Allegory and Reality: Spes, Victoria and the Date of Prudentius's Psychomachia*

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Prudentius's Psychomachia, largely because it was fated to become one of the literary cornerstones of mediaeval allegory, dwells in a historical vacuum. Roesler alone made an unconvincing attempt to interpret the poem as an anti-Priscillianist polemic.¹ The poem's date is considered largely irrelevant, though usually it is thought to have been written before A.D. 405.² For Walther Ludwig, who ingeniously analysed Prudentius's oeuvre as a Christian Supergedicht intended to replace the pagan literary genres, the Psychomachia is the epic centerpiece of a corpus defined by Prudentius's preface. In this paper I shall suggest that, far from being an early work, the Psychomachia was written after 405, that it was never part of a total plan, and that through the veil of its allegory we can occasionally glimpse topicalities which may reveal more about the place and date of its composition than has been believed possible. This is a plea for a more historical and political Prudentius than is commonly acknowledged.

Before 405?

Prudentius's preface to his edition of 405 provides a catalogue of his poetry, hence reliable external evidence on what had been written:

Hymnis continuet dies
nec nox ulla vacet quin dominum canat
pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidem

*The author is most grateful to the Fondation Hardt and to the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute for their hospitality during 1986–87 and to Clive Foss for his advice about matters numismatic. The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (copyrighted) was used for a word-search for Ἐλπίς.

² See below n. 7. The only clear advocates of a date after A.D. 405 are Bergman (CSEL 61, p. xiii) and O. Hoefer, De Prudentii Psychomachia et carminum chronologia (Marburg 1895) 59 (who, however, also puts the Hamartigenia after 405).
Conculcet sacra gentium
labem, Roma, tuis inferat idolis,
carmen martyribus devoeavat, laudet apostolos.3

Hymnis . . . canat are a clear reference to the Liber Cathemerinon. Pugnet contra hereses and catholicam discutiat fidem seem to cover two apologetic–didactic poems, the Hamartigenia on Free Will against the Marcionites and the Apotheosis written against various Trinitarian heretics and against the Jews. Conculcet sacra gentium alludes to the Romanus–hymn, now printed as Hymn 10 of the Peristefanon, but originally appearing either before or after that work.4 Labem, Roma, tuis inferat idolis covers the two books Contra Orationem Symmachi, the first an attack on polytheism, the second an attack on the Dea Victoria and Symmachus specifically. Carmen martyribus devoeavat covers the Peristefanon and laudet apostolos treats Peristefanon 12, the hymn to Peter and Paul, separately.

There have been many attempts to find allusions to the Psychomachia in the praefatio. Prudentius's place as the preeminent Christian poet demands a deliberate pattern in his work, a Christian program in which he intentionally provided counterparts to all the main genres of Classical Poetry. In his Hymns he was the Christian Horace. In his Psychomachia the Christian Vergil.5 The Psychomachia had to be in the praefatio to have a place in Ludwig's all-encompassing diagram, which depicts the generic structure of Prudentius's oeuvre based on the praefatio and places the epic Psychomachia as the centerpiece of the whole scheme.6 If those who see an allusion to the Psychomachia are right, then the Psychomachia must have been written before 405. If they are wrong, then the question of the work's date is reopened. Ludwig, following Weyman, detected the reference to the Psych. in line 39: pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidem, which is supposed to allude to the Apotheosis, the Hamartigenia, and the Psychomachia. The Psychomachia is encapsulated in hereses (the last Vice to be fought) and Fides (the first Virtue to fight).7 This is very ingenious,

3 Praef. 37-42.
4 Bergman (above, note 1) xiii.
5 Many other genres were covered too: see W. Ludwig, "Die christliche Dichtung des Prudentius und die Transformation der klassischen Gattungen," in Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en occident, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 23 (Vandoeuvres–Genève 1977) 304-05.
6 Ludwig (previous note) 310, "Das erzählende mythologische Epos hatte immer den obersten Rang in der poetischen Hierarchie der Römer. Dies war zumindest ein wichtiger Grund weshalb Prudentius seine Psychomachie in das Zentrum seines christlichen Supergedichts setzte."
7 C. Weyman, Beiträge zur Geschichte der christlich-lateinischen Poesie (München 1926) 65–66; Ludwig (above, note 5) 316. "Die Praefatio brauchte nicht explizit auf die Psychomachie zu verweisen, weil diese ihrerseits eine allegorische Verschlüsselung der vier Lehren darstellt und damit implizit in einem Hinweis auf jene bereits enthalten ist." For a pre-1895 history of the interpretation of the "table of contents," see Hoefer (above, note 2) 48. J. Fontaine, Naissance
but probably not right. If Prudentius had mentioned his *Psychomachia* here, he would have listed it as an *antiheretical* work: little is said about heresy in the poem. Secondly all sorts of subtleties are detected in this one line, whereas all the other references to Prudentius's work in the *praefatio* are *fully expanded* and completely straightforward. As in other ancient poetic catalogues at least a phrase is devoted to each work. There is no need for temporising; the *Psychomachia* was not mentioned in the preface.

There is no need for distress, for at least two other works of Prudentius were not mentioned either, and are not—for that reason—stricken from the book of literary history. At the end of the 5th century Gennadius of Marseilles in his continuation of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, wrote an article listing the oeuvre of Prudentius:

Prudentius vir saecului litteratura eruditus composuit *Diairocheum de toto Veteri et Novo Testamento personis excerptis. Commentatus est autem in morem Graecorum Hexaemeron de mundi fabrica usque ad conditionem primi hominis et praevaricationem eius. Composuit et libellos quos Graeca appellazione praetitulavit APΩTHEOSIS ΨΙΧΟMACHIA AMARTIGENIA, id est, De divinitate, De Compugnantia animi, De origine peccatorum. Fecit et in laudem martyrum sub aliquorum nominibus invitatorium ad martyrium librum unum et hymnorum alterum, speciali autem conditione adversus Symmachum idolatriam defendentem. Ex quorum lectione agnoscitur Palatinus miles fuisset.

