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The Art of Praise in the 'Argonautica-Syncrisis' at the Beginning of Claudian's *Bellum Geticum*

Techniques of praise in Claudian's panegyric epics have been broadly debated. Similes and comparisons are an essential part of the concept of his poems. Comparative elements may influence the characterization as well as the praise of the addressees and have so far only been briefly discussed.

This paper addresses on the proem of Bellum Geticum, *the so-called 'Argonautica-Syncrisis'. It aims to look at the techniques of depiction and praise through this passage, where Claudian takes up the myth of the Argonauts to illustrate and exaggerate the character traits and deeds of his protagonist. Furthermore, whether the myth is used to influence the recipient's perspective is examined. The primary focus lies on the depiction of Tiphys as the helmsman and conqueror of the Symplegades as well as its impact on the characterization and praise of the protagonist Stilicho.*

Keywords: Claudian's *Carmina Maiora*, *Bellum Geticum*, 'Argonautica-Syncrisis', praise, panegyric epics, similes, syncriseis, intertextuality

What does the helmsman of the Argo, Tiphys, have in common with Stilicho, a Roman military commander at the end of the 4th century AD? What connects these two figures, one mythological, one real? We shall discover the result in the following pages.

Claudian's *Bellum Geticum* has generated interest in research since the 1970s.[1] Its proem, which this paper is about, has so far been interpreted first and foremost regarding its relationship to the work as a

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[1] SCHROFF (1927); CAMERON (1970); BALZERT (1974); GARUTI (1979); CAMERON (2011); MÜLLER (2011); WARE (2012); COOMBE (2018).

whole as well as its overall panegyric effect.[2] The role of Tiphys within has only been discussed briefly.[3] The following paper aims to close this gap.

First, an introduction to the poem and its *praefatio* is given. Here, the expectations with which the recipients enter the poem following the *praefatio*, are of interest. Then the selected passage, in which Stilicho is compared to Tiphys and his deeds, is subjected to a close reading. Including intertextual references, an interpretation is sought. Furthermore, it is examined to what extent the figure of Tiphys shapes the praise of Stilicho at the beginning of *Bellum Geticum*.

Bellum Geticum is one of the latest poems in Claudian's œuvre and deals with the war against the Goths which took place in the winter of 401/402 AD.[4] As the title reveals, it is one poem of the *Carmina Maiora* which is not explicitly called panegyric. Nevertheless, *Bellum Geticum* is high encomiastic and primarily pursues praising Stilicho and his deeds in the war against the Goths.[5] The poem focuses on Stilicho's outstanding achievements, which are presented against the background of the preparations for the final battle at Pollentia, which itself is only mentioned in passing.[6]

The beginning of *Bellum Geticum* leaves the reader rather surprised, since one does not find anything they would expect at the very start of such a poem. Within the *praefatio,*[7] which precedes the poem, Claudian

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[2] The works of Claudia SCHINDLER must be mentioned in particular at this point, as she has published on Claudian in various volumes since the early 2000s. SCHINDLER was also the first to attribute importance to the opening verses of *Bellum Geticum*, which made an in-depth treatment of it possible in the first place. SCHINDLER (2004a); SCHINDLER (2004b); SCHINDLER (2005); SCHINDLER (2009).

[3] SCHINDLER (2005); COOMBE (2014).

[4] SCHINDLER (2009: 138); MÜLLER (2011: 351–352).

SCHINDLER (2004b: 19–20); SCHINDLER (2005: 109); MÜLLER (2011: 353–354).

[6] CAMERON (1970: 181).

[7] Claud. *Get. Praef.* 1–18: *Post resides annos longo velut excita somno / Romanis fruitur nostra Thalia choris. / optatos renovant eadem mihi culmina coetus / personat et noto Pythia vate domus. / consulis hic fasces cecini Libyamque receptam, [5] / hic mihi prostratis bella canenda Getis. / sed prior effigiem tribuit successus aenam, / oraque patricius nostra dicavit honos. / adnuit hunc princeps titulum poscente senatu / respice iudicium quam grave, Musa, subis! [10] / ingenio minuit merces properata favorem: / carminibus veniam praemia tanta negant, / et*

