

# THE CONVERSION OF THE ROMAN ARISTOCRACY IN PRUDENTIUS' *CONTRA SYMMACHUM*

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PRUDENTIUS' DESCRIPTION of the mass conversion of the Roman Senate at the behest of the emperor Theodosius (*Contra Symmachum* 1.506–607) has often been adduced and exploited by modern historians of the late fourth century.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, however, it seems that this familiar passage has rarely (if ever) been analysed carefully as a whole.<sup>2</sup> The present article has three aims. First, it will consider precisely who the individuals are to whom Prudentius alludes in lines 552–565; second, it will suggest that line 551 probably did not stand in the passage as Prudentius originally wrote it; third, it will ask why the poet has included precisely those men named or alluded to in lines 552–565, and explore the corollaries that this selection has for the genesis and composition of the *Contra Symmachum* as a whole.

## I

After the speech in which the victorious Theodosius addresses Rome (415–505), Prudentius turns to its salutary effects. Instructed by such edicts, the city abandoned its old errors in order to follow Christ: this service to Rome by a Christian emperor, the poet proclaims, far surpassed the benefits which her Republican saviours such as Marius and Cicero had conferred on her, since Theodosius has ensured eternal youth and eternal vigour for the city (506–543). Prudentius then turns to the effect of the speech on the Senate. He first describes the Senate's reaction in general terms

The following works will be cited by author's name alone, or in abbreviated form: A. Chastagnol, *Les Fastes de la préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire* (Paris 1962); M. C. Eagan, tr. and ed., *Prudentius: The Poems 2* (Washington, D.C. 1965, *Fathers of the Church* 52); M. Lavarenne, ed., *Prudence* 3<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1963, Budé edition); W. Taegert, ed., *Claudius Claudianus: Panegyricus dictus Olybrio et Probino consulibus* (Munich 1988, *Zetemata* 85); H. J. Thomson, tr. and ed., *Prudentius 1* (London 1949, Loeb edition); A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* 1 (Cambridge 1971) = *PLRE* 1.

<sup>1</sup>E.g., O. Seeck, *Symmachus* (1883, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auct. Ant.* 6.1) xciv, civ; S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*<sup>2</sup> (London 1899) 23; E. Stein (J.-R. Palanque, tr. and rev.), *Histoire du Bas-Empire* 1<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1959) 217; Alan Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford 1970) 230; C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana* (Rome 1976, *BEFAR* 224) 429, 438–439. On the other hand, the passage seems not to be cited at all in S. Mazzarino, "La conversione del senato," *Antico, tardoantico ed età costantiniana* 1 (Bari 1974) 378–397—who argues that the "decisive period" for the conversion of the Senate fell between 395 and 409.

<sup>2</sup>Not even in the recent and lengthy article of A. Baldini, "Il *Contra Symmachum* di Prudenzio e la conversione del Senato," *RivStorAnt* 17–18 (1987–1988) 115–157.

under the same two aspects of renouncing the old religion and embracing the new. The old Catos exchanged their togas and pontifical insignia for the white robes of catechumens, and the Senate of Evander, leaving only a few on the Tarpeian rock, rushed into the shrines of the Nazarenes and to the baptismal fonts of the Apostles:

545        *exultare patres videas, pulcherrima mundi*  
             *lumina, conciliumque senum gestire Catonum*  
             *candidiore toga niveum pietatis amictum*  
             *sumere, et exuvias deponere pontificales.*  
             *iamque ruit, paucis Tarpeia in rupe relictis,*  
             *ad sincera virum penetralia Nazareorum*  
 550        *atque ad apostolicos Euandria curia fontes.*

The following line (551: *Amniadum suboles et pignora clara Proborum*) refers to the youthful brothers who became ordinary consuls together in 395. Since we believe that this line is intrusive to its context, we shall discuss it separately below (Section II) and, for the present, analyse the passage without it. If line 551 is removed, Prudentius' general description of the conversion of the Roman aristocracy (i.e., lines 544–550) avoids specific examples, and *enim* in line 552 marks the transition from general to particular.<sup>3</sup> When selecting his particular examples, Prudentius adopts a procedure which Tertullian had frequently employed: he focuses his attention first on the earliest aristocratic conversion (552–553), then on contemporary aristocrats who were prominent Christians (554–565).