The so-called Διατοχαίον or *Tituli Historiarum* to which he alludes has survived. The *Hexaemeron* is now lost. Neither of these works, however, appeared in Prudentius's preface. Presumably the edition of 405 was not a complete one. Prudentius's tone of finality suggests that at that time he may have thought that this was all he would write, but reality was different. More was to follow.

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*de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien* (Paris 1981) 149 n. 246 is agnostic, "l'absence d'une allusion vraiment claire à la *Psychomachia*.”


9 Compare the Pseudo-Vergilian preem to the *Aeneid* and Ovid, *Am.* 2. 18 for a catalogue of the *Heroides*.

10 See the curious remarks of J. Fontaine on the topic: *Naissance* (above, note 7) 149 n. 246 maintains an agnostic position, "l'absence d'une allusion vraiment claire à la *Psychomachia*;" *ibid.* 206 "L'oeuvre n'est qu'impliquée, mais elle est peut-être omniprésente, dans le programme de la Préface;" *ibid.* 207 "Elle répond d'abord aux besoins d'un temps et d'un lieu précis. Elle exprime la mentalité et le goût de l'âge théodosien."

11 Ludwig (above, note 5) 303 had deliberately excluded the *Tituli Historiarum* from his scheme, but did not account for the lost *Hexaemeron*.


13 *Praef.* 34 fine sub ultimo.
The Prudentius tradition is largely dependent on five MSS, two date from the 6th century, three from the 9th century. A, the Puteanus, is a 6th century composite MS. It lacks the preface, and the epilogue but includes the Tituli Historiarum. The same is true of B, MS Ambros. D. 36 Sup. The main 9th century MSS, T, and S, have the preface, epilogue and the Tituli Historiarum. Thus our MSS do not descend from an archetype that was Prudentius's own collected edition of 405. Even the 6th century MSS are miscellanies, a fact which indicates that ancient book-collectors had to put together “complete Prudentius” from various sources.

Thus we must reconstruct at least a 3-stage early history of Prudentius's text. Some of his works, written before 405, were published independently. The Cathemerinon, at least, must have appeared twice, since codices that have the preface before the Cathemerinon all have certain Bindefehler in the Cathemerinon. It was this first edition of Cath. minus the preface that descended to A and B. The edition of 405 was put out by the author, contained the preface and probably the epilogue, but not the Psychomachia, Ditt. or the Hexaemeron. Finally an expanded edition (or separate editions) appeared after 405. It included the Ditt., Psychomachia, Preface, Epilogue, and gave rise, eventually, to TES, the 9th century MSS. Whether this edition contained the Hexaemeron or not is unclear. This work was lost sometime after the late 5th century.

The Psychomachia does not appear in the praefatio. The collection we have is not a complete edition of his work designed by Prudentius. This preface was written for some sort of edition, but not for all the works we have. The Psychomachia, as well as various other works, could well have been written after A.D. 405. So if the Psychomachia was not necessarily written before 405 when does it belong? We may now turn to the internal evidence.

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One problem in interpreting the Psychomachia has been the very fact that it is an allegory. Allegories are considered universally comprehensible abstractions bearing the signs of their own interpretation like the personified Artes on a French cathedral portal. But allegorical narrative is often more

14 Paris, B. N. lat. 8084.
15 M. P. Cunningham, "Some Facts About the Puteanus of Prudentius," TAPA 89 (1958) 32-33 corrects Bergman. The first two leaves of the quaternion containing Cath. in A are not missing.
16 Paris, B. N. lat. 8087.
17 Leiden, Burm. Q. 3.
18 Sankt Gallen 136.
19 See Cunningham, CC v. 126 p. xi.
20 Bergman (above, note 2) xiii is also of this opinion: "Psigitur et D post a. 405 edita videntur."
like a cartoon, particularly when it is partially political. The reader needs information in order to interpret the text: one must know the "base-image" in order to interpret the new picture. The Psychomachia, unlike some of its later mediaeval imitations, is not a purely moral or psychological allegory of hypostasised human emotions signifying virtues and vices.21 Such interpretations come from looking at the work backwards from the Middle Ages. Nor is it a fight between deities and demons, as has more recently been suggested.22 The answer is complicated because it is a very mixed composition: such poetry was still in its infancy.

It has been noted that the poem is usually interpreted as if it had no time or place whatsoever.23 But Prudentius does allude to time in the Psychomachia. Glimpses of the poet's own contemporary problems are afforded in realistic details such as the description of the death of Vplerum cultura deorum: difficilemque obitum suspiria longa fatigant.24 This could serve as an epigraph for the death of paganism. He also saw time in terms of human salvation: he can speak of Judith as a parum fortis matrona sub umbra / legis adhuc pugnans, dum tempora nostra figurat.25 He also shows a clear sense that Christians of his day were a vespertinus populus.26

But this is not all: one can highlight some areas where Prudentius's historical present may have broken through into the composition of his supposedly universal moral allegory. The central battle of the Psychomachia, the fight between Superbia and Mens Humilis aided by Spes, bears remarkable testimony to the versatility of the poet, to his use of books and to his awareness of living issues.

The episode is basically a Vergilian illustration of Proverbs 16. 18 "Pride goeth before a fall":27 there are echoes of Numorus's address to the Trojans in Aen. 9. 598 ff. in Superbia's taunts. Some aspects of Prudentius's allegory are probably spontaneous imaginative details, such as the Vice's toweringly pretentious Babylonian hairstyle.28 Some illustrate doctrinal points and often actual texts. Superbia, for example, is described

21 As in C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford 1973) 68 ff. and 45 for the initial process of psychological allegorisation.

22 K. R. Haworth, Deified Virtues, Demoniac Vices, and Descriptive Allegory in Prudentius's Psychomachia (Amsterdam 1980).

23 Implicitly the Psych. is assigned an early date, see Ludwig (above, note 5) 313 "womit wieder an die Bilder der Psychomachie erinnert wird . . . and W. Steidle, "Die dichterische Konzeption des Prudentius und das Gedicht contra Symmachum," Vig. Christ. 25 (1971) 262 ein Rückbezug auf die Psychomachie."

