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The Underworld Opening of Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae**

Stephen M. Wheeler
The Pennsylvania State University

The record of literary history does not disclose why Claudian stopped *De Raptu Proserpinae* after three books, much less why he began it. The date and circumstances of composition have long been a subject for educated guessing.[1] One book shy of its stated goal, this work of roughly 1100 hexameters nevertheless lays claim to being the last, late, representative of the tradition of imperial Roman epic.[2] Claudian's innovative engagement with his epic predecessors is nowhere more evident than in his unusual opening to one of classical antiquity's best known myths, the story of the rape of Proserpina by Pluto and the struggle of Ceres to recover her daughter. Claudian begins matters in the underworld. Pluto erupts into anger over his unmarried and childless state (1.32-36; cf. also 99-110), but the deeper cause is violent rivalry with his brother Jupiter, whose superior position and privilege he envies. The *dux Erebi* (1.32) prepares war against heaven: Furies mobilize troops; elements threaten to return to primordial chaos; the Titans and Aegaeon almost break loose from their prison (1.37-47). In a stunning reversal, however, the Fates put an end to the uprising. Lachesis solemnly supplicates Pluto not to overthrow the agreement of brothers with impious civil war ("neu foedera fratrum / civili converte tuba. cur inpia / signa?" 1.64-66); he need only ask Jupiter for a wife and one will be granted (1.67). Pluto blushes and disarms reluctantly, but soon becomes belligerent again, addressing Jupiter with peremptory demands for a wife and threatening to overwhelm heaven with hell if his suit is refused (1.93-116).

* My thanks go to *TAPA*'s three referees, whose thoughtful comments helped give this paper its present shape. I follow Hall's Cambridge edition of Claudian throughout.

[1] For recent discussion and further bibliography, see Hall 93-114, Cameron 452-66, Fo 1979, Charlet 1991: xx-xxxii, Gruzelier xvii-xx. Claudian was poetically active in Italy during the years 395-404 and made his fortune writing political poetry in support of the court of Honorius; see Cameron for details.

[2] The wealth of parallels and allusions to especially Vergil, Ovid, Lucan, and Statius can now be found conveniently in the *notes complémentaires* of Charlet's 1991 edition and in Gruzelier's commentary. For discussion of Claudian's use of epic models, see Eaton 107-18, Clarke, Dilke 1965, Hall 108-10, Cameron 315, and Gruzelier xxii-xxiii. On the revival of interest in early imperial epic in late antiquity, see Charlet 1988: 75-77.

As far as our knowledge of sources for Proserpina's rape go, Claudian introduces a new variation to the myth when he suggests that Pluto threatened war against Jupiter to obtain a wife.[3] This innovation has received little critical appreciation and is often cited as an example of Claudian's deficiency as a storyteller. The episode in question has been called "ludicrous" (Glover 244), "vraiment futile, et même quelque peu risible" (Fargues 282-83), and "a structural disaster" (Cameron 265; cf. Gruzelier 92). The usual line of argument is that Pluto's motive for war against heaven—not having a wife—is absurd, all the more so because he has not asked for one, and the plot requires that Jupiter grant him one. To top it off, the revolt peters out into anticlimax, serving no narrative purpose. In an attempt to explain Claudian's failure, Cameron hypothesizes that the poet adapts "to an unsuitable setting an idea originally conceived for another context" (459); that is, by an act of "Ovidian vandalism" (265), he imitates the infernal revolt from the beginning of his own *In Rufinum* (1.25-122) where it makes better narrative sense. Though this theory has met with little acceptance (counterarguments in Fo 1979: 395-99, 1982: 213-19), it illustrates the governing assumption beneath much scholarship on Claudian: that the poet frequently sacrifices the narrative continuity of his subject matter, and hence artistic unity, to elaborate set piece descriptions and speeches for their own sake (cf. Cameron 262-73, Braden 206-7, Browning 708, Gruzelier 92). In Braden's view, "the content, as it were, no longer puts up any resistance to the rhetorical machinery. The worst aspect of this is a deadening structural naiveté; the prevailing texture of Claudian's writing is of verbal flourishes neatly grouped as successive illustrations of some specific topic" (206).[4]

Claudian is not well served by this sort of classicizing criticism, for it is anachronistic to measure the success or failure of his poetry by Aristotelian standards of narrative unity and continuity. As Michael Roberts points out, the criteria of literary excellence in the fourth century differed markedly from classical norms:

[3] See Fargues 282-83. On Claudian's possible sources for the myth (e.g., the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, Orphic poems, a Sicilian-Alexandrian tradition, Peisander's *Heroikai Theogamiai*) see Förster, Cerrato, Fargues 266-81, Bernert, Graf 154-57, Hall 106-8, Cameron 310-11, Burck 374-75, Charlet 1991: xxxiv-xlvii; for a general survey of literary versions of the myth, see *RE* 19.948.17-956.26 (Bräuninger), Richardson 68-86.

[4] Braden's view that virtually all of Claudian's work "can be analyzed as a tessellated surface of identifiable *topoi*" is an old one (cf. Schanz-Hosius 4.2.30; Fargues 330-331) increasingly under challenge (cf. Potz 43-44). For an overview of the relationship between Claudian's rhetorical training and his poetic originality, see Cameron 253-60, 305-48.

> Late antiquity preferred juxtaposition and contrast to logical interrelationship; contiguity no longer required continuity. The impression of an organic whole, the sense of proportion, is lost, but it is compensated for by the elaboration of the individual episode. Late antique poetry has its own unity, but it is conceptual and transcends the immediate historical content of a narrative. (1989: 56-57)

It is therefore methodologically questionable to argue that a given episode is inappropriate or irrelevant because it interrupts the poem's narrative flow. If we return to the opening of *De Raptu*, bearing in mind the counterclassical norms of late antique poetry, we may be more inclined to appreciate the sudden build-up of Pluto's wrath and its abrupt deflation by the Fates. Far from being an awkward by-product of the poet's decision to interject an extraneous set piece, the anticlimactic narrative is precisely the point. Claudian calls attention to the anticlimax through the simplicity of Lachesis' advice to Pluto ("posce Iovem; dabitur coniunx," 1.67), which causes even Pluto to blush ("erubuitque preces," 1.68).[5] At the same time, however, Pluto's threat of violence against Jupiter does not fade away; it recurs in his demand for a wife. Given that late antique narrative emphasizes conceptual unity and the symbolic value of selected aspects of reality (cf. Roberts 1988: 195), we may accordingly ask why Claudian foregrounds Pluto's hostility toward Jupiter. What does this symbolize, and what does it have to do with the rape?