552        *fertur enim ante alios generosus Anicius urbis*  
             *inlustrasse caput: sic se Roma inclyta iactat.*

Who was the noble Anicius who was the first Christian in the Roman Senate?<sup>4</sup> Hardly the great Petronius Probus himself, as Peter Brown assumed without argument in his immensely influential article on the conversion of the Roman aristocracy.<sup>5</sup> The *generosus Anicius* of Prudentius is usually identified as Sex. Anicius Paulinus, consul in 325, whose Christian

<sup>3</sup>For this common use of *enim* as "introducing a particular instance in support of a general assertion," see *OLD* 608, s.v. 3 d; cf. M. Leumann, J. B. Hoffmann, and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* 2<sup>2</sup> (Munich 1965) 507–509.

Professor J. N. Grant points out that, with or without line 551, *enim* involves a slight logical incoherence because Prudentius jumps from Theodosius' speech, whose clearly indicated dramatic date is autumn 394, and its general consequences (415–550) to a series of specific conversions which occurred well before 394 (552–565). We believe that this tends to corroborate the hypothesis advanced below in Section III that Prudentius here incorporates a passage originally drafted in the mid-380s.

<sup>4</sup>For *caput urbis* = the senate-house, cf. *Cic. Mil.* 90.

<sup>5</sup>P. Brown, "Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *JRS* 51 (1961) 1–11, reprinted in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London 1972) 161–182, at 9 = 177: "the late baptism of the doyen of Roman society, Petronius Probus, celebrated in a grandiose epitaph, and acclaimed by Christian writers as the

religious sympathies appear to be confirmed by an inscription lauding him as *benignus* and *sanctus* (*CIL* VI 1681).<sup>6</sup> But Prudentius' stress on *ante alios* should point to a date significantly earlier than the 320s. Some years ago, E. J. Champlin convincingly demonstrated that the consul Gallicanus who donated silver objects and lands producing over 800 solidi a year to the church of Saints Peter and Paul and John the Baptist at Ostia, while Constantine was emperor and Silvester bishop of Rome (*Liber Pontificalis* 34.29 [Duchesne p. 184]), was the aristocratic Ovinus Gallicanus, ordinary consul in 317.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it seems probable that some of the ordinary consuls between Gallicanus in 317 and Anicius Paulinus in 325 were also Christians.<sup>8</sup> Hence the noble Anicius who became a Christian *ante alios* ought rather to be the Anicius Faustus who held the consulate under Diocletian in 298 and served as *praefectus urbi* in 299/300.<sup>9</sup>

An altar from Rome is also relevant. The inscription on the front of the altar is now erased so badly as to be completely illegible, but according to a Renaissance antiquarian it once bore a dedication to Hercules Invictus by M. Iun(ius) Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Faustus Paulinus as *praetor urbanus*, while the side still bears the consular date of 20 September 321 (*ILS* 3409). The name and the date appear to imply that the dedicand must be a son of the consul of 322.<sup>10</sup> But good technical reasons have been adduced for disjoining the date on the side of the altar from the dedication on the front and for dating the latter to the late third century.<sup>11</sup> If that is correct, then the praetor should be the consul of 298—whose explicitly attested much briefer nomenclature is no bar to the identification.<sup>12</sup> Hence it may be suggested that the oral tradition on which Prudentius implies that he draws (*fertur . . . : sic se Roma inclyta iactat*) preserves the memory of

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'first' conversion among the Roman aristocracy." The translation by M. C. Eagan (133), appears to identify "great Anicius" with the "heir of the blood and name of Olybrius."

<sup>6</sup>Chastagnol 85. The case is developed more fully by D. M. Novak, "Constantine and the Senate: An Early Phase of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *Ancient Society* 10 (1979) 271–310, at 291–297; "Anicianae domus culmen, nobilitatis culmen," *Klio* 62 (1980) 473–493, at 491.

<sup>7</sup>E. J. Champlin, "Saint Gallicanus (Consul 317)," *Phoenix* 36 (1982) 71–76.

<sup>8</sup>T. D. Barnes, "Christians and Pagans in the Reign of Constantius," *L'Église et l'empire au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1989, *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 34, Fondation Hardt) 301–337, classifies Severus (cos. 323) as a certain Christian and Petronius Probianus (cos. 322) as a probable Christian.

<sup>9</sup>On his career, see briefly *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 601; *PLRE* 1.329.

<sup>10</sup>*PLRE* 1.681; T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass. 1982) 120–121.

<sup>11</sup>Chastagnol 32; cf. G. Barbieri, *L'Albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino* (Rome 1952) 640 (addenda to no. 1802). The former argues from the similar dedication to Hercules by a group of four praetors (*CIL* VI 314).

<sup>12</sup>D. M. Novak, "The Early History of the Anician Family," *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman Literature* (Brussels 1979, Collection *Latomus* 164) 119–165, at 164–165.

an episode, whether historical or legendary, which has otherwise left no trace in our lamentably incomplete evidence for the reign of Diocletian—a public declaration of his conversion by a consul and *praefectus urbi* who embraced Christianity shortly before the “Great Persecution.”