24 Psych. 35.


26 Psych. 376.

27 Proverbs 16. 18 Contritionem praecedit superbia, et ante ruinam exaltatur spiritus.

28 Psych. 183 ff.
as *inflata:* she looks like a *superbus.* She is puffed up and windy. Her very clothing billows. Some aspects of this battle may have exegetic origins. Psalm 118. 49 ff. in the Itala–version juxtaposes Spes, *humilitas,* and the *superbi.* One may, with advantage, consider Psalm 118. 49–50 *Memor esto verbi tui servo tuo / In quo spem dedisti Haec (Spes) me consolata est in humilitate* me, *quoniam verbum tuum vivificavit me* and also Ambrose's exposition of it:

Haec est Spes, haec quae verbo tuo obvenit mihi, consolata est me, ut tolerarem acerba praesentium... Ergo si quis vult adversa superare, si est persecutio, si est periculum, si mors, si aegritudo, si incursio latronum... facile superantur, si sit Spes quae consoletur... *Humiliatur* enim anima nostra dum traditur *teniatores,* duris examinanda laboribus; *ut luctetur et certet,* congressum contrariae experiens potestatis.

Verse 51 of the same Psalm refers to the actions of the *superbi:* *superbi agebant nimos; a lege tua non declinavi.* Prudentius was familiar both with Ambrose's famous hymns and with prose works, such as his *Epistles* and the *De Officiis Ministrorum* on which he based a number of his versified martyr-acts.

David appears as an exemplum (Psych. 291 ff.) because the Psalmist was David himself. Superbia's description also resembles Goliath's bold challenge of the Israelites (1 Kings 17. 18 ff.). The manner of her death is similar. She is beheaded (Psych. 282). Like David, Mens Humilis has no sword (2 Kings 17. 50), and must borrow one from Spes (Psych. 278): *cunctanti Spes fida comes succurrat et offert/ultorem gladium.*

So far a brief conspectus of literary allusions. The description of the departure of Spes however contains a striking and significant *visual* twist:

*Dixit et auratis praestringens aera pinnis*

In caelum se virgo rapit. Mirantur euntem
Virtutes tolluntque animos in vota volentes
Ire simul, ni bella duces terrena retardent.
Confligunt vitii seque ad sua praemia servant.

The most noticeable feature of this Spes is her wings. Even though her first appearance in Hesiod *Op.* 97–98 οὐδὲ θώρακε ἐξέπτη indicates a

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29 *Psych.* 178.
30 *Psych.* 182 tumido...fastu.
31 *Ventosa* in *Psych.* 194; note also volutabat in *Psych.* 179.
32 Ambrose was using a pre-Vulgate version. The Vulgate here has *in afflictione mea.*
34 See I. Lana, *Due capitoli prudenziani* (Rome 1962) 56.
36 David, instead, used Goliath's own sword (2 Kings 17. 50).
winged creature, and this type seems to be alluded to a few times in Greek
texts, she is not winged in the Latin world. The standard Spes-type stands
with a flower in her raised right hand and with the lowered left hand she
holds the hem of her dress. There is no question here of a general
depiction of winged Virtues: Spes is the only figure with wings in the
Psychomachia. Prudentius has intentionally given her odd attributes—those
of her sister, Victory, whose appearance on a battlefield, even a
psychological one, would cause no surprise.

The description of Spes already nonplussed the mediaeval audience. Here
the illustrated Prudentius manuscripts carry erroneous illustrations, all
clearly dependent on a caption that named the flying goddess “Humilitas”
rather than “Spes.” Such captions must be dependent on the commentary
tradition where ad Psych. 305 aera pennis is to be found: Humilitas
superatis mundi pompis alas iam meruit unde caelos penetravit, sed sancta
spes cum ceteris virtutibus in hac vita laborans agdemit et ad ipsam
pervenire per multias tribulationes apectii. It would appear, however, that
these illustrations do not descend from any authentic late antique tradition.

Victory herself is not one of the most common figures in Latin poetry.
She appears most fleetingly in Vergil. She is also to be found in Ovid.
Am. 3. 2. 45 prima loco furtur passis Victoria pinnis briefly alludes to a
statue carried at the races. She is absent from Lucan. More brief references
are to be found in Tibullus, in Statius and in Silius Italicus. From a

38 Anth. Gr. 7. 420. Ελπίδες ἀνθρώπων, ἐλαφραί θεαί ... κοινωντατοι δαίμονες
ἀθανάτων. Lucian, Merc. Cond. 42 ἡ δὲ Ελπίς τὸ ἀπό τοῦτον ἀρχανής ἀποκτεῖθω
... This depiction is unusual, and is probably directly dependent on Hesiod.
40 There is some very slight early evidence for a military Spes, see K. Latte in RE 2. 3
(1929) 1634 ff.; for an early example of Spes’s military significance in Rome: Plaut. Merc. 867
Spes, Salus, Victoria.
41 See R. Stettiner, Die illustrierten Prudentius–Handschriften, Tafelband (Berlin 1905).
Table 21 has the caption mirantur virtutes humilitatem in caelestium; London, Brit. Lib.
MS. Cotton Cleop. CVIII (table 56) has Humilitas ascendit in caelum, virtutes mirantur; see
also Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 23 (table 55). Table 194 C, however, shows the
figure literally climbing steps to heaven with the correct, but later, caption: virtutes mirantur
spem scendantem caelestium.
42 See J. M. Burnam, Commentaire anonyme sur Prudence d’après le manuscrit 413 de
Valenciennes (Paris 1910) 96.
43 Aen. 11. 436 non adeo has exosa manus Victoria fugit.
44 Met. 8. 13 inter utrumque volat dubiis Victoria pinnis and Tristia 2. 169 Sic adsueta tuis
semper Victoria castris / Nunc quoque se praestet notaeque signa petat / Ausoniumque ducem
solitis circumsolvat alis, / Ponat et in niida laurea serta coma.
45 2. 5. 46 ecce super fessas volitat victoria pappes / tandem ad Troianas diva superba venit.
46 Silv. 5. 3. 145 Aut alium tetigit Victoria crimem.
47 15. 737 ad Rutulos Victoria vereter et alas.
later period come two brief references in Ausonius. The descriptions of the goddess are consistent. She is invariably winged, and comes to the winning side. This confirms what the Latin panegyricist called the germa na illa pictorum poetarumque commenta which Victori am finxere pinnatam.