Those who defend Claudian's decision to open *De Raptu* with the infernal revolt pay little attention to its conceptual relationship to the rape itself. For example, Gruzelier excuses Pluto's sound and fury on the grounds that Claudian wants a rousing start for his epic (92). True enough, until the Fates intervene. Fo, by contrast, argues that the infernal revolt achieves two poetic aims at once: it "safeguards" the traditional initiative and authority of the king of the underworld as a terrible and angry god, the equal of Jupiter; at the same time, it motivates the intervention of the Fates and the revelation of a providential world order (1979: 395-99; cf. Potz 27). Thus, according to Fo, the infernal revolt solves an immediate compositional problem. Fauth, on the other hand, opens the way for broader interpretation of the episode. His main argument is that Claudian describes violent geological events, such as the separation of Sicily from Italy (1.142-48) and the eruption of Mt. Aetna (1.153-78), to foreshadow and deepen the cosmological significance of Pluto's abduction of Proserpina (63-67). He observes furthermore that the atmospheric prelude of these ecphrases has a thematic background in the infernal revolt (67-68). Reading with hindsight, then, we see that Pluto's threatened war with heaven is

[5] I owe this point to a *TAPA* referee.

not just a rhetorical or compositional prop. It has thematic repercussions for the rest of the poem, prefiguring Proserpina's rape and ushering in the atmosphere of cosmic instability that colors the first book. Equally important, it signals the poem's deeper allegory of a cosmological struggle between the forces of chaos and order.[6]

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the way the underworld opening initiates Claudian's reinterpretation of the rape of Proserpina. This episode invites the reader to take a different view of the myth than that of mainstream literary accounts, such as the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (84-87) or Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (5.523-29), in which Jupiter arranges or approves of the marriage because he believes Pluto a worthy husband for Proserpina. Rather, the marriage of Proserpina is a necessary sacrifice to prevent a war between brothers and a return to chaos.[7] To shed light on Claudian's transformation of the myth, I take two approaches. First, I view the underworld opening from a literary historical perspective, analyzing and interpreting the epic models upon which it is based, since they help determine the symbolic function of the rape as a sacrificial alternative to a civil war between heaven and hell. The second approach is to employ René Girard's theory of the relationship between violence and sacrifice to elucidate the connection between the martial violence broached in the opening episode and the violence of the rape. According to Girard, a community redirects and expels internecine aggression through the sacrifice of a surrogate victim, thereby reestablishing social order. Likewise, Pluto's violent assault upon the body of Proserpina appears to substitute for his original desire to do violence to his brother and the fabric of the cosmos. At the same time, however, Claudian problematizes the efficacy of Proserpina's sacrifice, since it leads to the violent reprisal of Ceres—a repetition of the chaos with which the poem opens.

I.

Although the historical circumstances surrounding the composition of *De Raptu* are shrouded from view, the fact that Claudian is "reviving" Roman epic after a three-century repose must be of some significance to the beginning of his enterprise. It is as though the scene of infernal rebellion represented yet one more eruption of "the energies and tensions called up but not finally expended or resolved in the *Aeneid*" (Hardie 1993: xi). One of the functions of

[6] On the pervasiveness of this theme in the poem, see Charlet 1991: xlvii; cf. also Fauth 74, Gruzelier 96.

[7] Charlet 1991: xlvii: "Le sacrifice de la vierge Proserpine est le prix à payer pour la sauvegarde des *foedera mundi*, du pacte sur lequel repose l'ordre du monde."

this scene, I maintain, is to draw the reader's attention to the tradition of imperial Roman epic as a context for the interpretation of the rape of Proserpina. The aim of the following section is to show how Claudian selects and combines epic models to recast the rape of Proserpina as an allegory about the foundation and preservation of cosmic order. The argument develops in three stages. First, I examine the significance of the parallels between the opening of *De Raptu* and the beginning of Book 8 of Statius' *Thebaid*, a scenario in which Pluto likewise threatens Jupiter with war. Second, I show that Claudian patterns the underworld opening after the way other imperial Roman epics begin. Finally, I suggest that Claudian's allusion to the conventions of martial epic are part of a program to epicize his erotic material and conversely eroticize his epic models. The conflation of two modes of epic, martial and erotic, reflects on a stylistic level the symbolic equivalence between martial and erotic violence that enables the rape of Proserpina to be a sacrificial substitute for war.

Claudian's concern to relate his poem to earlier epic models is evinced first and foremost by a remarkable parallelism between his opening and the way Statius begins Book 8 of the *Thebaid*. In the Statian episode (*Theb.* 8.1-83), the still-living Amphiaraus breaches the boundary of the underworld, a disturbance of natural order that causes Pluto to rage against Jupiter over the violation of his prerogatives. By way of retaliation, he threatens civil war against his brother and dispatches Tisiphone to the upperworld to motivate atrocities on the Theban battlefield as well as a reciprocal invasion of heaven by Capaneus. Thus, for the first time in the epic tradition, Pluto "comes into his own as an anti-Jupiter" (Feeney 351). It is to this moment in Statius that Claudian draws our attention when he begins his epic (cf. Fo 1979: 398-99, Fo 1982: 213-16, Charlet 1991: 92-93 n. 5). Some scholars, nevertheless, do not consider Claudian's allusion deliberate or do not accord it the significance it deserves. Gruzelier (93), for example, notes only a general resemblance to Stat. *Theb.* 8.1-83, and refers the reader to Clarke. Clarke asserts (somewhat paradoxically) that this is "one of the most sustained examples" of unconscious allusion in Claudian, arguing that there is no formal parallelism of subject and that the echoes are too scattered and irregular (6-7). A comparison of the two passages shows, however, that Claudian's imitation of Statius is neither accidental nor trivial.

In the first place, Claudian introduces Pluto with precisely the same phrase as Statius does (*De Rapt.* 1.32 "**dux Erebi** quondam tumidas exarsit in iras;" cf. *Theb.* 8.21-22 "forte sedens media regni infelicis in arce / **dux Erebi** populos poscebat crimina vitae"). Placed emphatically at the beginning of the line, *dux Erebi* functions as a heading for the whole episode as well as a

pointer to the Statian background (Fo 1982: 213; Charlet 1991: 92-93 n. 5). Second, Claudian employs the same formal scheme for setting his plot in motion as Statius does. Pluto reacts to *perceived* wrongs by Jupiter (i.e. the catabasis of Amphiaraus or the lack of a marriage offer). Third, Pluto's speech requesting a wife from Jupiter (1.93-116) is formally and thematically indebted to the Statian god's diatribe against Jupiter (cf. *Theb.* 8.34-64). In both speeches, Pluto's sense of injury and dishonor has a deeper cause: his expulsion from the sky (*De Rapt.* 1.96 "rapta dies;" *Theb.* 8.46: "amissum . . . diem") and his allotment of the underworld (*De Rapt.* 1.99-101; *Theb.* 8.38-41). Finally, Claudian's emphasis upon the threat of a return to chaos and Gigantomachy are themes that Statius treats. The Statian Pluto is ready to join battle and hasten the disintegration of cosmic boundaries by mixing heaven and hell: "congredior, pereant agedum discrimina rerum . . . pandam omnia regna, / si placet, et Stygio praetexam Hyperiona caelo" (*Theb.* 8.36, 46-47). He also reminds Jupiter that he has Giants, Titans, and Saturn as reinforcements (*Theb.* 8.42-44). Claudian employs these very motifs (the confusion of heaven and hell and the release of Jupiter's old enemies) twice: first in describing the near rebellion of the underworld (1.43-47), and again at the close of Pluto's speech when he threatens Jupiter with cosmic destruction and warfare (1.113-16).[8] This is not a case of haphazard echo. Both references to Statius correspond to each other and frame the opening episode as a whole (cf. Potz 27).

