

Storms, Giants, and Winters: A Storm only the Helmsman Stilicho Can Steer us through

In Claudian's *De Bello Getico*, similarities between the Goths and the Giants can be found throughout the narrative; however, the connection is most explicit when Claudian points to the homeland of the Goths as the site of the Gigantomachia *i.e.* the Caucasus region (70-1). Even more telling are the references to the Caucasus and its proximity to the northern constellations. I argue that these connections in the narrative all characterize the Goths' remoteness from civilization while dramatizing their transgression over the borders of civilization. Moreover, the treatment given to the northern constellations is only the precursor to a cyclical conflict enacted by celestial bodies working against the northern stars. I suggest that the appearance of a comet on the eve of disaster/battle (243-8) and a powerful simile comparing Stilicho to a lion (323-9), despite their frequency and identification as common motifs in epic, both intimate that a larger cosmological force is at work in this story. The comet's description and path in the night sky reflect the characteristics of the sign Leo, and I propose that Claudian is playing with the constellation's spring and summer qualities. I argue that both of these instances and their relationship to Stilicho's northern march symbolize spring and summer overcoming winter. This connection is explicit in several instances in the poem, but particularly at 151-3, where Claudian exclaims that Stilicho restored fair weather back to both heaven and Rome. I suggest that Claudian is drawing from a symbolism (*i.e.* the warlike opposition of constellations and seasons) already in Manilius' *Astronomica* and similar cosmological ideas stemming from antiquity. Finally, I suggest that the lion simile (323-9) and another simile that compares Stilicho's appearance to a star (458-61) are responding to an underlying allusion of Vergil's famous *Eclogue* 4.34-6. As the lion, Stilicho's revitalization at the Battle of Pollentia is the delivered promise that there will be another Achilles.

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