Not everyone in Prudentius' day would have conceded the Anician claim to the first conversion among the Roman aristocracy: a pair of metrical inscriptions probably composed in the late fourth century once stood on the Via Salaria praising one Liberalis as a *patricio clarus de semine consul* who earned the crown of martyrdom (*ILCV* 56–57, from a seventh-century manuscript). The date of Liberalis' consulate and martyrdom are unknown: recent scholarly opinion prefers the third century, but admits the reign of Diocletian as a possibility.<sup>13</sup>

As a postscript to this discussion, it may be observed that, if Anicius Faustus the consul of 298 became a Christian before 303, this creates a presumption that the Anicii who were ordinary consuls under Constantine in 322, 325, and 334 were probably also Christians.<sup>14</sup>

555        *quin et Olybriaci generisque et nominis heres,*  
              *adiectus fastis, palmata insignis abolla,*  
              *martyris ante fores Bruti submittere fasces*  
              *ambit, et Ausoniam Christo inclinare securem.*

The identity of the heir of the Olybrian name and race admits of no doubt whatever. He is Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, *praefectus urbi* in 369/70, praetorian prefect of Illyricum and briefly of the East in 378, and ordinary consul in 379, who was still alive in 384 (Symmachus *Relat.* 28) but died before his young grandsons became consuls on 1 January 395 (Claudian *Cons. Olyb. et Prob.* 30).<sup>15</sup> Prudentius refers explicitly and directly to Olybrius' ordinary consulate: he was “added to the fasti” and lowered “the fasces of Brutus” (the legendary consul of 509 B.C.) before the doors of a martyr's shrine. The poet may also refer to Olybrius' urban and praetorian prefectures. The “western axe” which Olybrius made bow to Christ and the cloak decorated with a pattern of palm-leaves can certainly allude to the attributes and the dress of a consul,<sup>16</sup> but the axe could also symbolise the capital jurisdiction of a praetorian prefect and the *abolla*

<sup>13</sup>See A. Degrassi, *I fasti consolari dell'Impero Romano dal 30 avanti Cristo al 613 dopo Cristo* (Rome 1952) 128; *PIR*<sup>2</sup> L 163; W. Eck, “Das Eindringen des Christentums in den Senatorenstand bis zu Konstantin d. Gr.,” *Chiron* 1 (1971) 381–406, at 389; T. D. Barnes, “More Missing Names (A.D. 260–395),” *Phoenix* 27 (1973) 135–155, at 145.

<sup>14</sup>Barnes (above, n. 8) 316–317 classifies Anicius Julianus (cos. 322), Anicius Paulinus (cos. 325), and Anicius Paulinus (cos. 334) as consuls whose religious sympathies are not known for certain.

<sup>15</sup>For a full discussion of Olybrius' career, see Chastagnol 178–184.

<sup>16</sup>Lavarenne 207. Thomson (392–393) translates “enjoyed the glory of the palm-figured robe” and sees an allusion to the *toga palmata* of a consul.

could be the cloak of a *praefectus urbi*. The cloak of the prefect is well attested,<sup>17</sup> but the word *abolla* is quite rare, and Prudentius perhaps took it from Juvenal's fourth satire where the *praefectus urbi* Pegasus hurries to Domitian *rapta abolla* (4.77).<sup>18</sup>

*non Paulinorum, non Bassorum dubitavit  
prompta fides dare se Christo, stirpemque superbam  
560 gentis patriciae venturo attollere saeclo.*

Who are these Paulini and Bassi who did not hesitate to give themselves to Christ? Several scholars (including one of the present writers) have thought that Prudentius alludes to Meropius Pontius Paulinus, better known as Paulinus of Nola, who governed Campania in 381, withdrew from political life shortly thereafter, and finally settled into an ascetic existence at Nola in 395.<sup>19</sup> But the context renders this identification most improbable. Paulinus of Nola was a Gallic aristocrat from an established and wealthy family of Bordeaux.<sup>20</sup> The Paulinus and Bassus of Prudentius' poem are blue-blooded aristocrats of the Roman metropolis, "the arrogant stock of a patrician race," not noble provincials, however cultured and wealthy. Hence the Paulinus to whom the poet alludes is surely Anicius Paulinus, *praefectus urbi* in 380.<sup>21</sup> As for Prudentius' Bassi, there are three prominent men with that name known from the late fourth century: Anicius Auchenius Bassus, *praefectus urbi* in 382/3,<sup>22</sup> L. Valerius Septimius Bassus, *praefectus urbi* between 379 and 383 (*ILS* 782), and Tarracius Bassus, *praefectus urbi* not long after 374, perhaps precisely in 375/6.<sup>23</sup> Prudentius could in theory be alluding to all three of these Bassi, but in fact probably alludes only to the first two.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup>A. Chastagnol, *La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris 1960) 197–198.

