, p. 78.

³⁵ "Introduction." In: *Pindar. Wybór poezji*. Ed. A. Szastyńska-Siemion. Wrocław 1981, p. X.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ Trans. by: A. Szastyńska-Siemion. In: *Pindar. Wybór poezji*. Wrocław 1981, p. 127.

³⁸ Cf. P. Grimal: *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej*. Ed. J. Łanowski. Entries trans. by: M. Bronarska, B. Górka, A. Nikliborc, J. Sachse, O. Szarska. Wrocław 1987, p. 24.

mus and killed there the peoples of Meropis and herdsman as huge as a mountain — Alcyoneus when he met him in Flegrea [...].”³⁹ An element connecting Claudian’s panegyric with Pindar’s odes — within the analysed motif — is a mention that Heracles’ participation decided about the success of the gods of Olympus. Moreover, in the I Nemean Ode there is the picture of Heracles as an archer. Both authors use the mythological topos as an element of artistic study and a form of praise of fitness of real persons from history (Chromios of Syracuse and Phylakidas of Aigina when it comes to Pindar’s odes as well as Honorius when it comes to Claudian’s panegyric). What is more, both of them show the heroes’ belligerent nature in a simplified way using soldiers’ traditional attributes: a bow and an arch spear. Moreover, Pindar indicates Giants’ tallness and their characteristic hairline. Such a way of physical appearance representation of the enemy was, according to J. Mantke, typical of the late-ancient description of the barbarian tribes,⁴⁰ which can indicate the continuity of using the topos already set by the poet from Boeotia. Reinterpreting the myth the authors bring out similarities between the hero and the addressees of the laudatory works. Therefore, they create the possibility of reading the work on both levels: reality and myth.

Putting the myth on Giants in the *πράξεις* part of Claudian’s panegyric results from the function it serves in the work. One of them can be described as an idealization towards the presented view of reality. The foreigner from Alexandria who, having come to Rome joined up with the aristocratic circles of official elites, became in short time an acknowledged court poet and as such he was regarded as an pro-emperor artist, who met the expectations of the ruler and people from his environment. That is why the panegyrics commissioned to be written contained a significant load of flattering words towards the emperor, whom the rhetor willingly compared to gods, and exhibited his deeds in a remarkably hyperbolic tone.

However, Claudian’s praises are not, in my opinion, aimed at maximum emphasizing the ruler’s positive features. In the rhetor’s concept, Honorius does not exceed with his skills the archery agility of Hercules or Apollo (which could be expected from the often idolatrous content perspective of panegyrics) but merely equals them. Let us remind that in accordance with the genre convention and the rules of the specific form of comparison, called “exceeding” by E.R. Curtius, in panegyric works the basis of juxtaposing the ability of historical figure with a mythological one was usually emphasizing the superiority and exceptionality of an addressee of a laudatory speech (here Honorius).⁴¹ According to the typical scheme *σύγκρισις* the present time was compared with the past and as a part of

³⁹ Trans. by: A. Szastyńska-Siemion. In: *Pindar. Wybór poezji*. Wrocław 1981, p. 162.

⁴⁰ J. Mantke: *Obraz barbarzyńcy w eposie panegirycznym Korippusa “In laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris.”* In: *Classica Wratislaviensia*, vol. 22. Wrocław 2001, pp. 153—154.

⁴¹ Cf. E.R. Curtius: *Literatura europejska i łacińskie średniowiecze*. Trans. A. Borowski. Kraków 2005, p. 170; I. Gualandri: *La poesia di Claudiano...*, p. 130.

idealization tendency associating most of all the panegyric works — presented as the more prosperous one and better than the legendary.⁴²

Also the lack of the emperor's real political successes could have influenced moderating the emperor's praises. At the moment of delivering the panegyric (year 398) Honorius was just a 14-year-old boy, not much engaged in the empire's issues. Historian Zosimos and Eunapius of Sardis mention the nominal wielding of power by Theodosius' sons.⁴³ Most probably, the emperors were equally engaged in the area of military science. In face of lack of achievement on the battle field and lack of victories in commanding the Roman army, Claudian withdrew from the modification of the myth and did not transfer the victory over Giants from Hercules to Honorius. It is true that the comparison to famous mythical archers rises the significance of the ruler's skills, still, taking into consideration pace 158—162 *III Cons. Hon.*, in which through this identification by means of Stilicho's allusion with Jupiter the rhetor indicated sufficient skills of the ruler to protect the empire from the barbarians, Honorius' praise expressed in *IV Cons. Hon.* seems to be modest. So, both comparisons serve a value judgement. From the panegyric comparison on IV consulate of the emperor, which is in a slightly more realistic tone, it appears that the decisive role in the gods' war with the Giants was played by Hercules, and not Theodosius' son. Such a perspective results in decreasing Honorius' achievements and at the same time strengthens Stilicho's complementation which seems a model representation of interactions between the statements. I believe that Claudian realizes here *comparatio* exceeding the framework of one piece of work: creating Stilicho as the Giants' vanquisher (*III Cons. Hon.* 158—162) he suggested that a wise, due to age and experience *magister militum* personifies the ideal of *virtutes* of a warrior that the junior emperor cannot stand up to.