Prudentius's description of Spes flying like Victory includes a detail not found in any earlier poetic descriptions: golden wings (auratis... pinnis). To this passage must be compared Prudentius’s own description of the statue of Victory in the Senate House at CS 2. 27 ff. Aurea quamvis / marmoreo in templo rutilus Victoria pinnas / explicat et multiis surgat formata talentis... (33) Namquam pinnigeram legio ferrata pue lla m / vidit, anhelantum reget quae tela virorum. Here Prudentius describes the actual statue of Victory in the Senate House, a figure that, to judge by common descriptions, must have sported gilded wings. Prudentius ironically ridiculed the statue's wings at CS 2. 259 ff. Desine terga hominis plumis obducere; frustra / fertur avis mulier magnusque eadem dea vultur. For the pagan description of the statue and its golden wings one turns to Claudian: Affuit ipsa suis ales Victoria templis / Romanae tutela togae; quae divite penna / patricii reverenda foveat sacraria coetum.

In the earliest period, allusions to Victory such as those of Ovid (Tristia 2. 169) were intended to recall the famous statue in the Curia Julia taken from Tarentum and set up by Augustus in thanksgiving for the Battle of Actium. The winged goddess stands poised on a globe with a wreath in her right hand and either a palm or a vexillum in the left. The references to Victoria between Augustan times and the 4th century apply not to the actual image in the Senate, but to the neutral epic personification. And again in the 4th century A.D. Victoria, after the dispute over the Altar of Victory, took on a new political significance—this time in pagan—Christian conflict. It is at this point that descriptions of the goddess become again descriptions of the statue.

48 VI Prec. 33 hoc mihi praepetibus Victoria nuntiat alis und Epigr. 1. 2 ff. tu quoque ab aero praecps Victoria lapsi / come serenatam duplici diademate frontem / serta ferens quae dona togae, quae praemia pugnae.
49 Pan. lat. 2. 39. 1 Mynors Recte profecto germana illa pictorum poetarumque commenta Victori am finxere pinnatam, quod hominum cum fortuna euntium non cursus est, sed volatus.
50 Psych. 305.
52 The goddess, whose flight above the Roman legions should portend victory, is instead assimilated to a carrion bird.
53 6 Cons. Hon. 598 ff.
54 See above p. 353.
The Altar of Victory in the Senate House was banished by Gratian in 383. In 384 Symmachus petitioned Valentinian II to restore it and wrote his famous 3rd Relatio on this occasion. A series of intermediate embassies connected with pagan cults are also known. Ambrose, Ep. extra coll. 10 to Eugenius, probably written in 393, recounts the failure of a senatorial embassy to Valentinian in 392. The same epistle then chides the usurper for, while officially denying the request, giving money personally to members of a senatorial legatio who had asked for the restoration of pagan cults. The Vita Ambrosii maintains that Eugenius did restore the Altar. Quodvultdeus and Ambrose attest an embassy of Symmachus to Theodosius. And it is generally suggested that in 402 Symmachus may again have tried to petition Honorius, because, though ailing, he was sent on a legatio to Milan to Stilicho.

The direct evidence that Symmachus's petition had to do with the Altar of Victory consists of Prudentius’s Contra Symmachum, which was written in 402–3, and is often thought to address a dead issue. I recently have suggested that the poem was not an otiose restatement of Ambrose's and Symmachus's arguments. The CS began in Sept. 394 as a panegyric of Theodosius, perhaps joined to a diatribe against pagan religion. This work was never published, for in January 395 Theodosius died unexpectedly. Instead CS 1 was doctored with various passages reflecting works of Claudian written in 399 and 400, and hurriedly re-issued in 402–3 attached to CS 2, which really does deal with Symmachus. The very nature of the composition of the CS, the addition of Symmachus, above all, suggest that Symmachus was the reason. He had in fact gone to Milan in the winter of 402 to plead for the restoration of the altar and the statue—thereby causing great anxiety in Christian circles. Thus I found a Prudentius who, in his

56 Ep. extra coll. 10, p. 207. Zelzer Iterum Valentianum augustae memoriae principi legatio a senatu missa inra Gallias nihil extorquere potuit, et certe aberam nec aliquid tunc ad eum scripseram. For the date see O. Seeck, Symmachi Opera, M. G. H., A.A. VI (1883) lviii.
57 For the dating see M. Zelzer, C.S.E.L. 82, praef. lxxvii. See Ep. extra coll. 10, p. 208.
58 Paulinus, Vita Ambrosii 26. 3 [Eugenius] Qui ubi imperare coepit, non multum post, petentibus Flaviano tunc praefecto et Arbogaste, comite, aram Victoriae et sumptus caerimoniarum . . . oblivis fidei suae concessit.
59 See O. Seeck, (above, note 56) lviii.
60 Symmachus, Ep. 5. 96. Symmachus did not respond well to the cold in Milan.
61 Symmachus, Ep. 4. 9 tells us that the necessitas patriae et auxilium tui (Stilichonis) culmina pushed him to act the part of ambassador. Ep. 5. 94 refers to the mission as legationis officium . . . superest, ut proposito religionis tuae melior adspire eventus et tibi in posterum competens deus pro tanto in patriam labore respondeat. Ep. 5. 95 is perhaps the most explicit: Mediolanum sum missus a patribus ad exorandum divini principis opem, quam communis patriae sollicitudo possebat. Celerem mihi reditum praefata dei venia res prosperae pollicentur.
62 See D. R. Shanzer, “The Date and Composition of Prudentius's Libri contra orationem Symmachi,” RFIC forthcoming. The remainder of this paragraph briefly summarises this article.
own way, was no less an occasional poet than Claudian—on occasion. Prudentius’s satirical description of the non pexo crine virago / nec nudo suspenso pede strofioque recincta / nec tumidis fluitante sinu vestita papilla reflects the all-too contemporary issue of whether to admit the personification of Victory to a Christian battlefield. In 384 Symmachus had asked, quis ita familiaris est barbaris ut aram victoriae non requirat? The question was even more valid in 402. The Milan mint had found it necessary to launder its Victory by giving her an orb with a cross after 388. Little has been made of the reference to the Victoria Romana in the II A, Vit. Sev. 14. 2 pater eadem nocte in somnis vidit alis se Romanae Victoriae, quae in senatu, ad caelum vehi, but it is almost certainly some sort of topical allusion on the part of the prankster. The personification was not dead, and Victory was a concern to Prudentius in 402, and clearly no less so sometime after 405, perhaps after a restoration of the statue attested by Claudian’s 6 Cons. Hon. He did not allow Victoria to appear in the Psych. He substituted a permuted form of her image.