<sup>18</sup>E. Courtney, *A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (London 1980) 215, glosses *abolla* as "a double cloak" and explains that "Pegasus probably wears it because of the cold."

<sup>19</sup>T. D. Barnes, "The Historical Setting of Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*," *AJP* 97 (1976) 373–386, at 379, n. 17; cf., e.g., *PLRE* 1.683.

<sup>20</sup>On him, see especially J. F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364–425* (Oxford 1975) 151 ff.

<sup>21</sup>As argued by Chastagnol (207).

<sup>22</sup>On Bassus' career, see *PLRE* 1.152–154.

<sup>23</sup>*Amm. Marc.* 28.1.27; *ILS* 6072; cf. Chastagnol 195–196.

<sup>24</sup>Chastagnol (195) deduces that Tarracius Bassus must have been a pagan because he was accused in the early 370s of using magic to help a charioteer to win (*Amm. Marc.* 28.1.27). The inference is not peremptory—and does not formally exclude the possibility that this Bassus too had embraced Christianity before his prefecture. Nevertheless, what Ammianus reports renders him an unlikely exemplar for Prudentius to praise in this context.

- 561     *iam quid plebicolos percurram carmine Gracchos,*  
           *iure potestatis fultos et in arce senatus*  
           *praecipuos, simulacra deum iussisse revelli,*  
           *cumque suis pariter lictoribus omnipotenti*  
 565     *suppliciter Christo se consecrasse regendos?*

As with Olybrius (554–557), Prudentius makes his allusion so specific that none can doubt either the man or the precise event to which he refers. During his urban prefecture, the *praefectus urbi* Gracchus, who is attested in office in the winter of 376/7 (CTh 2.2.1, 9.35.3), destroyed a shrine of Mithras and was baptised as a Christian (Jerome Ep. 107.2). It seems probable that Gracchus' full name was Furius Maecius Gracchus,<sup>25</sup> and hence that he was a descendant of M. Maecius Memmius Furius Baburius Caecilianus Placidus, ordinary consul in 343 and a member of a family whose consular status goes back at least as far as the middle of the third century.<sup>26</sup>

## II

So far we have deliberately omitted any substantive discussion of line 551 or of why we believe that it is intrusive to its context. Our objections arise from a combination of linguistic and prosopographical arguments. Line 551 (*Amniadum suboles et pignora clara Proborum*) refers solely and precisely to the young brothers Olybrius and Probinus who assumed the *fascēs* as ordinary consuls on 1 January 395, and thus strikes a jarring note in a context where all the other allusions are to men who held high office at Rome in the late 370s and early 380s. It is also problematical in itself.

What does the line mean? The two phrases *Amniadum suboles* and *pignora clara Proborum* must be taken in apposition to *Euandria curia* in the preceding line. In itself, that is linguistically both natural and unobjectionable. Hence the standard translations duly render "Evander's Senate, the descendants of the family of Annius and the illustrious children of the Probi," "the Evandrian Senate, sons of Annius and children of the Probi," and "la curie d'Évandre, la race des Amniades et les illustres enfants de Probus."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>So Chastagnol (198–200), adducing ILS 5717 (Tibur).

<sup>26</sup>R. Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (Oxford 1968) 162–163; PIR<sup>2</sup> M 460.

<sup>27</sup>Respectively, Thomson (393), Eagan (133), and Lavarenne (154). Thomson prints *Anniadum* in the text, even though the form *Amniadum* not only has far stronger manuscript attestation, but is also confirmed as correct by contemporary inscriptions. The critical editions of J. Bergman (*Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* [Vienna 1926, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 61]), Lavarenne, and M. P. Cunningham (*Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* [Brepols 1966, *Corpus Christianorum: series latina* 126]) all correctly print *Amniadum*.

The problem arises from the fact that both phrases refer to the same pair of blue-blooded aristocrats, and thus can hardly refer to the Senate as a whole. As it stands, the text represents the ancient equivalent of equating "the House of Lords" with "the family of the Duke of Devonshire." Provincial though he was, Prudentius cannot have been so ignorant or insensitive as to equate the the Roman Senate as a whole with the noblest Christian family of the city. Nor is it likely that the difficulty can be overcome by taking the line as intended to illustrate what precedes—as meaning "all the aristocracy, even Olybrius and Probinus." Prudentius carefully marks both the transition to individual Christians in line 552 (*fertur enim ante alios*) and the later transition back from individuals to the rest of the Senate:

566        *sescentas numerare domos de sanguine prisco*  
               *nobilium licet.*

Line 551 (we hold) is socially tactless and interrupts its context. It is also relevant that it appears to be modelled on two phrases in Claudian's panegyric on Olybrius and Probinus, which he recited in Rome on 1 January 395.