Given this evidence for imitation, the reader may draw the conclusion that Claudian is recontextualizing the myth of the rape of Proserpina within the Statian framework of fraternal strife between Pluto and Jupiter. But why does Claudian choose this particular model to begin *De Raptu*? A pretext can be found in the speech of the Statian Pluto. He argues that Amphiaraus and others trespass in the underworld, but he does not have the same license to go to the upperworld for a bride (*Theb.* 8.61-64):

> ast ego vix unum, nec celsa ad sidera, furto
> ausus iter Siculo rapui conubia campo:
> nec licuisse ferunt; iniustaeque a Iove leges
> protinus, et sectum genetrix mihi computat annum.

[8] In each passage Claudian alludes to *Theb.* 8.42-44: "habeo iam quassa **Gigantum** / vincula et aetherium cupidos exire sub axem / **Titanas** miserumque **patrem.**" Cf. 1.43-46: "penitusque revulso / carcere laxatis **pubes Titania** vinclis / vidisset caeleste iubar rursusque cruentus / **Aegaeon**;" 1.114: "**Saturni** veteres laxabo catenas." Note how Claudian reproduces Statius's list of enemies in two parts; the Titans and the hundred-hander Aegaeon (a substitute Giant) appear in the first passage, and Saturn alone in the second.

> But I, having scarcely dared one journey in secret, nor was it to the stars on high, carried off a bride from the Sicilian plain. And they say it was not permitted. And right away come unfair laws from Jupiter, and her mother, to my disadvantage, reckons the year in halves.

This event recollected by Pluto in the *Thebaid* is obviously the subject of *De Raptu*. Claudian thus makes his poem an earlier installment of his Statian model, or, conversely, he makes the *Thebaid* a sequel to *De Raptu*. Claudian also corrects Statius in good Alexandrian fashion. The Statian Pluto stresses the illicit nature of the rape ("ausus . . . furto," "nec licuisse ferunt") and, more important, the subsequent opposition of Jupiter ("iniustaeque a Iove leges"). In *De Raptu*, Pluto erupts into anger as though Jupiter were already against him, anticipating, as it were, the situation in the *Thebaid*. But the Fates intervene and inform him that Jupiter will grant him a wife, contradicting the Statian version of the rape and following the vulgate (*pace* Fo 1979: 398-99 n. 22).

At the same time as Claudian positions *De Raptu* in relation to the *Thebaid*, he alludes to the tradition of imperial Roman epic, and specifically to the way epics begin. He strikes up his story in typical epic fashion, with the motif of divine anger.[9] While the pattern goes back to Homer, Vergil sets the standard for post-Augustan Latin epic. Juno remembers her wrath against the Trojans as they sail to Italy to found Rome and seeks to thwart their destiny with a great storm. The storm is, of course, a moral symbol of her rage, but it also operates on other allegorical levels as well. The outbreak of the winds, with their Titanic associations, has overtones of Gigantomachy, an impious revolt of chthonic and subterranean forces against Jupiter's authority; on a deeper cosmological level, it represents the dissolution of the cosmos and a return to primordial chaos (Hardie 1986: 90-97, 107-10). Claudian's treatment of a civil war between heaven and hell appears to be the most hyperbolic expression of this theme.[10] But this is not just a case of outdoing epic predecessors. It is an allusion to the way imperial epic begins by repeating (and hence continuing) earlier examples of itself.

In his study of the dynamics of epic after Vergil, Philip Hardie makes the fundamental point that "epic strives for totality and completion, yet is at the same time driven obsessively to repetition and reworking" (Hardie 1993: 1).

[9] Cf. Potz ad loc. The theme of Pluto's anger is not what one would expect at the beginning of a myth that traditionally focuses on the anger of Ceres; cf. the Orphic version which alludes to the first line of the *Iliad*: Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Δημήτερος ἀγλαοκάρπου (*Orph.* fr. 48, p. 118-19 Kern). Claudian reshapes the myth so that his original treatment of Pluto's anger prefigures the traditional theme of Demeter's anger.

[10] Cf. Ovid's treatment of Jupiter's wrathful flood in *Metamorphoses* 1, which escalates Juno's storm in the *Aeneid*.

Epic repeats itself because it cannot reach closure. The repetitiveness of epic lies in the instability of its dualistic view of the universe in which the violent, transgressive, and insatiable energy of hell continually disrupts the equilibrium of heaven.[11] Vergil sets the example for this dualism in the *Aeneid*, in which the irreconcilable *furor* of Juno, leagued with the forces of the underworld, repeatedly upsets Jupiter's dispensation of a rational and peaceful order. The hellish storm of Book 1 sets the first half of the poem in motion, as it keeps the Trojans from reaching Italy. In Book 7, Juno repeats the pattern by sending the Fury Allecto to instigate a civil war between Italians and Trojans and prevent the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia. In both halves of the poem Vergil represents the continuation of his own narrative as a recurring and seemingly irresolvable struggle between the powers of heaven and hell. Imitating this strategy of continuation, Vergil's successors likewise open their epics with some incarnation of the underworld disturbing heavenly order (Hardie 1993: 60-65). Thus, when Claudian begins with the anger of Pluto and the possibility of a war against Jupiter, he zeroes in on the source of epic's iterability, and suggests that his own poem is a repetition and continuation of the cosmological struggle canonized in Vergilian epic.

Claudian, in fact, prompts the audience to this interpretation with words of iteration.[12] Primordial chaos almost returns "again" (*iterum*, 1.42), and Aegaeon the hundred-hander nearly fights with Jupiter "again" (*rursus*, 1.45). Repetition occurs on the intertextual level as well. Claudian describes the repetition of chaos in terms that repeat moments in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. The wording of *De Raptu* 1.42-43 ("paene reluctatis **iterum** pugnantia rebus / **rupissent elementa** fidem") echoes the programmatic simile in Lucan's first book (*Bell. Civ.* 1.75: "antiquum repetens **iterum** chaos"), which compares Rome's civil war to the return of chaos; it also echoes the sea-storm in the fifth book (*Bell. Civ.* 5.634-35: "extimuit natura chaos; **rupisse** videntur / concordes **elementa** moras").[13] As for Aegaeon's struggle against Jupiter's thunderbolts ("obvia centeno vexasset fulmina motu," 1.45-47), it repeats a moment of "Gigantomachy" in the *Aeneid* when Vergil compares Aeneas, the avenger of Pallas, to Aegaeon (*Aen.* 10.567-68: "Iovis cum fulmina contra / tot

[11] Hardie 1993: 60: "In contrast to the peaceful equilibrium of Heaven, Hell is marked by ceaseless movement, war, and emotional turmoil. It therefore furnishes a suitable starting-point for a new narrative movement."

