There is no end to the questions that individuals motivated by particular scholarly interests might pose with regard to even so nugatory a work as the *Laus Herculis*, but, as it seems to me, there are only two issues, or, rather, sets of related issues, likely to interest the majority of scholars. First: was this poem written by Claudian, and if so at what stage in his career, and what does it add to our knowledge and understanding of his poetry? Second: if not by Claudian but the work of an unknown amateur, what does the poem tell us about the literary culture of the period of its production, the fifth or sixth century?

The first question, that of authorship, is almost the only one that has attracted the attention of scholars in the past, but the roster of those who have thought it worth their time is distinguished indeed. The whole sorry process is copiously and efficiently laid out for view in Guex’s doxography-cum-history (pp. 63–87), and it will bring out the flavour and quality of this book if I take up some of the reader’s time with a summary. Camers, who gave the world its first edition of the *Laus Herculis* (Vienna, 1510), based this work on a ‘vetustissimus codex’ which has since vanished but which, given the insistence of Camers on the authorship of Claudian, no doubt mentioned Claudian by name. The effective incorporation of Camers’ text in the prestigious Isengrin edition of Claudian made by Bentinus and Hontor (Basle, 1534) added to the apparent solidity of the attribution, but within a century of the appearance of the editio princeps Scaliger was holding up the poem’s metrical deficiencies and its poor literary quality as reasons to reject the attribution and speak instead of an anonymous poet. That kind of argument never deters those who are loath to let go of any scrap of information, be it truth or error, that trickles down from the darkest of ages, and so it is that a doubtful attribution and an undoubted lack of quality have been repeatedly reconciled by the claim that the poem is a work of Claudian’s declining years (Clavière, 1602) or, as the fashion moves, his half-lettered youth (Romano, 1958). The latter explanation has in fact proved the more enduring, and is taken seriously by the most comprehensive and learned of Claudian’s modern editors, Hall (1985). A fillip was given to the pro-Claudian camp by Jeep’s discovery in 1872 of our only surviving manuscript, the eighth-century Veronensis, where the attribution is clearly made; and Jeep himself jubilantly broadcast the vindication of both ‘Claudian’ and Camers, only to retract his claim a few years later when he collected his wits, remembered, as Guex puts it (p. 84), that it is an error to consider transmission alone as being relevant to the question of authenticity, and saw with a fresh eye the lamentable mediocrity of the poem. This reversal of belief, however, merely repeated that made long before him, and without benefit of the Veronensis, by Barth, who named Claudian as the author in his first edition (1612), only to recant in the *Adversaria* of 1624 and to identify the poem as the work of an ‘incertus auctor’ in his second edition in 1650. Barth, indeed, also mooted the possibility that the author was not the famed Claudian of Alexandria, but an otherwise unknown poet of the same name, while Wernsdorf (1780–99) went further and suggested the poem was the work of Nemesianus. In short, half a millenium and the natural processes of scholarly contention have had the pre-
dictable result: pretty much all possible permutations have been proposed at one time or another, with one scholar taking his stance in opposition to a point of view whose general acceptance at a given time in history has provided him with something to kick against.

This is the kind of history of scholarship that fascinates some, but tends to alienate those outside the discipline. Its essential aridness in the eyes of outsiders is, of course, no reason for our refusing to engage with the question. The only surviving manuscript informs us that Claudian is the author; the first editor would appear to have used an independent witness to the text which also led him to believe that Claudian was the author; and with the possibility that Claudian was the author we must therefore concern ourselves before we can achieve a just appreciation of the poem’s nature and status in the history of Latin literature. And yet the heart rebels. This is a miserable, ill-conceived, ill-executed, repetitive, unmelodious, lumbering, worthless scrap of late-antique versifying, which possesses no vividness and little colour, is undistinguished for its imagination and originality, and, for all that it peteres out before it finishes with the fourth of Hercules’ twelve labours, does not do so before it thoroughly wearies the reader. Or, to use the more kindly phrasing of Guex herself: «Quel que soit l’auteur du texte, la pièce porte les traces d’un talent rudimentaire dans le traitement de ses modèles littéraires, ainsi que d’une composition tardive.» (p. 41). Still, be of good cheer: there is reason to believe that Guex goes as far as anyone can to settle the question, for the rest of our natural lives at least. Not content with judgements that can be undermined by being subjected to the catcall ‘subjective’, she examines the linguistic features of the poem with an eye to the dating and to a comparison with Claudian’s usage. With unprecedented thoroughness, she then catalogues and analyses all the significant intertextual relations with Claudian that might allow us to solve the problem of priority, and shows with admirable concision and clarity that the traffic is all in one direction. The linguistic features of the Laus Herculis show clearly enough that it is a composition of the late empire.