Spes did not appear on the coinage of this period, but Victory had with the inscription, “Spes Romanorum.” These coins had been minted in Aquileia and Rome at the time of Eugenius’s usurpation. The message is clear: Victory is the Hope of the Romans. The image in Prudentius can be seen as a reversal of the numismatic propaganda: “Spes Victoria Christianorum.” In his panegyric on the 6th Consulate of Honorius, which dates to 404, Claudian juxtaposed Hope and Victory: the advent of the Emperor in the newly-fortified Rome to celebrate his Gothic triumphs was a cosmic event: Haud aliter Latiae sublimis Signifer aulae, / imperii sidus propria cum sede locavit, / auget spes Italas; et certius omina surgunt / victrici concepta solo. Here is the classical Roman Spes, her flower a symbol of growth, with words like augere, surgunt, concepta, and solo in the immediate context. In January 404 Victory had given birth to the pagan Hope with her promise of growth on earth.

Something had changed between 402/04 and the time of the Psych. The tone of the CS is sanguine. A major battle had just been won against the Goths, and Prudentius revelled in Christian Victory and blood-thirsty injunctions to suspend captive spoils. Instead here Christian Hope, whose

63 Prud. CS 2. 36–38.
64 Rel. 3. 3.
66 For his activities see Sir Ronald Syme, Ammianus and the Historia Augustia (Oxford 1968) passim.
67 6 Cons. Hon. 597 adfuit ipsa suis ales Victoria templis.
68 H. Mattingly, RIC 9, p. 107 (Aquileia 393/95) and p. 134 (393/94 Rome).
69 Claud. 6 Cons. Hon. 22 ff.
70 Claud. 6 Cons. Hon. 531.
71 CS 2. 62.
home is in heaven,\textsuperscript{72} not Victory, is the reward of victors who have conquered.\textsuperscript{73} Like Justice she flies away to heaven.\textsuperscript{74} The Virtues wish to follow, but cannot because they are detained by \textit{bella terrae}.\textsuperscript{75} The reward of war is no longer in this world, and Prudentius's substitution of Hope for Victory suggests that he wrote after 404, during times of military setback.

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At least one scholar denied that Prudentius's work reflected the contemporary invasions,\textsuperscript{76} but one can outline a variety of brief observations, mostly details and puzzles in the \textit{Psychomachia} that may reflect aspects of the external reality of the barbarian invasions. Many of the deaths of the Vices seem to recall those of miscreants from the pages of Claudian: Arbogast,\textsuperscript{77} Leo,\textsuperscript{78} Rufinus.\textsuperscript{79} Some of the colouring of the \textit{Psych.} may be topical. Luxuria, who comes, mysteriously,\textsuperscript{80} from the West,\textsuperscript{81} \textit{occiduis mundi de finibus}, bears an uncanny resemblance to Gildo as described by Claudian.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Col.} 1. 5.

\textsuperscript{73} 6 Cons. Hon. 601–02 had presented the sanguine promise of eternal victory: \textit{atque omne futurum / te Romae sesque promittit in aevum.}

\textsuperscript{74} In \textit{CS} 2, 907 ff., perhaps following \textit{Romans} 5, 2, Spes provides immediate guidance on earth to the Christian: \textit{spem sequimur gradimurque fide fruimurque futuris / ad quae non veniunt praesentis gaudia vitae.}

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Psych.} 306.

\textsuperscript{76} F. Paschoud, \textit{Roma Aeterna: Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions} (Rome 1967) 231, “De ces dangers, Prudence n'en parle guère; ce n'est ni par ignorance, ni par inconscience: sa haine du Barbare ne peut être que le résultat de son inquiétude: s'il n'en dit mot, c'est d'abord que ces poèmes ne se prêtent guère à de telles allusions … c'est enfin que son oeuvre a été écrit au moment où les succès de Silicnon semblaient assurer à l'Empire une certaine stabilité; elle est achevée avant l'apparition des prodromes de la terreur de 410.”

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Psych.} 160 Ipsi sibi est hostis vaesania seque furendo / interimit moriturque suis Ira ignea telis followed by Patentiola's departure at 162 Haec effata secat medios impune cohortes is similar to Claudian's 3 Cons. Hon. 104 et ultrices in se converterat iras followed by 3 Cons. Hon. 112 (of Honorius) Inter barbaricas ausus transire cohortes.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Psych.} 262 ff. hostili de parte latens, ut fossa ruentes / exciperet cuneos atque agmina mersa voraret describes the pit dug by Fraus into which Superbia falls. The episode is similar to the defeat of Leo, the boastier (\textit{Eutrop.} 2. 380 linguae iactator) at the hands of Tribigild's troops, another instance of \textit{frous} where soliders fall into the bog: \textit{Eutrop.} 2. 438 ast alios vicina palus sine more ruentes / excipit et cumulis immannibus aggerat undas.

\textsuperscript{79} The \textit{sparagmos} at \textit{Psych.} 719 ff. may be compared to \textit{In Ruf.} 2. 405–27.

\textsuperscript{80} Contrast the traditional position of Cc. \textit{Pro Murena} 5. 12 Et si habet Asia suspicacionem luxuriae quandam, non Asiae numquam vidisse, sed in Asiae continentem vidisse laudandum est.

\textsuperscript{81} C. Gnilda, \textit{Studien zur Psychomachie des Prudentii} (Wiesbaden 1963) 40 believes that the West is the evil kingdom of the setting sun (following Bergman, [above, note 1] 32) or that West and East may be entirely relative to the geographical position of the author. But \textit{occiduis . . . de finibus} does not have to mean “western limits or westemmost confines;” it could equally well mean “western regions.”