[12] On iterative language, see Hardie 1993: 57-58.

[13] Claudian's "pugnantia . . . elementa" also takes the reader back to the original chaos of Ovid (cf. *Met.* 1.9: "discordia semina rerum," 19: "pugnabant"). The idea of a return to chaos is Ovidian too; cf. *Met.* 2.298-99: "si freta, si terrae, si regia caeli, / in chaos antiquum confundimur."

paribus streperet clipeis, tot stringeret ensis"). These allusions imply that the infernal revolt is a replay of chaotic crises in imperial epic when violence threatens to breakdown all spatial, temporal, and moral distinctions. Furthermore, a return to chaos means not only the end of the world, but also a return to its beginning. One may then read the underworld opening as an allegorizing allusion to the *origo mundi*—the chaos from which cosmic order arises.[14] Like Hesiod and Ovid, Claudian begins *a Chao*.

This raises a new issue. So far I have been stressing the connection between the opening episode of *De Raptu* and the predominantly martial epics of Vergil, Lucan, and Statius. But we must also consider this intertextual background as part of a dialogue among different sorts of epic, including the Hesiodic cosmological/erotic strain represented by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. That is, by opening the poem on the note of a civil war between heaven and hell, Claudian is technically beginning his epic the wrong way. The rape and marriage of Proserpina is obviously not supposed to be a martial epic. As Gruzelier notes (*ad* 1.32), *De Raptu* is "one of the few epic poems without the prospect of a good war or pitched battle in it." Indeed, viewed as a whole, the poem's subject matter and style approach the sort of epic exemplified by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (cf. Burck 375, Hall 110 and n. 1) and Statius' *Achilleid* (cf. Dilke 1959: 19, Hall 110), both of which emphasize erotic material and define themselves in opposition to martial epic.[15] Claudian's topic is Ovidian in the sense that it appears in the *Metamorphoses* (5.341-661), not to mention Ovid's elegiac *Fasti* (4.417-618). While it is true that the details of *De Raptu* differ substantially from Ovid's epic version, the latter unquestionably provides a scheme for Claudian's innovations.[16] Ovid may therefore help to answer why

[14] One *TAPA* referee points out, citing Gesner *ad* 1.32, that Pluto plays the role both of mythological god and of Chaos itself, which without love is inclined to *furor* and disorder.

[15] Fantham 457 observes that Statius' *Achilleid* is more akin to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* than to Vergil's *Aeneid*; cf. also Koster, who argues that the *Achilleid* is a new kind of erotic epic developing the elegiac theme of love and war. It is well to remember, however, that Vergilian epic is capable of erotic modulations (e. g., Dido and Aeneas, Nisus and Euryalus).

[16] Doubtless Ovid's version exercises influence on Claudian (cf. Hall 107-8 and Fo 1979: 397 n. 19 *contra* Bernert 353 and Eaton 118). Claudian not only alludes to this part of the *Metamorphoses* (e.g., 1.1 ~ *Met.* 5.402; 1.89 ~ *Met.* 5.566; 1.223-28 ~ *Met.* 5.366-71; 2.105-6, 112-13 ~ *Met.* 5.385-91), but he also depends upon his audience's knowledge of it. For example, when Claudian's Jupiter orders Venus to engineer the rape (1.214-228), the reader may observe the combinatorial imitation of two Vergilian scenes (Jupiter's interview with Venus at *Aen.* 1.223-96 and Juno's machinations with Venus at 4.90-128), but the whole is substituted for the Ovidian original in which Venus gives orders to Cupid (*Met.* 5.363-79). Claudian's Jupiter, in fact, entices Venus to action with the same argument that *she* uses in the *Metamorphoses* to persuade Cupid: i.e., the opportunity to build the empire of love in the underworld (cf. 1.223-28 and *Met.* 5.366-71). See Gruzelier *ad* 1.214 ff. for further analysis of

Claudian begins an ostensibly erotic epic on the apparently false note of a war between heaven and hell.

In *Metamorphoses* 5, the Muse Calliope sings the rape of Proserpina (5.346-571) as the winning entry in a song contest with the mortal Pierides, who, for their part, sing a Gigantomachy (5.318-31).[17] Some Ovidian scholars read the song contest as a dramatization of the rejection of weighty martial epic (Gigantomachy) in favor of lighter epic.[18] I suggest Claudian renegotiates the competing claims of these two poetic programs at the beginning of *De Raptu*. On the one hand, the scenario of a war between heaven and hell raises the possibility of an epic in the tradition of Gigantomachy. The diction of "dux Erebi . . . proelia moturus" (1.32-33) cannot but recall the *reges et proelia* (Verg. *Ecl.* 6.3) by which Roman poets under the influence of Callimachean poetics define grand epic. On the other hand, the Fates intercede and forbid a grand epic about *proelia*, setting a poetic agenda of *conubia* which falls more in line with the song of Calliope. Pluto's consequent change of mood illustrates this alteration in poetic program. As he desists from war, he blushes, weakens, and bends ("erubuitque preces, animusque relanguit atrox / quamvis indocilis flecti," 1.68-69)—signs that portend love, not war. If Claudian's play with the idea of two sorts of epic can be traced to Ovid's song contest in *Metamorphoses* 5, Pluto's false start may be influenced by other examples of *recusatio* in Ovid's poetry. One may compare the way Cupid forces Apollo to abandon his epic *arma* for *amor* in *Metamorphoses* 1.452-74; or the way Cupid in *Amores* 1.1 compels the poet writing on epic themes to write love elegy instead ("arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam / edere," *Am.* 1.1.1-2).[19] Claudian's Fates thus play the "theophanic" role of a Cupid, constraining Pluto to lay down his arms for love.

Despite his apparent imitation of the Ovidian *recusatio*, Claudian does not raise the specter of martial epic to banish it. Clearly he had no qualms about writing on the theme of Gigantomachy, epic hyperbole being his stock and

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Claudian's use of Ovid. On Claudian's technique of combining literary models, see Gualandri, esp. 7-9, 48-49, 68-69.

[17] Calliope begins her song from the defeated Typhoeus imprisoned beneath Sicily (*Met.* 5.346-61), thereby correcting her challenger's song about the Giants' victory over the Olympian gods (cf. Hinds 129). Thus she too begins the rape of Proserpina with reference to Gigantomachy.

[18] For further details, see Hofmann 227-29, Hinds 129-31. On the equation of Gigantomachy with the grandest epic, see Innes 465-66.