foreshadows an epic about Stilicho's great success in the war against the Goths and raises expectations for an imposing entry in a panegyric epic:[8] At the beginning of the *praefatio*, Claudian announces the end of what must have been a long break in literary activity (Claud. *Get. Praef.* 1–2). He then refers to his earlier consular panegyrics and other literary works (Claud. *Get. Praef.* 3–5) and announces that he will now praise Stilicho's victory over the Goths (Claud. *Get. Praef.* 6–7). Claudian furthermore elaborates on how he had achieved fame and honour at the Roman court through his earlier poetry (Claud. *Get. Praef.* 8–14). The *praefatio* ends with the announcement of Stilicho's eulogy and his deeds in the following poem (Claud. *Get. Praef.* 15–18).[9] After hearing or reading this *praefatio*, one is awaiting an imposing introduction. However, something completely different occurs: the proem turns out to be a syncrisis that focuses on single and predominantly threatening stations from the myth of the Argonauts.[10]

The syncrisis is divided into three parts. At the end of each part a reference to Stilicho can be found: Firstly (1) Tiphys, the helmsman of the Argo, and his achievement in the passage of the Symplegades are highlighted (Claud. *Get*. 1–11a). This part of the myth is then set in relation to Stilicho's achievements in the war against the Goths (Claud. *Get.* 11b–14a). In this paper, I will examine these fourteen verses. To give a better insight into the whole proem, I will also offer a glimpse of the remaining two parts of the syncrisis. The second section (2) presents itself as a kind of *recusatio* of mythological contents and aims to distinguish the poetic program of this poem from the classical mythological epics. For this purpose, some stations of the Argonauts' journey are brought up and described as fictitious and, moreover, exaggerated (Claud. *Get.*

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magis intento studium censore laborat / quod legimur medio conspicimurque foro. /materies tamen ipsa iuvat solitumque timorem [15] / dicturo magna sedula parte levat, / nam mihi conciliat gratas inpensius aures / vel meritum belli vel Stilichonis amor.

[8] PERRELLI (1992: 119).

[9] FELGENTREU (1999: 132–133; 215).

[10] SCHINDLER (2005: 109; 112). CAMERON (1970: 287) has indicated that Claudian often draws on material from mythology to anticipate or suggest the theme of a poem. What is new here is that the epic begins with a mythological narrative. See also SCHINDLER (2004b: 20).

14b–27a). The third part (3) embraces two of these points and puts each of them in relation to Stilicho's success (Claud. *Get.* 27b–35). All juxtapositions primarily aim to exaggerate Stilicho as a military commander in comparison with mythical heroes and happenings.[11]

Structure of the syncrisis

Argonautica-Syncrisis (1–35)

1–14a		**Tiphys**
	1–11a	Tiphys, the helmsman of the Argo
	11b–14a	Comparison Stilicho and Tiphys
14b–27a		***Recusatio***
	14b–15a	Introduction
	15b–19	Building the Argo with Minerva's support
	20–21	Accusations against poets of mythical epics
22a–26		Further examples
	22a	Harpyies
	22b–23	Dragon, guardian of the Golden fleece
	24	Fire-breathing bulls
	25–26	Earth-borns
	27a	End (revisiting the myth-*topos*)
27b–35		**Fusion of myth and reality** (Stilicho)
27b–30		Comparison of the Harpyies and Goths
	27b–28	Expulsion of the Harpyies (thanks to the Argonauts)
	29–30	Expulsion of the Goths (thanks to Stilicho)
31–35		Comparison of the Earth-borns and Goths
	31–33a	Fall of the Earth-borns
	33b–35	Fall of the Goths

To make the following close reading comprehensible, the first fourteen verses of the syncrisis will now be given in Latin as well as in English translation:

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[11] SCHINDLER (2005: 112); SCHINDLER (2009: 139).

Text and Translation:

Intacti cum claustra freti, coentibus aequor
armatum scopulis, audax inrumperet Argo
Aeeten Colchosque petens, propiore periclo
omnibus attonitis, solus post numina Tiphys
incolumen tenui damno servasse carinam
fertur et ancipitem montis vitasse ruinam
deceptoque vagae concursu rupis in altum
victricem duxisse ratem; stupuere superbae
arte viri domitae Symplegades et nova passae
iura soli cunctis faciles iam puppibus haerent
ut vinci didicere semel. quodsi ardua Tiphyn
navis ob innocuae meritum sic gloria vexit
quae tibi pro tanti pulso discrimine regni
sufficient laudes, Stilicho?