Guex cites, for example, celer as a feminine nominative (vv. 118, 13; pp. 43 and 185), a decidedly non-classical usage, and also points to the adverbial use of the accusative dubium (v. 93; pp. 45 and 173) rather than the classical in dubio, as well as to two features prominent in fifth- and sixth-century verse, the reliance on phrases constructed by brachylogy with post (post viscera, v. 11; post membra, v. 88; p. 45) and the admission into the high style of prepositional phrases based on de to replace a classical genitive (pp. 45-46). More generally, she notes, and documents with copious examples, the author’s fondness for employing ‘stronger’ words in preference to ones that had lost force or were felt to be insubstantial, such as emicare in preference to the colourless ire (vv. 98–99 n.). It hardly needs saying that this tendency in poetry is matched by the development in Vulgar Latin of such features as the lexical substitution of frequentative forms for simple ones (cantare replacing canere, for instance) or the removal from standard usage of verbs whose irregularities, combined with changes in pronunciation, encouraged a preference for more solid alternatives (such as vadere for ire). Now, the same features can be abundantly documented in Claudian, but that speaks more for chronology than for dependence. Claudian tends to use many of them with less frequency, and also avoids some of the more prosaic turns of phrases of the author of the Laus Herculis. So, for instance, the use of minus esse for deesse is attested in Luxorius and Fortunatus, but not in Claudian (v. 79 n.), while the quid nunc ... / ... iuvat of vv. 36–37 only looks like one of Claudian’s favoured turns of phrase till Guex reminds us that the inclusion of nunc is colloquial in tone and something not paralleled in Claudian’s three examples of quid iuvat. In short, combine...
the details of usage with the absence from the poem of Claudian’s vivid visual style (p. 58), and the impression we gain is of a work perhaps considerably later than Claudian; my hunch, for what it is worth, is that it was composed closer in time to Fortunatus than to Claudian.

All this is very helpful, but not quite definitive. Guex puts us on much firmer ground when she examines those passages that recall parts of Claudian’s attested poems. In these, as she shows, there is often very good reason to believe that it is Claudian who is being imitated, not least because in their context in the *Laus Herculis* the phrases in question are less effective, or indeed not readily comprehensible unless we recall Claudian’s words.

The most convincing example here is provided by *post viscera* (v. 11), which baffles by its lack of precision until we note the model at Claud. *Extr. 1*, 46 ‘*suscipiant matris post viscera poetae*,’ a line which, as Guex shows, was also apparently known to Draccontius (v. 11 n.). More could be said, however. This imitation is combined with the more clearly marked reworking of the preface to Claudian’s last and perhaps his greatest panegyric, *De Sexto Consulatu Honorae Augusti*, as *pr VI. Cons. 17 Enceladus mihi carmen erat victusque Typhoeus becomes Alcides mihi carmen erat, germana Tonantis progenies, dignus credi post viscera numen* (vv. 10 f.). The opening of that poem, however, is not the only model that the author of the *Laus Herculis* alludes to, for, as Guex duly notes, *namque tamen non nunc novus advena turbam ingredior, laurusque gerens et florea sertis tempora vincit tuis* (vv. 6–8, to Apollo) clearly recalls, in phrasing, imagery, and ideas alike. Statius turning from his earlier triumphs with the *Thebaid* to his new topic, the life of Achilles: *da fontes mihi, Phoebe, novos ac fronde secunda/ necte comas: neque enim Aonium nemus advena pulso/ nec mea nunc primum augescunt tempora vittis* (*Ach. 1*, 9–11). If we now step back for a moment and forget that anyone had ever attributed the *Laus Herculis* to Claudian, then with just those opening eleven lines in front of us we can perhaps see what is going on. The poet presents us with a double proem imitating two great models, first Statius, then Claudian, and so claims a place for himself in a tradition that stretches from the great age of Latin literature to his own times. But still more is going on, and Guex’s analysis requires developing. There is another echo in this double proem of the proem to the *Achilleid*, *magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti progeniem*. Guex notes the similarity (note ad loc. p. 118), but offers no comment. Now, we may know less Latin these days than the scholars of the Renaissance or the Enlightenment did, but we do know about the Hellenistic technique of double imitation and in general understand better the processes of intertextuality. The author of the *Laus Herculis* is not only announcing his allegiance and his claim to a position in the canon, he is showing the difference between his subject matter and that of his predecessors. Statius sang of the son that Jupiter never had, for fear that the prophecy would become true and Thetis’ child would be mightier than his father; Claudian sang of Jupiter’s victory over the Giants, the sons of Terra who tried to assail Heaven; but the author of the *Laus Herculis* will sing of Jupiter’s greatest son, Hercules, a son who will indeed, unlike Achilles (*progeniem ... patrio vetitam succedere caelo, Ach. 1*, 2), enter Heaven, and who, unlike Enceladus and Typhoeus, will deserve to do so: *dignus credi post viscera numen*. I should acknowledge in passing that, despite the harsh things I say above about the quality of this poem, the clever and learned double allusion speaks of a talent that is rudimentary indeed, but real all the same.