[19] Nicoll 174-77 plausibly interprets the Cupid-Apollo episode as a disguised *recusatio* based on *Amores* 1.1 and the Callimachean theophany of the *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1.21 ff. Pf). Cf. also Ov. *Am.* 2.1.11-38, where Cupid prevents the elegist from writing a Gigantomachy.

trade.[20] As commentators frequently observe, Claudian returns almost obsessively to martial themes in *De Raptu*, especially Gigantomachy. Yet Claudian's program is not merely to fatten the muse. He seeks to wed the erotic and martial branches of the epic tradition and create his own version of cosmological epic. While the range and complexity of his experiments in the mixing of martial and erotic themes (not to mention other themes such as natural philosophy) are impossible to survey here, an example or two will support some generalizations with only small risk of oversimplifying. For instance, Pluto's intent to make war is linked with the desire for a wife and the fruits of marriage ("inpatiens nescire torum nullasque mariti / inlecebras," 35-36), striking a characteristically Ovidian tension between the god's *maiestas* and his *amor*.[21] Later, in addressing Jupiter he boasts of his own martial strength ("sic nobis noxia vires / cum caelo fortuna tulit?" 1.94-95), but envies the latter's marriage and love affairs ("te consanguineo recipit post fulmina fessum / Iuno sinu. quid enim narrem Latonia furta / quid Cererem, magnamque Themin?" 105-7). In both cases, Claudian combines the epic violence of the Statian Pluto with the elegiac behavior of Ovid to yield a *tertium quid*. To put the point another way, Claudian eroticizes his epic models and epicizes his erotic material. This grafting of violent imperial epic onto erotic epic is not just a typical example of stylistic variation in the Alexandrian tradition.[22] It helps to establish a symbolic equivalence between the violence of war and the violence of rape, and hence the connection between the infernal revolt and the rape of Proserpina. To this topic we may now turn.

II.

Claudian provides two motivations for the marriage of Proserpina to Pluto. One is that the Fates decree it (cf. 1.48-67; 216-18). The other is that Pluto will make war on Jupiter if he is not married. Some commentators emphasize the importance of the former motivation (i.e. providential fate) as a philosophical basis for the poem (Fo 1979: 393-97; cf. Charlet 1991: xlvii). But it is the latter motivation, Pluto's violent rivalry with Jupiter, that proves to inform Claudian's interpretation of the rape of Proserpina as a sacrifice that preserves the peace between heaven and hell. To help clarify the association between the

[20] Claudian composed a *Gigantomachia* in Greek and attempted another in Latin (*Carm. Min.* 53); for details see Cameron 467-69.

[21] On Ovid's technique of juxtaposing epic pretensions and elegiac behavior when representing gods in love, see Otis 102-8, 122-27, 341-42. As Gruzelier puts it, "Claudian's penetration into the psychology of Dis quite out-Ovids Ovid in its humanization of the emotions of a god" (92).

[22] On the "neo-alexandrianism" of late antique poetry, see Charlet 1988: 77-79.

underworld opening and the rape of Proserpina, it is useful to compare René Girard's theory of the way violence works in human society.[23] And while Girard's model is primarily anthropological, it may nevertheless shed light on the human side of Claudian's gods (cf. Feeney's General Index s.v. "anthropomorphism of gods," 441).

According to Girard (1-38), a community purges itself of internecine violence by ritually sacrificing a surrogate victim—the one for the many. The sacrificial victim serves as an external target for a collective act of "good" violence that expels (and conceals the origin of) the community's internal violence. In turn, this distinction between sacrificial and non-sacrificial violence is the basis upon which all other differences of social order depend. If the sacrificial distinction breaks down, a condition Girard calls "sacrificial crisis" (see 39-67), community members direct their violence against each other in a vicious circle of vengeance, resulting in the dissolution of hierarchical differences and the primordial conflict between pairs of enemy brothers (61-65).

The underworld opening of *De Raptu* dramatizes the potential for a sacrificial crisis when Pluto threatens to wage war on Jupiter. Claudian clearly underscores the theme of enemy brothers when he refers to Book 8 of the *Thebaid*, where the fraternal conflict of Pluto and Jupiter parallels that of Eteocles and Polyneices (Feeney 350-52). Like Statius, moreover, Claudian represents Pluto as usurping Jupiter's privilege. For example, the king of the underworld dispatches Mercury to heaven (cf. 1.76-120), just as Jupiter conventionally dispatches Mercury to earth (cf. Gruzelier *ad* 1.76 ff.). This imitation of Jupiter corresponds to what Girard terms "mimetic desire" (145-49). Pluto desires what his brother desires, and frustration of that desire leads to violence. The poem begins with just such a scenario. Pluto wants to emulate Jupiter sexually and becomes angry at his brother when he (unlike Neptune) is denied the same pleasures (1.33-34: "quod **solus** egeret conubiis;" cf. 1.103-8).

To resolve this rivalry, the Fates introduce the diplomatic expedient of a marriage between heaven and hell. But the marriage of Proserpina to Pluto is not an ordinary one. As Burkert explains: "To be raped by Hades, to enter into a marriage with him, means simply to die. The Kore myth relates a maiden's death that has the approval of Zeus: it describes the sacrifice of a maiden" (260-61; see also Foley 104-5). Claudian recognizes the sacrificial aspect of

[23] As Hardie 1993: 21 n. 5 points out, Girard's theory is a productive tool for the analysis of imperial epic even though it was developed in response to Greek tragedy. Cf. also the essays in *Helios* 17.1 (1990), an issue devoted to "René Girard and Western Literature," of which Segal, Griffiths, and Joplin 1990 are helpful in exploring Girard's implications for classical texts beyond Greek tragedy.

Proserpina's marriage to Pluto and explores its significance as a means of mediating the violent rivalry of enemy brothers. In this regard, Joplin (1984) has introduced some important additions to Girard's theory of sacrifice as it applies to the exchange of women. Following Girard, and disagreeing with Lévi-Strauss, she sees the exchange of women between political rivals as an exchange of violence, not valuables; in other words, "the woman, in exchange, becomes the surrogate victim for the group" (36; cf. also Joplin 1990: 51-53). Building on Mary Douglas' concept of the human body as an image of sociey, she makes a special case for the king's daughter, whose body represents the body politic and whose hymen serves as the physical and sexual sign for the limen or wall defining the city's limits (36-37). In Claudian's poem, Proserpina's body plays just such a role; her virginity is symbolically associated with the boundary between the upper- and lowerworlds and hence the differentiated order of the world. Indeed, Claudian makes explicit this symbolism when, as a prelude to the rape, he describes Proserpina weaving an Ovidian tapestry of creation, in which Natura divides and differentiates the warring elements of chaos (1.246-70).[24] Jupiter thus offers his daughter as a surrogate victim for the world. As Joplin observes, "exchange of the king's daughter is nothing less than the articulation of his power and the reassertion of his city's sovereignty" (38). So too the sacrifice of Proserpina confirms Jupiter's supremacy and sphere of control.