The name Amniades occurs for the first time in Latin literature in Claudian's poem (*Cons. Olyb. et Prob. 9*), in the plural and apparently meaning "the race of Amnii." It seems probable that Claudian coined the noun *Amniades* himself,<sup>28</sup> just as elsewhere he coins both *Honoriades* to designate the male heir to be produced by the union of Honorius and Maria (*Nupt. Hon. et Mar. 341*) and the feminine *Honorias* in the sense of "daughter of Honorius" (*Carm. min. 30.131*). Names formed by adding the Greek suffix *-ades* to a Roman nomen or cognomen are not common in Latin, but the practice of inventing them, dictated by metrical considerations, goes back to the origins of Latin poetry.<sup>29</sup> It seems that it was Ennius who coined *Scipiades* (- - - -) as a synonym for Scipio, since the ordinary form of the name would not fit into dactylic hexameters with the prosody normal at that period (*viz.* - - - -):<sup>30</sup> both Lucretius (3.1034) and Virgil (*G. 2.170*; *Aen. 6.843*) use the plural *Scipiadae* with the meaning "Scipios," while Lucilius uses the singular *Publius Cornelius Scipiadas* (fr. 1139 Marx, the model for Horace *Satires 2.1.17, 72*), with dative *Scipiadae* (fr. 394). Similarly, and presumably on the model of Ennius, Lucretius coined *Memmiades* to use in the dative case instead of the unmetrical *Memmio* (1.26), and Valerius Flaccus

<sup>28</sup>Taegert 89: "vielleicht—wie wohl auch *Honoriades* (*nupt. Hon. 341*)—Claudians eigene Prägung, die bei Prud. c. Symm. 1,551 wiederkehrt."

<sup>29</sup>See especially L. Müller, *De re metrica poetarum Latinorum praeter Plautum et Terentium*<sup>2</sup> (St. Petersburg and Leipzig 1894) 490–492; E. Norden, ed., *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI*<sup>4</sup> (Darmstadt 1957) 333 (on *Aen. 6.842–843*); E. Courtney (above, n. 18) 147–148 (on Juvenal 2.154); Taegert 89.

<sup>30</sup>Except of course with correpion of the final vowel, as in Ennius *Varia 3* Vahlen<sup>3</sup> = *Scipio*, fr. 7 Warmington: *Scipio invicte*.

has *Caspiadae* (nominative plural) for *Caspia* (6.107), while an inscription in elegiacs from Naples styles Appius Claudius Julianus, who was consul for the second time in 224, *progenies Claudius Appiadum* (ILS 1184 = CLE 888). In all these cases, unlike the frequent *Aeneadae* (= Romans), the suffix *-ades* has no patronymic force whatever. Claudian's normal usage, therefore, differs from that of the classical Latin poets who provided his inspiration in that, as a Greek speaker, he retained the patronymic force of the suffix, except for *Amniadae* and *Scipiades* (= Scipio) which he uses no less than seven times, twice in a passage clearly intended to depict himself by implication as the Ennius of Stilico (*Cons. Stil.* 3, pr. 1, 21, contrasting *maior* with *noster Scipiades*, i.e., Stilico).<sup>31</sup> Linguistic criteria, therefore, indicate that the first half of line 551 reflects the coinage of the noun *Amniadae* by Claudian in a poem recited in Rome on 1 January 395.