When the bold Argo broke the locking bolts of
the sea and the surface, armed with converging rocks,
seeking Aeetes and the Colchians, and while all were
stupefied because of the too close danger, <then>
Tiphys all alone, apart from divine power, is said to
have saved the ship uninjured and with but small
harm, and to have avoided the collapse of the rock <threatening> from
both sides, and, after the
convergence of the swaying rock face had been
deceived, to have guided the ship victoriously on to
the high seas; there they stood, the haughty, the
Symplegades subdued by man's skill; and they
endured the new laws of the sea-bottom, and, now
easily accessible to all ships, remained standing,
as soon as they had once learned to be vanquished. If
such great an honor is conferred on Tiphys because of
the merit of an undamaged ship, what praise will be
conferred on thee, Stilicho, for the expulsion of
danger from so great an empire?

In the first two verses, the recipients find themselves in the middle of the myth about the Argo. There is no introductory word or any other kind of introduction; the story simply starts at a point somewhere on the sea; straightaway an uneasy atmosphere is drawn: the sea is described as untouched; the conditions seem threatening. A poem about war beginning with the adjective *intactus* gives the entrance a special effect: through this, the image of something untouched is drawn, and, thus, peaceful associations are retrieved; one then immediately thinks of the Goths invading Italy and disturbing the peace that existed there. It is also striking that the word *mare* is not used here, instead *aequor* and *fretum* are used synonymously. Particularly the noun *aequor* can evoke associations with a battlefield and, thus, create a connecting line to the final battle at Pollentia. The phrase *claustra freti* is also worth mentioning and seems to be an allusion to Seneca's *Medea*. In the second stasimon of the Roman tragedy, the Symplegades are referred to as *claustra profundi* (Sen. *Med*. 42b). The word *claustrum* is usually also used in connection with big doors or gates. Therefore, it evokes the image of the Argo breaking through a barrier.

Furthermore, linguistic parallels to Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* can be found,[12] where the sea is also described as untouched. Claudian may have consciously placed these linguistic markers to link the two passages of the poems.

The second verse finally opens up to the recipient that the following story is about the Argo (Claud. *Get*. 2b: *audax inrumperet Argo*). The sea itself is described as armed (Claud. *Get*. 1b–2a: *coentibus aequor / armatum scopulis*). This makes the sea seem to have prepared itself like a person for battle and as it was by force preventing the Argonauts from continuing their journey.[13] The adjective *audax* should also be emphasised,

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[12] Claud. *Get*. 1: *intacti* […] *claustra freti*; Val. Fl. 3, 554: *intactas* […] *undas*; Claud. *Get*. 1–2a: *coentibus aequor / armatum scopulis;* Val. Fl. 4, 688: *clausum scopulus super effluit aequor*. Cf. further Stat. *Theb*. 5, 336: *intacti* […] *ponti*. GUALANDRI (1968: 67–68).

[13] The sea was earlier described as inhospitable in Pindar and Apollonios of Rhodes: Pind. *P*. 4, 203: σὺν Νότου δ᾽ αὔραις ἐπ᾽ Ἀξείνου στόμα πεμπόμενοι ἤλυθον. BRASWELL (1988: 273; 286). Apoll. Rhod. 2, 547–548: ὣς ἄρα καρπαλίμως κούρη Διὸς ἀίξασα | θῆκεν ἐπ᾽ ἀξείνοιο πόδας Θυνηΐδος ἀκτῆς. In this case, it should be mentioned, that in the passage of Statius' *Thebais*, which was cited above, the sea is, unlike

through which the voyage of the Argo is interpreted as a venture. A similar representation is found in Seneca's *Medea*, where in the second stasimon the chorus describes Jason's first sea voyage as bold.[14] Afterwards the destination of the journey is mentioned twice (Claud. *Get*. 3a: *Aeeten Colchosque petens*), thus, briefly interrupting the drawing of the threatening situation, before in v. 3b the focus is again directed to the danger (Claud. *Get*. 3b: *propiore periclo*). Claudian draws a classic maritime-nautical picture here, in which the sea represents danger to a ship.[15] It should be mentioned that the ablative can be read literally, considering that the Symplegades are in constant motion, opening and closing again.