Claudian reveals the sacrificial character of the rape when describing Pluto's journey to the upperworld. Pluto's violent breach of the boundary between the lower- and upperworlds is at once a sign of rape and a sign of war. This ambiguity is meaningful: it represents the violence of the infernal rebellion with the difference that the object is not Jupiter's celestial realm, but Proserpina. As Girard remarks: "If sacrificial violence is to be effective it must resemble the nonsacrificial variety as closely as possible" (37), for "ritual violence is intended to reproduce an original act of violence" (249). Analysis of several exemplary moments from the account of Pluto's ascent will illustrate this point. The first is an extended simile comparing Pluto to a soldier tunneling below the walls of an enemy city or fortress (2.163-69):

> ac velut occultus securum pergit in hostem
> miles et effossi subter fundamina campi
> transilit elusos arcano limite muros

[24] The theme of Proserpina's tapestry is drawn from the opening of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.21-68). For discussion of the cosmological significance of the weaving, see *RE* Suppl. 9.1546.57 ff. s.v. "Weltschöpfung" (Schwabl), Curtius 106-7, Charlet 1991: xliii-iv and 123 n. 4, Gruzelier 143.

turbaque deceptas victrix erumpit in arces
terrigenas imitata viros: sic tertius heres
Saturni latebrosa vagis rimatur habenis
devia fraternum cupiens exire sub orbem.

And just as the hidden soldier goes on against the unsuspecting enemy and, beneath the foundations of the tunneled field, leaps across the walls, outmaneuvering them with his secret passage, and a throng bursts out victoriously into the outwitted citadel, in imitation of earthborn men, thus the third heir of Saturn explored the cracks of hidden out-of-the-way places with wandering reins, desiring to emerge beneath the sky of his brother.

The simile of underground siege warfare is, of course, well-suited to the narrative context. But it also exemplifies the sacrificial economy whereby Pluto's violence against Proserpina resembles his original violence against Jupiter. In sexual terms, the tunneler's deceptive breaching of the walls and eruption into the city symbolizes the deflowering of Proserpina (Christiansen 108; cf. Charlet 1991: 148 n. 4). At the same time, however, the simile implies that Pluto's emergence into the upperworld is also an assault upon the stronghold of his brother. In fact, the subterranean soldier may conjure up another enemy brother. The phrase *transilit muros* (165), paradoxical for tunneling, gains point if associated with the primordial act of Remus overleaping the walls of Rome to mock Romulus (cf. Liv. 1.7.2: "volgatior fama est ludibrio fratris Remum novos transiluisse muros;" Ov. *Fast.* 4.841-43). In addition, the image of earthborn men ("terrigenas imitata viros," 2.167) carries with it Theban associations of civil war and is itself an archetype of enemy brothers (Girard 61-62). Claudian sustains this pattern of covert hostility when making the transition back from the simile to the narrative. First, he characterizes Pluto as "tertius heres / Saturni" (2.168-69), a reminder of Pluto's inferior lot and resentment toward Jupiter (cf. 1.99-100: "nonne satis visum grati quod luminis expers / tertia supremae patior dispendia sortis"). Next, in the phrase "fraternum cupiens exire sub orbem" (2.169), he alludes to Pluto's threats against Jupiter in *Theb.* 8.42-44, "habeo . . . aetherium cupidos exire sub axem / Titanas," the very passage that furnished a model for the infernal revolt. Now it is Pluto who Titan-like desires to come out into the light of day. Here we come very close to the original violence of the poem's opening.

Pluto's penetration of the earth's surface is, as one would expect, an especially charged moment. At first, Pluto comes up against the solid structure of this boundary ("solidaque . . . conpage," 2.171). *Solida conpage* is the reverse of the Lucanian catch phrase *conpage soluta* (*Bell. Civ.* 1.72), the hallmark of cosmological instability which Pluto borrows in his threats to destroy

the universe at 1.114.[25] In order to loosen the framework of the universe, Pluto must resort to an act of violence: "non tulit ille moras indignatusque trabali saxa ferit sceptro" (2.172-73). The angry blow of the scepter comes from Ovid's epic version of the rape (*Met.* 5.420-24); the difference, of course, is that the Ovidian Pluto strikes the pool of Cyane to go *down* to the underworld. The anger of Pluto (*indignatus*), however, also recalls his outburst at Jupiter. As Gruzelier notes (*ad* 2.172), "this is precisely the behaviour one is led to expect from the initial picture of Pluto's character in 1.32 ff." The blow of Pluto's scepter thus signifies the violence of his rivalry with Jupiter; at the same time, the phallic symbolism of the scepter suggests the displacement of that violence onto the body of Proserpina. If Proserpina in the sacrificial context represents the order of things, and specifically the boundary between heaven and hell, then that boundary is also a metaphor for her hymen.

Claudian problematizes the ambiguity of Pluto's violent ascent and abduction when Proserpina's companions, Minerva and Diana, respond to the event as a sign of war with Jupiter (cf. Newbold 105). They arm themselves to do battle with Pluto ("stimulat communis in arma / virginitas," 2.207-8) and order him to leave his brother's realm ("fratris linque domos, alienam desere sortem," 2.220). Thus the rape threatens to turn into the internecine violence that it is supposed to defuse. The crisis recalls that of the infernal revolt. A verbal parallel, furthermore, invites the association. As Minerva is about to cast her spear at Pluto, Claudian uses the same peculiar grammatical construction of *paene* with the contrafactual subjunctive to mark an abrupt intervention: "missaque paene foret, ni Iuppiter aethere summo / pacificas rubri torsisset fulminis alas / confessus socerum" (2.228-30; cf. 1.42-43: "paene . . . rupissent elementa fidem"). Like the Fates before him, Jupiter averts the outbreak of civil war. He confirms their prophecy of Pluto's marriage (cf. 1.67), in fact, with the "peacemaking wings" of his lightning bolt, the weapon that he ordinarily uses against his enemies.

From one perspective, the sacrifice of Proserpina leads to the civilizing of Pluto. Under the influence of love ("primi suspiria sentit amoris," 2.274), the god woos and consoles his new bride, promising a peaceful and orderly underworld for her to rule (2.277-306). As he re-enters his realm with Proserpina, he appears gentler (*mitior*, 307) and trouble-free (*serenus*, 312); unlike himself, he smiles ("facili passus mollescere risu / dissimilisque sui,"

[25] Statius also uses the phrase for the moment when Amphiaraus breaks through to the underworld (*Theb.* 8.31).