The phrase *Amniadum suboles* also deserves prosopographical comment. Fourth century references both to the *gens Amnia* and to individual *Amnii* are surprisingly rare.<sup>32</sup> Ausonius praises Sex. Claudius Petronius Probus, four times praetorian prefect and ordinary consul in 371, as *stirpis novator Amniae* (*Ep.* 16.2.32) for marrying and producing offspring by Anicia Faltonia Proba, who was honoured by her sons a generation later as *Amnios Pincios Aniciosque decorans* and the daughter, wife, and mother of consuls (ILS 1269). As for individuals, the only bearers of the name *Amnius* specifically attested in the fourth century are *Amnius Anicius Julianus*, consul in 322, his son *Amnius Manius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Paulinus*, consul in 334 (ILS 1220),<sup>33</sup> and possibly their close relative Sex. *Anicius Paulinus*, consul in 325.<sup>34</sup> Since Ausonius reveals that the *stirps Amnia* was saved from extinction by Petronius Probus when he married Anicia Faltonia Proba ca 370 (*Ep.* 16.2.31–35), the phrase *Amniadum suboles* had a very precise reference ca 400—to the issue of that marriage, viz. a son born in the early 370s who died young, *Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius* and *Anicius Probinus*, the consuls of 395, *Anicius Probus*, consul in 406, and probably a sister *Anicia Proba*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Also *Cons. Olyb. et Prob.* 149; *In Eutr.* 1.455; *Cons. Stil.* 1.381, 2.384; *Goth.* 141; *Carm. min.* 30.42. In addition, note *Heliades* (feminine plural) = "daughters of the sun" and *Thyestiades* = *Aegisthus* (*VI Cons. Hon.* 164,113).

<sup>32</sup>For a list, see *TLL* 1.1939.

<sup>33</sup>*PLRE* 1.473–474, 679. Symmachus' brief poem on the consul of 322 styles him *Amnius* (*Ep.* 1.2.5).

<sup>34</sup>In the fragmentary list of names belonging to the early fourth century published in *NSc* 16 (1917) 22 = *Bull. Comm.* 45 (1917) 225, cf. Barnes (above, n. 10) 121–122, the fifth name is preserved as "[n. Anicius P[aulinus]." There seems to be little doubt that he is Sex. *Anicius Paulinus*, consul in 325, but the name preceding *Anicius* can be restored as either [Am]n(ius) or [Iu]n(ius).

<sup>35</sup>*PLRE* 1.1144, *Stemma* 24; cf. *AJP* 111 (1990) 418–419. In the fifth century her epitaph describes *Demetrias*, the daughter of *Olybrius* the consul of 395 and *Anicia*



The second half of line 551 has the same parentage as the first. Claudian salutes the consuls of 395 as *pignora cara Probi* (*Cons. Olyb. et Prob.* 143). That was surely the inspiration for *pignora clara Proborum* in the *Contra Symmachum* (which means, not "the illustrious children of the Probi," but "the illustrious children of Probus and Proba"). Line 551 is thus a pastiche of two phrases modelled on the poem which Claudian delivered in Rome on 1 January 395, both of which describe the children of Petronius Probus.

On these grounds, which we realise that most scholars will probably not consider conclusive, we propose to delete line 551 as an interpolation by an early reader who had also read Claudian's poem and missed an allusion in Prudentius to the leading members of the *gens Anicia* ca 400.<sup>36</sup> The feebleness of the line renders it unlikely, in our view, that it was Prudentius himself who added it in 402/3 while revising an earlier draft of the passage. It is no obstacle to this hypothesis that the line appears in all the manuscripts of the *Contra Symmachum* that preserve the passage. Unfortunately, the only two pre-Carolingian manuscripts of Prudentius are lacking here: the sixth-century Puteanus (Paris, BN lat. 8084) does not contain the *Contra Symmachum* at all, and the seventh-century Ambrosianus (D 36 sup.) omits 1.337–560 and 2.85–1132. Admittedly, the line stands even in the Durham manuscript (Dunelmensis B 4.9) which originally omitted a passage of five lines which has been interpolated into Book Two (2.423–427: added by a later hand in the margin).<sup>37</sup> But the Durham manuscript is no earlier than the tenth century, and our hypothesis posits that line 551 was interpolated early enough to establish itself as part of the *paradosis* in every branch of the manuscript tradition before the eighth century. For, if Prudentius did not write it himself, it must have been interpolated in the fifth century by someone who knew about the children of Petronius Probus.<sup>38</sup>

### III

If the preceding arguments are correct, then Prudentius' account of the conversion of the Roman Senate refers precisely and exclusively to the following late fourth-century aristocrats:

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Juliana, as *Am[nia virgo]* (*ILCV* 1765, cf. J. R. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* 2 [Cambridge 1980] 351–352).

<sup>36</sup>The type of interpolation which we posit is similar to that recently discussed by R. J. Tarrant, "The Reader as Author: Collaborative Interpolation in Latin Poetry," in J. N. Grant, ed., *Editing Greek and Latin Texts* (New York 1989) 121–162.

<sup>37</sup>C. Gnllka, "Zwei Textprobleme bei Prudentius," *Philologus* 109 (1965) 246–258.