In the following verse, human actors are integrated for the first time. First, the mood on the Argo is described within an ablative absolute (Claud. *Get*. 4a: *omnibus attonitis*): the crew of the ship seems to be completely dazed by the impending hurdles and therefore incapable of acting.[16] Such a drawing of the Argonauts can already be found at the epic of Apollonios of Rhodes, where the Argonauts appear equally terrified facing the Symplegades.[17]

In v. 4b, Tiphys, the helmsman of the Argo and protagonist of this part of the syncrisis, is mentioned for the first time. The adjective *solus* (Claud. *Get*. 4b) indicates Tiphys' special position. This aspect will later be

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to earlier depictions, illustrated as hospitable to the Argonauts. Stat. *Theb*. 5, 336-337a: *Pelias intacti late subit hospita ponti / pinus*.

[14] Sen. *Med*. 301–302: *Audax nimium qui freta primus / rate tam fragili perfida rupit*. BOYLE (2013: 209) points out, that *audax* is used as an epithet to the Argonauts as well as to their sea voyage in Roman Literature. Cf. Ov. *epist*. 12, 14: […] *audacis attuleratque viros*; Catull. 64, 5–6: *auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem / ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere puppi*.

[15] 'The ship in danger' is known since Alcaeus of Mytilene (Alk. 326 LP [=46a D]) and Theognis of Megara (Theogn. 667–680). The image of the ship in danger is popular both within Greek tragedy and philosophy as well as historiography: Aischyl. *Sept*. 208–210; Soph. *Ant*. 180; Plat. *Rep*. 488b; *Pol*. 6, 44, 3. The *topos* is further used in epic poetry: Hom. *Il*. 15, 615–629; Apoll. Rhod. 2, 70–73; Verg. *Aen*. 1, 148–156; Lucan. 1, 498–504a. On this account, the famous poem of Horace about the ship in danger should be mentioned (Hor. *Carm*. 1, 14).

[16] BALZERT (1973: 11).

[17] Apoll. Rhod. 2, 561a: σὺν δέ σφιν χύτο θυμός.

relevant for the characterization and exaltation of Stilicho. In the *Argonautika* of Apollonios of Rhodes, Tiphys also plays an important role in the successful passage of the Symplegades.[18] At this point, it should also be mentioned that Tiphys, as an independently acting figure, does not occur at this point in the Roman epic version of Valerius Flaccus. There the Argonauts reach for the oars all together,[19] although they are just as dismayed in the face of the cliff and are only motivated to do so by a speech of Jason.[20]

The following verses (Claud. *Get*. 5–8a) describe the thoroughfare and Tiphys' involvement in it. This part is divided into four sub-paragraphs: Firstly, the integrity of the ship (Claud. *Get*. 5: *incolumen tenui damno* [...] *carinam*) and Tiphys' function as a rescuer are emphasised (Claud. *Get*. 5: *servasse*). The minor damage to the Argo, caused by the Symplegades, is only mentioned in passing (Claud. *Get*. 5a: *tenui damno*). Secondly, reference is made to the beginning verses (Claud. *Get*. 1b–2a: *coentibus aequor / armatum scopulis*) when the converging cliffs are again depicted as a threat (Claud. *Get*. 6: *et ancipitem montis vitasse ruinam*). By use of the word *ruina*, the threat with which the Argonauts are confronted is described on two levels. On the one hand, *ruina* can be read literally as the imminent collapse of the rocks, on the other hand in a figurative sense as an approaching disaster for the Argonauts and their planned venture. Thus, the nature of the situation is made clear and Tiphys is portrayed as the helmsman, who is able to overcome this danger. Thirdly, the focus is once again directed to the clashing rocks (Claud. *Get*. 7: *deceptoque vagae concursu rupis in altum*). In the fourth part, the successful thoroughfare is described as a victorious undertaking (Claud. *Get*. 8a: *victricem duxisse ratem*). Claudian uses warlike terms and motifs to create associations. This supports the later comparison with Stilicho and gives the passage through the Symplegades the appearance of a warlike enterprise.