In the context of war, not little space was devoted by Claudian to Alaric. His failed expedition on Rome and failure in Pollentia near Torino battle (year 402) the rhetor compared to a futile Mount Olympus climb of the Giants. This view is present in lines 184—186 of the panegyric on VI consulate of Honorius Augustus. In the work we can find some content expressing deep emotions of the described persons. Full of reproach are words which the god of Eridanus aims at Alaric at the moment of his leaving Italia:

[...] o cunctis Erebi dignissime poenis,
 tune Giganteis urbem temptare deorum
 adgressus furiis? nec te meus, improbe, saltem
 terruit exemplo Phaëthon, qui fulmina praeceps
 in nostris efflavit aquis, dum flammea caeli
 flectere terrenis meditatur frena lacertis
 mortaliq[ue] diem sperat diffundere vultu?

⁴² I. Gualandri: *La poesia di Claudiano...*, p. 130.

⁴³ Cf. S. Olszaniec: *Comites consistoriani...*, p. 459.

crede mihi, simili bacchatur crimine, quisquis
adspirat Romae spoliis aut Solis habenis.⁴⁴

Eridanus' speech can be classified as Alaric's *vituperatio ex animo*, *id est ex vitiis circa res gestas*.⁴⁵ It constitutes an antithesis of Stilicho's praise (*laudatio ex virtutibus circa res gestas*) included in *III Cons. Hon.* 144—162, and indirectly also in the above mentioned quotation. Therefore, in the perception of the motif the accent shift from *laudatio* to a reprimand (*vituperatio*) is visible. Claudian put special emphasis on inhuman emotions which associated Alaric's behaviour, who wanted to destroy Rome *Giganteis furiis*.⁴⁶ This description constitutes a direct reference to the war with the Giants. The picture of Rome enemy created by the rhetor is a proof of Claudian's creative communing with the tradition of historiography. According to M. Cytowska and H. Szelest, the picture of Alaric's escape (*VI Cons. Hon.* 265—272) constitutes a parallel of Livius's representation of Hannibal at the moment of his leaving Italia.⁴⁷ In *Ab urbe condita libri* the citizen of Carthage was even identified with *furiam et fax [...] belli*.⁴⁸ S. Śnieżewski, in the context of war and peace analysis in Livius' *History*, adds that the Carthage ruler Hannon was advising to "transport Hannibal to the ends of the seas and lands, where neither his name nor news of him could reach Carthage so he could no longer disturb the country's peace."⁴⁹ A similar overtone has Claudian's metaphor which finishes with a picture of rivers which chase the enemy in his escape.⁵⁰ Due to Alaric's vile behaviour (*improbe*),⁵¹ Eridanus calls him the most worthy of all punishments of Erebus (*cunctis Erebi dignissime poenis*).⁵² The superlative form of the adjective is to emphasize here exaggeratedly the enemy's greater madness (*furiam*) than all previous behaviours which were associated with barbarian peoples' rides on Rome.

Also the noun *urbs* (in the text expressed in *accusativus*) related to the myth about the Giants is connected with *deorum* genitive. Thanks to them Claudian symbolically defined Rome — a city of gods' temples, for example Jupiter on the Capitol, towards which leader Stilicho is marching in a triumphant march with the young emperor. The expression *urbs deorum*, in accordance with the art of literary

⁴⁴ Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 184—192.

⁴⁵ See: H. Lausberg: *Retoryka literacka. Podstawy wiedzy o literaturze*. Translated, edited and introduced by: A. Gorzkowski. Bydgoszcz 2002, p. 138.

⁴⁶ Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 185—186.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Cytowska, H. Szelest: *Literatura rzymska. Okres cesarstwa*. Warszawa 1992, p. 524.

⁴⁸ Liv. XXI 10, 11; Cf. S. Śnieżewski: *Koncepcja historii rzymskiej w „Ab Urbe Condita” Liviusza*. Kraków 2000, p. 184.

⁴⁹ S. Śnieżewski: *Koncepcja historii rzymskiej...*, p. 184.

⁵⁰ Cf. D. Romano: *Claudiano...*, p. 136.

⁵¹ Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 186.