<sup>38</sup>For several certain interpolations in Claudian (most of which appear to be very early and all of which are disallowed by the recent Teubner editor), see C. Gnllka, "Beobachtungen zum Claudiantext," in C. Gnllka and W. Schetter, eds., *Studien zur Literatur der Spätantike* (Bonn 1975) 45–90—where a brief appendix surveys "das Interpolationenproblem bei Prudentius" (86–90). Recently, and with the encouragement of Gnllka, Taegert (111–116) has convincingly diagnosed another substantial interpolation in Claudian, viz. *Cons. Olyb. et Prob.* 48–54.

554–557 Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, *cos.* 379

558–560 Anicius Paulinus, Anicius Auchenius Bassus, and L. Valerius Septimius Bassus, who were all *praefecti urbis* between 379 and 383

561–565 (Furius Maecius) Gracchus, prefect of the city in 376/7

Why has Prudentius chosen precisely these individuals? What do they all have in common? Perhaps all the men named belonged to the family of the Anicii, the leading Christian aristocratic family of Rome. Anicius Paulinus and Anicius Bassus are clearly Anicii born, and Olybrius married Turrana Anicia Juliana (*ILS* 1271), while marriage alliances with the *gens Anicia* for both Gracchus and Septimius Bassus could easily be postulated.<sup>39</sup> Alternatively, and perhaps more plausibly, all the men whom Prudentius mentions may have been prominent signatories of the *libellus* which Damasus sent to Ambrose in 382 protesting that the majority of the Senate supported Gratian's removal of the altar of Victory from the senate-house (Ambrose *Ep.* 17.10). More important, once line 551 is removed, all of Prudentius' references to contemporary aristocrats cluster around men who were prominent between 376 and 383. That is very relevant to the genesis and composition of the *Contra Symmachum*—a problem which has of late attracted a certain amount of scholarly attention.

The assumption, long prevalent in discussions of the *Contra Symmachum*, that the two books were conceived and composed as a unity, has been replaced by a growing awareness that various internal features of the poem indicate that its final version incorporates passages which must have been drafted some years earlier and rewritten only in part. To be sure, the unity of the poem still finds determined defenders.<sup>40</sup> But such a view is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the first book focuses on Theodosius, while the second addresses his sons and openly alludes to the battle of Pollentia on Easter Day 402.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the fact that Symmachus himself is not mentioned until towards the very end of the first book

<sup>39</sup>It may be relevant that Gracchus was related to Laeta, the daughter of the pagan Publius Ceionius Caecina Albinus (Jerome *Ep.* 107.2). Otherwise the collateral ties of both men appear to be totally obscure.

<sup>40</sup>So recently S. Döpp, "Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum* eine Einheit?," *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986) 66–82. A. Baldini (above, n. 2) 145, characterises the poem as "frutto di concezione unitaria tradotta in continuità di composizione nel tempo."

<sup>41</sup>J. B. Hall, "Pollentia, Verona, and the Chronology of Alaric's First Invasion of Italy," *Philologus* 132 (1988) 245–257, has recently argued that both the battle of Pollentia and the battle of Verona occurred in 403. Surprisingly, he does not discuss (or even explicitly refer to) the central argument advanced by Barnes (above, n. 19) 375–376, for dating the two battles to the spring and summer of successive years, viz. that Stilico visited Rome between them: Claudian *Goth.* pr. 1–6; *VI Cons. Hon.* 122–126, cf. M. Balzert, *Die Komposition des claudianischen Gothenkriegesgedichts* c. 26 (Hildesheim 1974, *Spudasmata* 23) 18 ff.; G. Garuti, *Cl. Claudiani de bello Gothico* (Bologna 1979) 94 ff.

The chronology proposed in 1976 (it may be noted) was not new: although most Roman historians had dated both battles to 402 (Cameron [above, n. 1] 180–187), most students of Prudentius dated Pollentia to the spring of 402, Verona to the summer of

(1.622 ff.) presents a further serious difficulty for any hypothesis of unitary composition.

Since G. Zappacosta first suggested that Book 1 was written to attack Nicomachus Flavianus in 394,<sup>42</sup> there have been three acute, significant and divergent discussions of its date of composition. J.-P. Callu argued that most of Book 1 was composed as early as 391.<sup>43</sup> But in order to do so, he was compelled to claim that when Prudentius styles Theodosius *gemini bis victor caede tyranni* (1.410), he refers only to his victory over Magnus Maximus and his son Victor in 388, not to his two victories over Maximus in 388 and Eugenius in 394. That is not at all plausible. Maximus did indeed proclaim his infant son Flavius Victor Augustus ca 384 and Victor was duly put to death after his father's defeat. But the speech which Pacatus delivered before Theodosius in Rome in 389 makes it clear that the propaganda of the victorious emperor did not celebrate the outcome of the campaign of 388 as a triumph over two usurpers: the existence of Victor was simply ignored altogether.<sup>44</sup> J. Harries subsequently (and independently of Callu) argued that Prudentius wrote and published Book 1, more or less as it stands, between the defeat of Eugenius in September 394 and the death of Theodosius on 17 January 395.<sup>45</sup> But F. Solmsen long ago pointed out that the end of Theodosius' speech appears to reflect a change of imperial policy towards statues in pagan temples which occurred in 399<sup>46</sup>—from which it follows that the relevant lines (501–505) were written several years later than 394. Most recently, D. R. Shanzer has noted that line 385 appears to echo Claudian's panegyric on the consulate of Manlius Theodorus delivered