In the following verses (Claud. *Get*. 8b–11a) it is reported that after the thoroughfare of the Symplegades the rocks remain rigid (Claud. *Get*.

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[18] Apoll. Rhod. 2, 550–610; especially 573b–575a; 584–585; 610b. COOMBE (2014: 177); COOMBE (2018: 144).

[19] Val. Fl. 4, 689–690.

[20] Val. Fl. 4, 637–646.

8b–9a: stupuere *superbae* / [...] *Symplegades*) and that they no longer pose a threat neither to sailors nor to ships.[21] It is even mentioned, that the Symplegades now ensure easy access (Claud. *Get*. 9b–10: *passae* / [...] *cunctis faciles iam puppibus*). Furthermore, the drawing of the Symplegades as haughty is interesting (Claud. *Get*. 8: *superbae*) and suggests a negative valuation. In addition, the artistry of Tiphys is emphasised and brought into close connection with the overcoming of the danger. The new circumstances are clearly contrasted with the previous ones. Where at first the sinking of the Argo and the failure of the entire mission threatened (Claud. *Get*. 1b–2a; 3b; 6; 7), now, thanks to Tiphys, trouble-free passage is possible for all ships (Claud. *Get*. 9b–10a). Moreover, the artistry of Tiphys is highlighted at this point and brought into close connection with the overcoming of the danger (Claud. *Get*. 9a: *arte viri domitae Symplegades*).[22] Afterwards, the Argonauts and most importantly Tiphys are described as masters of the Symplegades (Claud. *Get*. 11a: *ut vinci didicere semel*). This already offers a comparison; for this, we must anticipate the following: when Stilicho is later compared to Tiphys and his deeds, the praise is specifically measured by the merits attributed to Tiphys. The Argo's helmsman is here presented as both the saviour of the Argo and the conqueror of the Symplegades. Accordingly, v. 11a could also refer to the Goths, who are defeated at the end of Stilicho's campaign and forced to withdraw from Italic territory.

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[21] This passage might be inspired by the corresponding passage of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*; Val. Fl. 4, 711–712a: *Tum freta, quae longis fuerant impervia saeclis, / ad subitam stup<uer>e ratem.* SCHINDLER (2005: 121).

[22] COOMBE (2014: 177). The art of helmsmanship is already a component of maritime-nautical imagery in Plato's philosophical treatises (Plat. *Rep*. 241d; 488; there referred to as τέχνη), where it serves predominantly as an *exemplum*. Cicero, in one of his *Epistulae ad Familiares* (Cic. *Fam*. 1, 9, 21), compares the art of sailing to the art of governance. Furthermore, as a negative example, reference can be made to a simile from Lucan's *bellum civile* (Lucan. 7, 123b–127), in which the *ars* of the helmsman fails and the ship is finally abandoned to its fate. In Claudian's *Carmina Maiora*, the *ars* and corresponding other terms for art of navigation – or precisely its non-existence – are an essential aspect in numerous maritime-nautical comparisons and similes (Claud. *Rufin*. 2, 12b–13a; *4 cons. Hon*. 219–224; 419–427; *Gild*. 215–222; *Mall. Theod*. 42–50; *Eutrop*. 2, 419b–431; *Stil*. 1, 281–290).

Then, finally, the story refers to Stilicho (Claud. *Get*. 11b–14a). First, Tiphys' merits are presented in abbreviated form once more. His deeds are mentioned as the origin of his fame (Claud. *Get*. 11b–12: *quodsi ardua Tiphyn / navis ob innocuae meritum sic gloria vexit*). Claudian subsequently argues, that if Tiphys has achieved such great glory for saving one single ship (Claud. *Get*. 12a: *navis ob innocuae*; 11b–12: *ardua* [...] / *sic gloria vexit*), then Stilicho is owed even greater honour for preserving the Roman Empire from the Goths (Claud. *Get*. 13–14a: *quae tibi pro tanti pulso discrimine regni / sufficient laudes, Stilicho?*).[23] Even before Stilicho's name appears in the poem, it is emphasized that he was able to avert very great danger (Claud. *Get*. 13b: *tanti pulso discrimine regni*). What the recipients have probably been expecting since the very beginning is finally provided here. Stilicho's name is conspicuously placed in the middle of the verse. At this point, the first part of the syncrisis closes.