\textsuperscript{82} Gild. 444 ff. \textit{ubratus dux ipse rosis et marcidus ibit / unguentis crudusque cibo titubansque Lyaeo is close to \textit{Psych.} 316 Ac tunc pervigilem ructatam marcida cenam and \textit{Psych.}.
Avaritia who is called mendax Bellona \(^3\) disguises herself the way Claudian's real Bellona dressed as Tribigild's barbarian wife.\(^4\) Prudentius alludes with distaste to the fact that Avarice has attacked even priests, who fight in the front-line of the allegorical battle.\(^5\) There is a curious passage on plundering.\(^6\) Striking too are barbarians like Ira, the barbara bellatrix\(^7\) and Superbia with her fur-clad mount, who first incited Man to wear pellitos habitus.\(^8\) In Genesis Adam and Eve fashioned their own perizomata made of fig-leaves and were then given tunicas pelliceas by God.\(^9\) Prudentius has fairly representative opinions about barbarians: they may not have butter in their hair\(^10\) and hair on their teeth, but in his CS 2.816 ff. he declares that the barbarian differs as much from the Roman as the four-legged from the two-legged animal.\(^11\) They looked different: a barbarian is armis veste comisque ignotus.\(^12\) The overwhelming numbers of barbarians in the Roman armies had already been a source of trouble for some time. Ammianus is anti-German.\(^13\) Northerners had their uses: frightening Africans, for example, as Claudian observed.\(^14\) But desertions might often

326 sed violas lasciva iacit foliisque rosarum / dimicat. Even more striking is the wakening by the trumpet: Psych. 317 ff. sub lucem quia forte iacens ad ferrulo raucos / audierat lituos . . . ebria calcatis ad bellum floribus ibat and Gild. 447 excitet incestos turmalis bucinam somnos, inplorat curharas catatricesque choreas / offensus stridore tubae . . . Such an awakening is typical of the real soldier, see Cic. Pro Murena 9. 22 te gallorum, illum bucinatum cantus evisculat.

\(^3\) Psych. 557 Huius se specie mendax Bellona coaplat.
\(^4\) Eutr. 2. 182 mentiisque ferox incedebat barbarus gressu.
\(^5\) Psych. 497 ff. Quin ipsos temptare manu, si credere dignum est / ausa sacerdotes domini, qui proelia forte / ductores primam ante aciem pro laude gerebant / virtutum magnoque inplebant classica flatu. Bergman (above, note 1) ad loc. believes that this refers to the Priests of the Jews who blew down the walls of Jericho in Jos. 6. This is unlikely for there is no hint that avaritia inspired them, and it is inconceivable that Prudentius would have used the insinuating si credere dignum est about the Bible. More tantalising is Bergman's vague reference to Sulpicius Severus on the priests of Prudentius's own times. Roesler (above, note 1) 219–20 cites Sulp. Sev. Chron. 1. 23 and Chron. 2. 41 on the avarice of sacerdotes. Roesler's attention (pp. 217–18) to details of the attack of Heresy, her wounding viz in cute summa and the phrase at 795 ff. quamvis de corpore summo indicating corruption only in the top ranks is praiseworthy. These are deliberate contemporary allusions on Prudentius's part.
\(^6\) Psych. 470 ff. may reflect topical issues. Compare Claudian, Poll. 604 ff. Vv. 606–07 et caedis avarus/contemptus procucat opes suggest that the Roman armies had plundered.
\(^7\) Psych. 133.
\(^8\) Psych. 179 effreni volitabil equo, quem pelle leonis / tezer et validos villis oneroverat armos and Psych. 226 pellitosque habitus sumpsit venerabilis Adam.
\(^9\) Gen. 3. 7 and 3. 21 for the tunicas pelliceas made by God. The point is that to Superbia the skins or furs are an improvement.
\(^10\) Sid. Carm. 12. 7 infundens acido comam butyro.
\(^11\) CS 2. 816–17.
\(^12\) CS 2. 694.
\(^13\) W. Enlilin, Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltanschauung des Ammianus Marcellinus, Klio Beiheft 16 (1923) 30–33.
\(^14\) Gild. 1. 372.
occur, as in the case of members of Eutropius's campaign who went over to the side of the Ostrogoth Tribigild and caused the defeat of Leo's forces in the spring of 399. Goths might make secret agreements among themselves: Gainas's deal with Tribigild was a case in point. Anti-German sentiment surfaced earlier in the East than in the West, but eventually much criticism was levelled at Stilicho for his lenient treatment of Alaric. Some considered him a traitor. Claudian's panegyrics do their best to dispel such notions. After 417 Rutilius Namatianus accused Stilicho of having opened Rome to the skin-clad ministers of evil: ipsa satellitibus pellitiis Roma patebat.

With this in mind it is worth reexamining the imagery of the preface to the Psychomachia. Prudentius begins by exhorting us to fight with the profanae gentes. By chance fierce kings happened to capture Lot and conquer him as he tarried in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They forced him to serve the harsh chains of the barbarians. Abraham, with the aid of his vernulae, came and rescued Lot. This myth from Genesis is interpreted as an encouragement to be vigilant and to use the home-forces, our many home-born slaves, in our internal fight against any part of our body that is slave to foul desires. The allegory begins with a Biblical passage and is given an explicit psychological interpretation. But the language and the imagery is that of Prudentius's own times, of invasion by foreigners. The words to underline, barbari, profanae and ferores, do not feature in Gen. 14. Is this relatively obscure myth involving repulsion of foreign enemies with home-born forces chosen because of actual problems with the constitution of the Roman army? It is possible. The story of Lot and his second departure from the twin cities was about to become a painful topic a year or so later: Pope Innocent who was absent when Alaric entered Rome would be compared to him by the apologists, Orosius and Augustine.