The attempt to answer my first question – on authorship – has shaded into the second, that concerning what can be learned about the world of the author and about his cultural milieu. Here I can be more succinct, and say that a close reading of Guex’s commentary, with its superb analysis of language and models, is something that well repays the time spent on it. The poet, as is to be expected,
proves to have been familiar with the standard canonical authors, above all Virgil, Ovid, and Statius, as well as the latter-day colossus Claudian. Guex effectively reveals his equal familiarity with the *Hercules Furens* of Seneca, and makes a decent case for his having known Silius. Strikingly, she twice makes the attractive suggestion that he also knew Servius auctus (vv. 122 and 133 nn.), something that would fit with the general schoolroom atmosphere. The commentary succeeds in bringing out the encroachment of Vulgar Latin syntax and idiom on the literary language even as it demonstrates this continuing familiarity with the canon of Latin poetry. The direct influence of Greek literature is all but absent. I doubt this really adds up to much that will surprise those well acquainted with the Latin literature of the fifth and sixth centuries, but the basic picture has been given added colour and vibrancy by an excellent piece of scholarship that deserves commendation for its learning and its balanced good judgement. Whoever composed this piece of late-antique doggerel, he has found in Sophie Guex a critic far beyond his deserts.

Toronto

*M. J. Dewar: Guex, Ps.-Claudien, Laus Herculis*


This book owes its existence to a deep and long-lasting fascination that dates back to 1980, when Schenkeveld first happened to read Romanus. As he tells us in his preface, he «became ‘addicted’ to this text and decided to write a monograph on the subject» (p. viii), but for various reasons this desire was not fulfilled until the beginning of the 21st century. Better late than never, I would say, because regardless of all criticism that this book will meet with (also in this review) it is beyond question to me that it is of some value for everyone who is interested in ancient linguistics.

Our knowledge about Romanus is rather weak – in fact, there is hardly anything certain to say about his person and life, and moreover, his work was handed down to us neither directly nor complete. All we have is a set of excerpts contained in the work of a later grammarian called Flavius Sosipater Charisius; as a consequence, Sch. has at first to deal with this «transmitter of grammatical theory» (ch. I, pp. 1–28). But we are scarcely better off for Charisius than for Romanus himself. Again, external evidence is lacking, and the only source of information, his *ars grammatica* consisting of five books, has survived in such a bad condition that the constitution of the text is connected with lots of serious difficulties (some of which concern the text investigated by Sch.; see below). However, the major part of the text is preserved, so that to some extent it is possible to give well-founded statements about its making, its structure, its place in the grammatical tradition, its sources, and its intentions. Sch. sketches these subjects with both broad reference to recently done researches (e.g. by Vivian Law, Robert A. Kaster, and Mario De Nonno) and due reluctance to rather speculative inferences that are typical not only for Karl Barwick and his ‘Remmius Palaemon und die römische Ars grammatica’ published in 1922; surprisingly, however, he

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