The comparison has two characterizing functions which lead to Stilicho's praise: on the one hand, Stilicho's prudence is emphasised, on the other hand, his role as a commander and victor is underlined. Furthermore, the rescue of the Roman territory is highlighted.[24] Tiphys' enterprise, however dangerous and courageous, nevertheless serves predominantly as a point of comparison and is subordinated to Stilicho's actions and success.

With special regard to the fact that the entire first part of the syncrisis aims at a comparison between Tiphys and Stilicho, it is worth taking a look at v. 4, where Tiphys is called lonely (Claud. *Get*. 4). Tiphys and Stilicho appear on the same level insofar as they both act alone and are successful in a situation, in which everyone else is completely dazed (Claud. *Get*. 4a: *omnibus attonitis*).

Finally, the choice of Tiphys as the main protagonist should be discussed. Tiphys is not the classical hero from the myth of the Argonauts, for that is Jason.[25] Nor is Stilicho the Roman emperor. Furthermore, Tiphys' prominent role as a leader in the passage of the Symplegades is first encountered in Claudian's poem. This is where the peculiarity of

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[23] SCHINDLER (2005: 113); SCHINDLER (2009: 139); COOMBE (2018: 145).
[24] COOMBE (2014: 177).
[25] GUALANDRI (1968: 66); KIRSCH (1989: 184); COOMBE (2018: 144).

this syncrisis seems to lie: both figures, mythical and real, are merely minor players in the respective story and are heroized by their achievements. Therefore, they both appear to be underdogs.

The image of Tiphys, the helmsman who saves the Argo and ensures a safe passage and journey, serves – apart from its characterizing function – first and foremost as an illustration. The description of Tiphys' deeds presents Stilicho's victory as a great success. Since the comparison places Stilicho above Tiphys and his achievements and depreciates the mythological narrative, the image also has the effect of exaggerating and, thus, provides Stilicho with a supermythical greatness: what a hero achieves in myth, is incredible; (but) what Stilicho has accomplished, however, is of higher value.[26] Considering that the Argonautica-Syncrisis as a whole extends over 35 vv. and that Tiphy's image in particular is richly painted (Claud. *Get*. 1–14a), the passage also has a retarding effect, since it delays the entry into the epic's main plot. Simultaneously, the syncrisis assumes a structuring function, for it clearly marks the beginning of the epic. Furthermore, the description of the Argo, traditionally the first ship of antiquity, breaking through the locking bolt of the sea for the very first time (Claud. *Get*. 1a: *intacti cum claustra freti*) lends Stilicho's deeds a certain symbolic character. Ultimately, the syncrisis is also prospective, especially since it anticipates the expulsion of the Goths by Stilicho at the end of the epic. Thus, the victory over the Goths could be symbolically evaluated as a sign of the restoration of Roman supremacy as the Argo symbolizes the start of a new age.[27] Therefore, the syncrisis mainly has an impact on how the recipients start off this poem and what kind of position they will take through.[28]

Another outstanding point, which has an impact on the praise of Stilicho throughout the syncrisis, is the fact, that Tiphys himself is – within the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus – characterized through two

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[26] SCHINDLER (2005: 112–113; 121); SCHINDLER (2009: 139–140); MÜLLER (2011: 254, n. 10).

[27] COOMBE (2014: 178); WARE (2012: 225–226); COOMBE (2018: 145). See also Verg. *Ecl*. 4, 34–36: *alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae vehat Argo / delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella [35] / atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles.*

[28] SCHINDLER (2005: 115; 117); COOMBE (2014: 177); COOMBE (2018: 26).

similes.[29] When Tiphys is mentioned at the beginning of *Bellum Geticum*, the descriptions and sections, in which Tiphys plays a role in the Roman epic, are called to mind. At this point, it must be pointed out, that there is no characterization of Tiphys within similes in the *Argonautica* of Apollonios of Rhodes.