Such imagery is not confined to the preface. After the end of the battle Concordia addresses her troops: Extincta est multo certamine saeva / barbaries, sanctae quae circumsaepserat urbis / indigenas ferroque viros flammaque premebat. This is a clear description of the siege of a city to

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95 Such criticism is met by 6 Cons. Hon. 301 ff.
96 De Reditu suo 2. 49.
97 Psych. praef. 9 pugnare nosmet cum profanis gentibus.
98 Psych. praef. 15 ff. Victum ferores forte reges ceperant / Loth immorantem criminosis uribus / Sodom et Gomorrae.
99 Psych. praef. 21 servire duris barbarorum vinculis.
100 Psych. praef. 22.
101 Psych. praef. 50-54 domi coactis liberandam viribus, nos esse large vernularum divites.
102 See EnBlin (above, note 93) 32-33 especially citing Amm. 31. 16. 8 Romanos omnes (quod his temporibus raro contingit) universos . . . mandavit occidi. For a more optimistic point of view see A. H. M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire I (Baltimore 1986) 621.
103 Orosius 7. 39. 2; Aug. Serm. de Urbis excidio, PL 40. 718.
104 Psych. 752 ff. This passage is cited by Fontaine (above, note 7) 209 n. 412 as an unquestionable evocation of contemporary reality.
which one should compare Rome's own triumphant speech from CS 2. 692
nullus me barbarus hostis / cuspidæ clastra quærit. The imagery of the city
persists at Psych. 816 ff. Nam quid terrigenas ferro pepulisse falangas /
culparum prodest, hominis si filius arce / aetheris inlapsus purgati corporis
urbem / intert inornatum templi splendentis egenus? It would appear that
Prudentius carefully insists on the Roman colouring of his Temple of
Sapientia: at the top of its gates, inscribed on the posts, gleam the twelve
names of the apostolic Senate. Prudentius was thinking of Rome, and
furthermore of Rome in a state of embattlement at a time of direct military
threat to the city.

We may eliminate Alaric's successful invasion of August 410. Had
Prudentius written after 410, he would unquestionably have alluded
explicitly to the Fall of Rome. He does not. Radagaisus's unsuccessful
invasion of 405, followed by his defeat by Stilicho at Fiesole in August
406 may also be eliminated. Rome was not directly threatened, and it is
temporally too close to the date of the preface.

Instead I would suggest 408/09, a time of strong anti-barbarian
sentiment leading up to and following the execution of Stilicho in August
408. Later that autumn Alaric was at the gates of Rome. Panic ensued
and much debate about whether the pagan gods had deserted the city. The
more orthodox Christian party then in power was forced to give way, a
German Comes domesticorur was chosen, and Honorius was forced to
repeal the law of 14 Nov. 408 which allowed only orthodox Christians to
hold palace office. The Psychomachia's special warning about the secret
threat of heresy after peace appears to have supervened may have been
prompted by this apparently backsliding legislation of Honorius. One
might also consider causes célèbres like the Arian baptism of the pagan
Count of the Sacred Largesses, Priscus Attalus who was used as a puppet
usurper by the Goths. Prudentius explicitly alludes to Arius. Could
the vivid dismemberment of Discordia recall the death of Gabinius Barbarus
Pompeianus, pagan Urban Prefect in 408/09 who was torn apart during a
bread-riot? In order to pay the enormous ransom demanded by Alaric the
Romans were compelled to strip the ornaments of their statues, and in the

105 Psych. 838 Portarum summis inscripta in postibus auro / nomina apostolici fulgent his
sena senatus.

106 Ham. 390 ff. (pre-405) which describes the Devil's mustering of the sins in the human
body, and which can be seen as a preliminary version of the imagery to be used in the Psych.
significantly does not employ the image of the embattled city.

107 For an account of events leading to Stilicho's fall, see E. Stein, Histoire du Bas-Empire I
(Amsterdam 1968) 252–54.

108 PLRE 2 Allobichus; see Stein (previous note) 256.

109 Zosimus 5. 41. 6 ff. Cod. Theod. 16. 5. 42 and 16. 5. 51.

110 Sozomen 9. 9; PLRE 2 Priscus Attalus 2.

111 Psych. 794.

ἐλκόμενος ἐφονεύσθη ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πόλεως.
case of gold or silver ones, melt them down. The kings attacked by Abraham when rescuing Lot are described as *mole praedarum graves* (*Psych. praef.* 27), a detail missing from *Genesis*, and hence probably a significant embroidering on Prudentius's part. Zosimus attributes the disasters to the melting down of the statue of Virtus itself.\(^{113}\) Is it too fanciful to suggest that Prudentius's elaborate construction of the temple of Sapientia using riches like "an enormous pearl worth a thousand talents which brave Faith had obtained"\(^ {114}\) is a spiritual consolation for the riches lost from the buildings of the city?

Part of the imagery of the *Psych.*, that of the interior battle, has Latin precedents in Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose.\(^ {115}\) The other central image, that of the temple of the mind, was likewise not unknown to previous writers.\(^ {116}\) God, according to Prudentius, loved the temple of the mind, not one of marble.\(^ {117}\) Despite lack of generic and religious affinities, Prudentius followed the work of his contemporary Claudian very closely.\(^{118}\) The opening of *Stil.* 2 features an extended panegyrical metaphor. Clementia reigns in Stilicho: The goddess enjoys him as her temple and her altar warm with incense. She has made her seat in his heart.\(^ {119}\) . . . Her sister Fides too, making her shrine in his breast, takes part in all his acts.\(^ {120}\) The opening of the panegyrical goes on to describe how all the goddesses who dispel crimes with pure lips dwell all together in his heart, Justice, Patience, and Prudence, while the wicked monsters of Tartarus are put to flight: Avaritia, Luxuria, and Superbia.\(^ {121}\) The resemblance of the passage is striking; notable also is the leading role played by Fides, who also leads the Virtues in the *Psychomachia*. The birth of a poem is often elusive, but here it would appear that Prudentius was thinking of the Virtues using the person of Stilicho as their living temple—perhaps following Stilicho's death and the realisation that he alone could have staved off Alaric. The conjunction of both the temple of the mind and the Virtues and Vices make Claudian the most probable source.\(^ {122}\) In the face of growing disillusionment with actual

\(^{113}\) Zos. 5. 41. 6 ff.