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the following year: see A. Kurfess, *RE* 23 (1957) 1043; I. Lana, *Due capitoli prudentiani* (Rome 1962) 2, n. 3; F. Solmsen, "The Powers of Darkness in Prudentius' 'Contra Symmachum': A Study of His Poetic Imagination," *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965) 237–257, at 238. The chronology adopted by most Roman historians, which puts both battles in 402, is now restated against Hall by M. Cesa and H. Sivan, "Alarico in Italia: Pollenza e Verona," *Historia* 39 (1990) 361–374.

<sup>42</sup>G. Zappacosta, "De Prudentii Libro I Contra Symmachum," *Latinitas* 15 (1967) 202–218.

<sup>43</sup>J.-P. Callu, "Date et genèse du premier livre de Prudence *Contre Symmaque*," *REL* 59 (1981) 235–259.

<sup>44</sup>Note especially *Pan. Lat.* 2 (12). 45.4: *tu ipsius victoriae victor ita omnem cum armis iram deposuisti ut ceciderit nemo post bellum, certe nemo post Maximum*. In fact, Maximus had left his son in Gaul: after his death at Aquileia Theodosius sent Arbogast to Gaul, who put Victor to death at Vienne (Zosimus 4.47.1; Orosius *Hist. adv. pag.* 7.34.10; *Chr. min.* 1.245, 298, 462; 2.62, cf. Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, as quoted by Gregory of Tours *HE* 2.8).

<sup>45</sup>J. Harries, "Prudentius and Theodosius," *Latomus* 43 (1984) 69–84.

<sup>46</sup>F. Solmsen, "The Conclusion of Theodosius' Oration in Prudentius *Contra Symmachum*," *Philologus* 109 (1965) 310–313. Observe, however, that A.-M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford 1989) 260, takes lines 501–505 to refer to *CTh* 16.10.8, issued in 382.

in Milan on 1 January 399 and that "only a complicated hypothesis fits the contradictions apparent in the *Libri contra orationem Symmachi*."<sup>47</sup> Specifically, Shanzer proposes that Book 1 itself may represent a conflation of two original drafts—"a standard invective against pagan gods combined with a panegyric treatment of Theodosius' anti-pagan legislation." On the other hand, it may be presumed that those parts of Book 1 which cannot have been composed before 399 (379–407, 501–505) were added when Prudentius revised and rewrote the whole poem in 402/3.

If line 551 were integral to its context, if Prudentius had written it at the same time as the lines adjacent to it, and if the basic analysis of the first book of the *Contra Symmachum* argued by Harries and Shanzer were accepted, then it would follow that the poet composed his description of the conversion of the Roman aristocracy in Rome after he heard Claudian recite his panegyric on Olybrius and Probinus on 1 January 395 but before he learned of the death of the emperor Theodosius on 17 January. We have argued that the line is a later addition, conceivably by Prudentius himself but more probably interpolated by a later hand. If we are correct, then the line cannot be used to date the original composition of the draft of the passage which Prudentius incorporated into the finished poem in 402/3. On the contrary, if the line is deleted, it becomes possible to accept the *prima facie* implication of the identity of the individuals to whom Prudentius alludes in lines 552–565, viz. that Prudentius originally drafted his description of the conversion of the Roman aristocracy to Christianity in or shortly after 384. If that inference is correct, then it in turn opens up the possibility that Prudentius may originally have composed a first version of what now stands as the second book of the *Contra Symmachum* in or shortly after 384.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>D. R. Shanzer, "The Date and Composition of Prudentius's *Contra Orationem Symmachi libri*," *RFIC* 117 (1989) 442–462.

<sup>48</sup>This article had its origin in a seminar paper prepared by R. W. Westall for T. D. Barnes. It was the latter who first suggested that line 551 may be interpolated, but we have worked together in elaborating this initial hypothesis. We are grateful to Professor Shanzer both for allowing us to see a copy of her recent paper in advance of its publication and for her comments on our penultimate draft.