2.313-14).[26] The denizens of the underworld likewise undergo a change as they abandon their customary woes and celebrate the marriage of Pluto and Proserpina ("pallida laetatur regio gentesque sepultae / luxuriant epulisque vacant genialibus umbrae," 2.326-27). Structurally speaking, the rejoicing in the last episode of Book 2 neatly reverses the atmosphere of infernal revolt with which the action of Book 1 began (contrast the Furies at 1.38-41 and 2.343-47). And whereas Pluto threatened to wreak havoc because he did not have offspring (cf. 1.34-36; 108-110), this part of the poem closes with a wedding hymn that looks forward to the birth of children: "iam felix oritur proles; iam laeta futuros / expectat Natura deos" (2.370-71). Jupiter's sacrifice of Proserpina thus appears to have pacified Pluto and the underworld (i.e., Chaos) and initiated a new order.

In contrast to the happy ending of Book 2, Claudian raises doubts about the efficacy of the sacrifice of Proserpina when he explores the response of Ceres to the loss of her daughter. The "good" violence of the rape may solve the problem of Pluto's rivalry with Jupiter, but Ceres has a different view of it. She first interprets the disappearance of her daughter as a sign that an infernal revolt has occurred. In a series of questions posed to Proserpina's nurse, Electra, Ceres asks whether the Giants have overthrown Jupiter (3.181-88). Sometimes maligned for its monotony, this speech shows a remarkable degree of thematic continuity with the first two books. One sign of this continuity is the patterned evocation of details from the near outbreak of Gigantic violence at the start of the poem.[27] Ceres' first question about who controls the sky, Jupiter or the Titans ("regnatne maritus / an caelum Titanes habent?" 3.181-82), harks back to the threat of the *pubes Titania* (1.44). Her concluding and climactic question on this theme ("nostros an forte penates / adpetiit centum Briareia turba lacertis?" 3.187-88) recalls with learned variation Aegaeon's near escape from his infernal prison (1.45-47).[28] Viewed narrowly, the operatic repetition of questions about Gigantomachy serves to magnify the importance of the imagined disaster (Gruzelier *ad* 3.182 ff.). But it also represents the continuing and culminating equation of the abduction of Proserpina with civil war and Gigantomachy. To Ceres there is no difference between the two actions. And so there is a considerable irony for the audience who knows

[26] Cf. Jupiter's orders to Venus: "Ditisque severi / ferrea lascivis mollescant corda sagittis" (1.227-28). The unusual motif of Pluto's smile may derive from Hom. *H. Cer.* 357-58; see Richardson 73 and *ad* 357-58.

[27] On the geographical order of the questions, see Gruzelier *ad* 3.182 ff.

[28] Ceres refers to Aegaeon by his divine name Briareus, in accordance with what Achilles says at Hom. *Il.* 1.402-3.

that, according to Jupiter's scheme, the rape of Proserpina has been arranged to avoid just such a civil war between heaven and hell.

In answer to Ceres' questions, Proserpina's nurse, Electra, wishes that the loss of her daughter had been a result of Gigantomachy (3.196-97), but breaks the news that it was a conspiracy of Proserpina's sisters ("sed divae . . . sorores / in nostras (nimium!) coniuravere ruinas. / insidias superum, cognatae vulnera cernis / invidiae," 3.198-201). Ironically, Electra misinforms Ceres that Minerva and Diana were in on the plot against Proserpina.[29] But her misunderstanding underlines the increasingly collective nature of the violence directed toward the household of Ceres. The reader is already familiar with Jupiter's role as conspirator from Book 1, where, like a general, he plans with Venus a stratagem against his daughter (1.216-28; cf. Gruzelier 110) and then later gives his brother the signal to invade ("germani monitu," 1.279).[30] The first to recognize Jupiter's conspiratorial role is Diana, who sympathizes with Proserpina's plight: "in te coniurat genitor populoque silenti / traderis" (2.237-38). Diana's charge of Jupiter's connivance with the underworld is a strong one; one need only remember that the poem began with the underworld conspiring against Jupiter ("contraque Tonantem / coniurant Furiae," 1.38-39). Yet Jupiter does more than throw his lot in with Pluto. He makes all the other gods accessory to the rape by violently forbidding them to reveal Pluto's identity to Ceres (3.55-65). Electra is therefore not far from the truth when she draws the shocking conclusion, "Phlegra nobis infensior aether" (3.201). At this point, the reader will perceive that the poem's configuration of opposition has indeed changed: the original underworld conspiracy against heaven has become a conspiracy of heaven and hell against Proserpina, Ceres, and Electra.[31]

Consequently, in the hyperbolic discourse of the poem, Proserpina and Ceres come to occupy the same category as Jupiter's foes, the Giants and demonic forces of the underworld. As Proserpina is carried off, she complains to Jupiter that he is treating her as though she were a Giant (2.250-59). She protests her innocence, arguing that she did not fight on the side of the Giants.

[29] Gruzelier *ad* 3.230f. points out that Claudian may be alluding learnedly to a mythic variant in which Minerva and Diana are accomplices.

[30] Girard observes that the sacrificer has the propensity "to actually conspire with the enemy and at the right moment toss him a morsel that will serve to satisfy his raging hunger" (4). For the pattern of father conspiring against daughter to preserve social order, cf. Joplin's analysis of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1984: 38-39).

[31] The opposition of Pluto and Jupiter to these goddesses also breaks down along gender lines. On the theme of gender conflict in the Homeric tradition of the myth, see Foley 104-5, 112-18.

Her extended allusion to Gigantomachy may strike some readers as rhetorically excessive, if not inappropriate to the situation. But it accords well with the poem's conceptual framework. In Proserpina's eyes, the violence of the rape is no different from that of war. She makes this clear when she opens her speech by asking why Jupiter has not hurled thunderbolts at her instead ("cur non torsisti manibus fabricata Cyclopum / in nos tela, pater?" 2.250-51). Here she assimilates the violence of rape with the violence of thunderbolts.[32] The deeper implication of her rhetorical question is that Jupiter is co-author of the sexual violence against her. This point is strikingly consonant with the sacrificial logic behind political marriage, where rival males cooperate in redirecting their enmity to the woman's body.

While the selection of a sacrificial victim is arbitrary, one of the conditions governing selection is that the victim can be exposed to violence without fear of violent reprisal (Girard 12-13). In the case of Proserpina, however, reprisal is inevitable. Ceres responds to the rape of her daughter with reciprocal violence toward Jupiter. Her opposition to Jupiter is, of course, a traditional feature of the myth (cf. Foley 111-16). Claudian's innovation is to represent the transformation of the angry goddess into a demonic agent of hell. The portrayal of her wrath in the final scenes of Book 3, in fact, repeats the pattern of infernal revolt in Book 1. After failing to win back her child on Olympus, she finds herself at war with heaven ("non bella palam caelestia sentis?" 3.314). In her search for her daughter on earth, she becomes fury-like in her disturbance of natural order. Her first act is to obtain torches for her wanderings by desecrating the grove that commemorates Jupiter's victory over the Giants ("aetheriisque nefas nocuisse tropaeis," 3.354).[33] A striking part of this narrative is Claudian's digression on the trophies of the defeated Giants hanging in the trees (3.335-56). It is easy to charge that he is elaborating this ecphrasis for its own sake.[34] But the theme of Gigantomachy has run throughout the whole poem, and its reprise here serves to illustrate Ceres' furious opposition to heaven. Brandishing her axe to fell trees sacred to Jupiter, she is

[32] It seems unlikely, given the ironical relation between the questioner and the addressee, that Proserpina is actually begging for a fate similar to the Giants or Phaethon, as Gruzelier asserts ad loc.