\(^{114}\) *Mille talentis / margaritum ingens opibusque et censibus hastae / addictis animosa Fides merata pararet*.

\(^{115}\) See Gnilka (above, note 81) 9 and Fontaine (above, note 7) 206.

\(^{116}\) For the history of this metaphor see Gnilka (above, note 81) 83 ff.

\(^{117}\) *CS* 2. 249.

\(^{118}\) For more on this see D. R. Shanzer, "The Date and Composition of Prudentius's *Libri contra orationem Symmachii*," RFIC (forthcoming).

\(^{119}\) *Stil.* 2. 12–13.

\(^{120}\) *Stil.* 2. 30 ff.

\(^{121}\) *Stil.* 2. 100 ff.

\(^{122}\) U. Keudel, *Poetische Vorläufer und Vorbilder in Claudians De Consolatu Stilichonis* (Göttingen 1970) 63 is oddly skeptical about any direct relationship between the two passages. In favour of a connection, however, is the absence of the temple of the mind from two other aborted Virtue-catalogues, *Man. Theod.* 166–73 and *6 Cons. Hon.* 584–86. The presence of both the temple and the Virtues in *Stil.* and *Psych.* suggests a direct relationship.
fighting and despair of external victory, Prudentius performed a characteristically Christian psychological manoeuvre. He moved the battle to another field: he made it an interior and a moral one. He substituted Hope for Victory. He built, not a new and rich Senate-House, but a Temple adorned with apocalyptic gems patterned both on Solomon’s Temple and on the Heavenly Jerusalem. His thought does not differ greatly from that of Augustine who used the fall of the earthly city of Rome to develop his theology of the heavenly city projected into a better future.

One of Prudentius’s Tituli Historiarum, again written after 405, may reemphasise the point:

Aedificat templum Sapientia per Solomonis
Obsequium; regina austri grave congerit aurum
Tempus adest quo templum hominis sub pectore Christus
Aedificet, quod Graia colant, quod barbara dient.123

The Queen of the South brought foreign riches to Solomon’s temple of Wisdom. Now in our times, as Prudentius emphasises, Christ builds the temple in order that the pagans may worship and barbarians bring riches to it. It is unlikely that the emphatically Roman Prudentius would have used Graia and barbara from the Greek point of view to denote the civilised world.124 Prudentius has carefully separated pagans and barbarians, his two main adversaries. This apparently Italian and Roman milieu for the Psychomachia need not cause surprise. Prudentius’s journey to Rome took place after 399, the Contra Symmachum suggests that he was there in 402/03, and there is no evidence that he returned to his home-province.125

Finally some Rezeptionsgeschichte. Few read Prudentius at the beginning of the 5th century,126 but St. Augustine was one of them. He provides perhaps the first testimonium for the Psychomachia in the 19th Book of the City of God.127 He says Sed neque sancti et fideles unius veri Dei summque culturae ab eorum fallaciis et multiforme temptatione securi sunt. In hoc enim loco infirmitatis et diebus malignis etiam ista sollicitudo non est inutilis, ut illa securitas ubi pax plenissima atque certissima est, desiderio ferventiore queratur . . . ibi virtutes, non contra uilla vita vel mala quae cumque certantes, sed habentes victoriae praemium aeternam pacem,

123 Prud. TH 81-84.
124 Gnilka (above, note 81) 127 n. 5 points to Rom. 1. 14, Clem. Alex. Protr. 12. 120. 2 and Eus. HE 10. 4. 20, and is followed by R. Pillinger, Die Tituli Histioriarum oder das sogennante Dittochaeon des Prudentius (Wien 1980) 61-62, but in this period even Ammianus, himself a Greek, never used the word barbarus of the Persians. It was reserved almost exclusively for Germanic barbarians: see Enßlin (above, note 93) 33.
125 See Shanzer (above, note 62) n. 83.
126 Bergman (above, note 1) xxix starts his list of testimonia with Avitus. No one appears to have noticed Claud. Mam. 1. 3, p. 32. 6 ff. Engelbrecht unde iucundissimis Asclepiadeis tuis poeta notissimus: abstentemque diem lux agit aemula / quam nox cum lacero victa fugit peplo (= Cath. 5. 27-28).
127 CD 19. 10, p. 370. 6-18 Dombart.
quam nullus adversarius inquietet. Augustine's Virtues had found serenity in the other world, in Jerusalem, the vision of peace,¹²⁸ not in this vale of woe, where we have but little peace.¹²⁹ Maximus, Bishop of Turin, who died some time between 408 and 423 wrote a sermon de tumulis bellicosis in which he speaks in vague terms of the evil times and wars that beset us. The arguments, however, have a familiar ring: Cernimus armari civitatis portas, debemus etiam prius in nobis portas armare iustitiae . . . Tunc autem civitatis porta munita esse poterit, si prius in nobis porta iustitiae munitur;—ceterum nihil prodest muros munire propugnaculis et deum provocare peccatis. Illa enim construitur ferro saxis et sudibus, haec armetur misericordia innocentia castitate . . .¹³⁰ David, as in the battle against Superbia, is again used as an example of Fides who overthrew the gentile unarmed.¹³¹ He perorates, Ergo, fratres, propter mundi iudicium armis nos caelestibus muniamus, accingamur lorica fidei salutis galea protegamus verbo dei velut spiritali gladio defendamus.¹³² . . . Non in armis tantum speranda victoria est sed in nomine salvatoris oranda.¹³³ Thus there may well have been ancient writers who read the new “interiorisation” of the Psychomachia as Christian advice to devote military energies to the internal struggle in times of war against the barbarians.

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¹²⁸ CD 19. 11, p. 371. 15 Dombart.
¹²⁹ CD 19. 10 Hic autem dicimur beati, quando pacem habemus quantulacunque hic haber potest in vita bona, sed haec beatitudi illi, quam finalem dicimus, beatitudini comparata prorsus miseria reperitur.
¹³⁰ Serm. 85. 2, p. 348. 27 ff. Mutzenbecher (CC 23)
¹³¹ Ibid. p. 349. 45 ff.
¹³² Ibid. p. 349. 40 ff.