The first simile on Tiphys in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* can be found in the first book following the sea storm scene.[30] The simile compares the obedience of the Argonauts to Tiphys to the obedience of the forces of nature to Jupiter. Primarily, the simile serves as an illustration of the scene. Moreover, Tiphys as the Argo's helmsman is characterized in two ways: firstly, he appears as a leading figure at this point, and secondly, his relationship with the crew is described in more detail. Furthermore, the passivity of the Argonauts within the scene should be emphasised. This creates a strong contrast to Tiphys' vigour and reminds of his independent action.[31]

In the second simile, the illness and death of the helmsman and the significance of this loss for the crew are discussed.[32] It must be mentioned that Apollonios of Rhodes, even if only briefly, also reports Tiphys' death and the lamentations of the Argonauts in the second book of his epic, but the episode is not as richly displayed as in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*. The focus is on the Argonauts' wish for Tiphys' recovery, which is compared to the pleading of children who fear for their mortally ill father. Tiphys' death is staged here like that of a father: like children, the crew does not want to acknowledge the certainty of the approaching death. This simile strongly focuses on the emotional aspect and has a performative effect, since it evokes pity in the recipient. In

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[29] GÄRTNER (1994: 239).

[30] Val. Fl. 1, 689–692: *Tiphys agit tacitique sedent ad iussa ministri, / qualiter ad summi solium Iovis omnia circum [690] / prona parata deo, ventique imbresque nivesque / fulguraque et tonitrus et adhuc in fontibus amnes*.

[31] ANZINGER (2007: 177).

[32] Val. Fl. 5, 22–27a: *qualem praecipiti gravidum iam sorte parentem / natorum flet parva manus trepidique precantur / duret ut invalidis et adhuc genitoris egens, / haud aliter socii supremo in tempore Tiphyn [25] / ante alios superesse volunt. mors frigida contra / urget*. On the design of the scene in Apollonios of Rhodes, see MORRISON (2007: 297–298); MORRISON (2020: 132).

addition, Tiphys' relationship with the Argonauts plays a significant role once again.

In both similes, Tiphys' relationship to the crew is highlighted. The image of Tiphys as a helmsman and attachment figure of the Argonauts is here recalled as a reminiscence at the beginning of *Bellum Geticum*. The role attributed to Tiphys thus influences the characterization and praise of Stilicho. Stilicho not only appears superior to Tiphys, but also figuratively comes close to Jupiter. Moreover, as a Roman army commander, he becomes the father of the nation and in this role surpasses a simple family father.

I will now summarize the main impacts on Stilicho's praise within the first part of the syncrisis.

There are several points of characterization through reminiscences and within the syncrisis itself. The comparison of Tiphys and Stilicho has the effect that the emphasis on Tiphys (re-) acting alone (*solus* […] *Tiphys*, v. 4b) facing the Symplegades can be transferred to Stilicho's deeds during the war against the Goths.[33] Both figures appear as heroes who save themselves and their followers in a precarious situation through acting alone. Furthermore, Stilicho's position as commander-in-chief and victor becomes evident in the same way as the salvation of the Roman Empire.[34] Moreover, Stilicho's role as a leader is expanded by the intertextual reminiscences of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*.

Finally, there are two more points, that influence the praise within the syncrisis and the poem as a whole. On the one hand, since Stilicho is not only compared to but also put over a hero out of a myth, Stilicho is given supermythical greatness. On the other hand, the syncrisis also assumes a prospective function, since Stilicho's victory over the Goths at the end of the poem is anticipated here. In the juxtaposition of the Symplegades' passage and Stilicho's success against the Goths, a hint of interpreting Stilicho's victory as the foundation of a new age is suggested; similarly, the voyage of the Argo was often interpreted as the beginning of a new age as well. This symbolic character is already noticeable

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[33] BALZERT (1973: 11); MÜLLER (2011: 355, n. 13); WARE (2012: 226).

[34] WARE (2012: 88). See also Claud. *Get.* 36–38: *per te namque unum mediis exuta tenebris / imperio sua forma redit claustrisque solutae / tristibus exangues audent procedere leges.*

in the opening verses when the Argo is described as a ship breaking through the locking bold of the untouched sea. The first fourteen verses of the proem have a significant impact on the attitude with which the recipients enter the main plot of the epic.

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