[33] Ceres' desecration of the grove is an ironic inversion of the episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where Erysichthon impiously chops down an oak sacred to Ceres (8.741-76). For the association of grove desecration with civil war, see Masters 25-29.

[34] Gruzelier 285; cf. Charlet 1991: 176 n. 5: "L'ekphrasis du *lucus* . . . est pour Claudien l'occasion de traiter l'un des ses thèmes quasi-obsessionels."

even ready to strike himself ("ipsum etiam feritura Iovem," 3.359).[35] After felling two cypress trees, she carries them to the volcano Aetna, that reservoir of Gigantic energy and opening between the lower- and upperworlds (3.381-99; cf. Fauth 70-71). There Claudian compares Ceres with the Fury Megaera lighting her yew-torches in the Phlegethon (3.386-88). The association of Ceres with one torch-bearing Fury may also conjure up another: Tisiphone in Book 1 who waves a pine-torch and summons her infernal army (1.39-41).[36] On the other hand, the "infuriation" of Ceres contrasts with the most recent appearance of the Furies, who were kindling wedding torches to celebrate her daughter's marriage (2.347). Thus the close of Book 3 reverses and calls into question the rejoicing of the underworld at the end of Book 2, taking the reader right back to the threat of disorder opening Book 1. As Ceres embodies the energy of hell, she ironically becomes the female counterpart of Pluto—the enemy brother of Jupiter.

III.

One of the aims of this paper has been to question traditional critical assumptions about Claudian's *De Raptu* that continue to hold sway despite recent progress in interpretation both of the poem and of late antique literature in general. I have sought to show that the poem's opening episode is neither poorly conceived nor superficially relevant to what follows. Furthermore, I have attempted to make the case that *De Raptu* has a conceptual unity, militating against the view that its composition is slipshod, or that its set piece descriptions and speeches are without meaning. Far from being a superficial patchwork of epic *topoi*, the poem motivates its readership to interpret its richly woven fabric as a dynamic recreation of the epic tradition. We have seen that the underworld opening of *De Raptu* sets the rape of Proserpina within a context of violent rivalry between Pluto and Jupiter, which is reminiscent of Statius' *Thebaid*. Furthermore, the episode alludes to the tradition of violent imperial epic in which the energy of hell provides a starting point for a new action. Claudian's innovation is to wed this sort of epic to the erotic subject matter of Ovidian epic and thereby reinterpret the rape's cosmological significance. As I have argued, Claudian does not introduce the imagery of war and cosmic upheaval just to illustrate the brutality of Proserpina's rape (cf. Gruzelier xxvi). Rather, the rape repeats the event of an infernal uprising with

[35] Here I depart from Hall's text and adopt the mss. reading *feritura*, despite the false quantity of the *i*, and refer the reader to Gruzelier *ad* 3.359.

[36] It also parallels the opening of *In Rufinum* in which Megaera lights a pine-torch in Phlegethon (1.119-21) before journeying to the upperworld to unleash Rufinus.

the significant difference that Pluto's object of violence is not Jupiter, but Proserpina. It is in this sense that the rape functions as a sacrifice mediating the original violence of the enemy brothers. The idea of Proserpina's sacrifice is, of course, a traditional feature of the myth. In Greek religion, the sacrifice and rebirth of Kore was originally connected with agricultural ritual: the surrendering of the seed underground in order to guarantee the return of the crops. It also furnished an aetiology for Demeter's two gifts to mankind, the Eleusinian mysteries and grain. Claudian alludes to these elements of the myth; he even announces the gift of grain to mankind to be the subject of the final book of the poem ("unde datae populis fruges," 1.25).[37] But the originality of his project is to refit the rape to the allegorizing tradition of imperial epic, and to suggest that rape and marriage can replace the violence of civil war—eroticizing chaos, so to speak. Although the sacrifice of Proserpina makes the world safe for Jupiter, Claudian nonetheless complicates the reader's response by focusing on the collateral victims of the rape, who view the violence as an act of war and disturbance of cosmic order. The revolt of Ceres against Jupiter threatens, in fact, to undo the very marriage upon which the new order is founded.

This reading of *De Raptu* complements others that respond to Claudian's emphasis upon the way violent anarchic energy seeks outlets (Newbold 105; Fauth). Claudian's attention to this theme, we are often told, is symptomatic of late fourth-century imperial fears about barbarian invasion (Fauth 74-78; Gruzelier 93, 96, 143). Yet the poem's obsessions are not exactly new to the imperial epic tradition, inasmuch as the hopes and fears of empire have always found expression in Roman epic. In Claudian's time, however, the empire experienced a development that distinguishes it from the earlier period in which epic thrived. After the death of the emperor Theodosius in 395, his sons Arcadius and Honorius divided the empire in half and ruled over the East and West as separate realms. It is possible that Claudian's treatment of the theme of the rivalry and reconciliation of Pluto and Jupiter may have held contemporary political significance—a *speculum principum*, as it were—at a time when relations between the two brother-emperors were uncertain.[38] Be this as it

[37] In Book 3, Jupiter assembles the gods to explain that Ceres' discovery of Proserpina will result in a change of man's diet from acorns to wheat (3.33-54). As for the mysteries, Claudian's proem includes a vision of Ceres' epiphany at Eleusis (1.7-19), but he seems little concerned with the eschatological aspects of the myth; cf. Cameron 210-11.

[38] Gruzelier 99 notes the possibility of topical allusion in *De Raptu*'s theme of civil war given the periodic unease between the courts of Arcadius and Honorius. It is worth observing that Claudian emphasizes the theme of *plena concordia fratrum* in *De Bello Gildonico*, on which see Olechowska 47.

may, *De Raptu* does not necessarily promise a rosy future. If the resolution of Ceres' anger and the gift of grain to mankind were to be the subject of the final book, one may believe that Claudian aimed to close his poem with universal peace and unity (thus Nolan 4-8; Potz 24-29; Charlet 1991: xlvii). But the poem also belies such a vision. When Claudian hints that Statius's *Thebaid* is to be the sequel of *De Raptu*, are we to suppose that Pluto's rivalry with Jupiter can ever be finished? And what are we to make of the ruin of Proserpina's tapestry, once depicting an orderly and comprehensive model of the universe (cf. 1.246-71; 3.155-58)? Like the latter-day Arachne completing Proserpina's divine work ("divinus perit ille labor, spatiumque relictum / audax sacrilego supplebat aranea textu," 3.157-58), posterity has the challenge of completing Claudian's text.

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