⁵² Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 184.

allusion is to indicate the lasting of “divine Providence in the history of Rome.”⁵³ This expression is also associated with gods’ mythical seat — Mount Olympus, which the Giants were taking by force; it can also constitute a reference to literary tradition of Augustus period which was when the poets from Maecenas circle name the Palatine Hill — a hill on which there was Augustus’ home and later on palaces of the following emperors — a seat of the Olympians.⁵⁴ In Claudian’s words filled with pathos one can see attachment to traditional views of Rome greatness, which is under gods’ care and control.⁵⁵ We can see here a conviction that the City plays an exceptional role in the history of mankind. However, the main role in the description is played by an idea that if the opponent is burning with anger and with guns in his hands he wants to conquer Rome, he conducts a murderous war against himself (*crede mihi, simili bacchatur crimine, quisquis / adspirat Romae spoliis*).⁵⁶ Therefore, what is expressed here is the punishment that the barbarian may expect if he attacks the capital city of Italia. Then, the expression “gods” is most probably an allusion to Stilicho and Honorius. According to M. Zagórski, attributing divine features to leaders and rulers can be a result of the impression that the enemies’ vanquishers made on Roman citizens at the moment of their triumphal entry into Rome. Stilicho was therefore yet another time (the true winner over Alaric in the battle of Pollentia and Verona in 402) associated with Jupiter.

Vituperatio of the river deity is addressed not only to Alaric. Eridanus is equally critical towards Phaëton whose fall he treats as *triste exemplum* of the ruler’s greed. *Cupiditas imperii* was expressed by Claudian by an allegoric view which in a directly expressed verbal meaning shows an idea of driving a sun chariot: *adspirat [...] Solis habenis*.⁵⁷ Phaëton felt no respect for his father’s power who would warn him with the words: “Your fate is human, and you want a superhuman work.”⁵⁸ The young man was lost by his ambition to rule the circle of heaven (*temperat orbem*),⁵⁹ which contributed to his final defeat. Alaric, for whom Phaëton’s experience did not constitute an instructive lesson, shared the same fate (*nec te meus, improbe, saltem / terruit exemplo Phaëthon*).⁶⁰ That is why by using a hyperbolic view Claudian expressed the thought that whoever wants to conquer Rome

⁵³ J. Styka: *Sydoniusz Apollinaris i kultura literacka w Galii V wieku*. Kraków 2008, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Cf. M. Zagórski: *Bogowie mieszkają na Palatynie. Oktawian August i jego program ideowy w „Metamorfozach” Owidiusza*. Kraków 2006.

⁵⁵ Cf. J. Styka: *Sydoniusz...*, p. 17. The author of the monograph lists poets who would extol Rome as “mother of the homeland, cradle of law and culture, ruler of the civilized world, an invincible city, predestined to a continual victorious march in the future and not fearing twilight.”

⁵⁶ Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 191—192.

⁵⁷ *VI Cons. Hon.* 192. Definitions of allegory on the basis of ancient sources are quoted by: A. Kucz: *Dyskurs z Filozofią w „Consolatio Philosophiae” Boecjusza*. Katowice 2005, p. 63.

⁵⁸ Ov. *Met.* II 56 (*Sors tua mortalis, non est mortale, quod optas*). Trans. from Latin by: A. Kamińska and S. Stabryła. In: *Owidiusz. Metamorfozy*. Vol. 1. Wrocław 1995, p. 36.

⁵⁹ Ov. *Met.* I 770.

⁶⁰ Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 186—187.

is not a lesser madman than the one who wants to drive the god of Sun's chariot.⁶¹ The factor which determined Alaric's behaviour was moreover the willingness to ravage the country (*adspirat Romae spoliis*),⁶² which was visible in the text, in my opinion as an addition to *cupiditas imperii*, and not the main reason of Alaric's Rome expedition. Whatever the case, the king of the Visigoths was presented as the one who dictates the rules of war with the Giants' madness (*Giganteis furiis*). It is at the head of his *vitia*, becoming a symbol of real plundering and barbarian's way of fighting.

In Claudian's way of presenting content one can easily recognize the mechanism which characterized one of the late-ancient *alegoresis* which is the typological interpretation, according to which some of the characters from mythology are pre-figurations, that is "types" of characters from modernity.⁶³ Assuming the two-planes of the statement, as a part of panegyric praises, Claudian introduced a myth on Giants in the interpretation of which it is assumed that Stilicho is a type of Jupiter, and barbarians — of Giants. Content development of Claudian's works, in which the legend constantly mixes with the fact results fundamentally from the poet's tendency to use mythological-ekphrastic structure. Stories about gods, presented in well-known *loci communes* of literature, often become a pretext to introduce praises in which one can find a number of political allusions. However, all pictures taken from gigantomachy are built on the idea of contrast between the barbarian wildness and the civilized *Romanitas*.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Cf. D. Romano: *Claudiano...*, p. 136.

⁶² Claud. *VI Cons. Hon.* 192.

⁶³ Cf. I. Gualandri: *La poesia...*, p. 136.

⁶⁴ See: J. Mantke: *Obraz barbarzyńcy...*, pp. 149—160.