

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS?
A PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSITION*

Abstract: Claudius Claudianus served the Roman general Stilicho as a panegyrist until 404 CE, but then disappears from the historical record. Only one other author, also an Egyptian, chose to defend Stilicho's policies: Olympiodorus of Thebes, in a work dedicated to Theodosius II between 425 and 440. Claudian and Olympiodorus are similar enough that we might wonder if they were the same person. This paper offers a sequence of pedagogical exercises based upon a comparison of the two authors and intended to train students in a range of academic skills.

In Part I of this paper, I offer some basic biographical information on two late Roman poets, Claudius Claudianus (a.k.a. Claudian) and Olympiodorus of Thebes. In Part II, I present and discuss an intriguing resolution to a long-standing mystery concerning Claudian's sudden disappearance in 404 CE. My proposal there serves as a foundation for Part III, in which I present a sequence of skills-training pedagogical exercises that can be used, either singly or progressively, in a wide range of undergraduate or upper-level high school History and Classics courses. All the proposed exercises relate to a central question: What might have happened to Claudian after 404? It should be noted, however, that this particular topic is only one among several possible choices for an interesting central focus in such a course. In examining the connections between these late Roman poets, I attempt to do two things. First, I draw attention to the many ways in which students can examine primary sources. In this case, the focal sources can be used to investigate the biographies of the two authors, in addition to offering opportunities to study their works from literary, historiographical and historical perspectives. Second, comparison of these writers offers students multiple attention-grabbers, or what I call "interest hooks." These "hooks" encourage and maintain the students' active engagement while they participate in an intensive writing and skills-training course. As the Claudian-Olympiodorus example shows, the two essential elements

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of any suitable topic are that it is supported by ample primary and secondary source literature to permit student research, and that it provides an intriguing mystery with two or more potential solutions that can serve as a versatile focus for the skills-training exercises described in Part III.¹

Part I: Who were Claudius Claudianus and Olympiodorus of Thebes?

Claudius Claudianus was a professional poet, whose extant works were written in Latin for the western emperor Honorius and for Honorius' supreme Master of Soldiers and guardian, Stilicho.² Claudian was employed by the western court from 396 to early 404. Our sparse collection of details about his life comes primarily from his own poetry. He was from Egypt, and probably received his higher education in Alexandria. His date of birth is unknown, but most scholars agree that he was likely born no later than 370. Most of his known literary output is a collection of lengthy poetical works that feature vivid propaganda in support of Stilicho's political and military policies and *de facto* control over Honorius' allotted western half of the Empire. In these works, Claudian also attacked several eastern political and military rivals of Stilicho. The poet seems to have been married between 402–404. He was a traveler, who visited North Africa and possibly Gaul and Asia Minor, in addition to his native Egypt. But he mainly worked in Italy, and was the western court's most eloquent spokesman in his day.

After January 404, Claudian apparently stopped writing; indeed, he left some major poems unfinished. This circumstance has led some scholars, most notably Alan Cameron, to argue that Claudian likely died in or shortly after 404, although that is by no means certain.³ His political poetry was probably published before 408, and his work was known to many other writers of the early 5th century, especially in the West. Both Augustine of Hippo and the Spanish priest Orosius considered him a pagan—though this view has occasionally been challenged or qualified by modern scholars.

¹ Suggestions for alternative topics are offered at the conclusion of this paper.

² The best and most complete study of Claudian's life and works is Cameron (1970). Other useful studies and source references include Platnauer (1922) vols. I and II; Cameron (1965) 470–509; the entry for "Claudius Claudianus" in *PLRE I*, 299–300; Barr (1981) 7–17; and Dewar (1996) Introduction. The standard edition of Claudian is Hall (1985). A number of English translations of Claudian's poems are readily available (e.g. Maurice Platnauer's Loeb edition). Latin editions and English translations of Claudian's works are also currently being transcribed onto the WWW on a number of sites, some of which provide further information useful for examining his biography; see the suggestions after my list of Works Cited.

³ Cameron (1970) 415–18. Though most scholars accept the theory that Claudian died between 404 and 408 (e.g. Dewar (1996) xxi), some continue to maintain uncertainty about the matter, e.g. Gruzeliier (1993) xvii.

An equally obscure figure in terms of his personal background is the historian and self-proclaimed poet Olympiodorus of Thebes.⁴ Again, most of what we know about Olympiodorus' life comes from his own work. He claimed to be a poet by profession, but we can confidently attribute to him only one, now mostly lost, history. This work, once in 22 books, survives only as a summary written by the 9th-century Byzantine patriarch Photius. Olympiodorus' history is also the source of a small collection of fragments derived from the histories of later historians who used his work for about 70 years after its official dedication to the eastern emperor Theodosius II. Olympiodorus, like Claudian, was from Egypt, and he too was a far-ranging traveler. Though he was from the eastern half of the empire himself, his history referred almost exclusively to events in the West. It began with Stilicho's service under Honorius and continued to 425, when Valentinian III was installed as the new western emperor, following Honorius and the brief reign of a usurper named John. Olympiodorus related in his history that he personally visited the Huns and the barbarian Blemmyes, who lived on opposite frontiers of the Roman world, sometime between 412 and 425; that he was well known to the sophists in early 5th-century Athens; and that he was a personal friend of one particular Athenian sophist named Leontius, whose daughter became the Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, in 421.

Unlike every other known early- to mid-5th-century writer apart from Claudian, Olympiodorus was openly favorable toward Stilicho in his history of the West. The date of his birth is a matter of conjecture, though it is usually assumed that he was well-advanced in age by the time he submitted his history to the eastern court sometime between 426 and 440. His earliest datable activities were in 412, when he visited the Huns; before that, his whereabouts are unknown. Olympiodorus is often described by modern scholars as something of an eccentric. This is due in part to his unusual style of writing history, in part to his atypical political views, and also because he kept a pet parrot as a traveling companion for 20 years. It is by no means certain that he visited the western half of the empire, despite the extraordinary detail he offered in his history about a broad range of western people and events.⁵ Whether he ever had an official position

⁴ See Thompson (1944) 43–52; Matthews (1970) 79–97; Baldwin (1980) 212–31; Blockley (1981) 1: 27–47; Chaffin (1993); Clover (1993) 127–56; Gillett (1993) 1–29; Rohrbacher (2002) 73–81. For the fragments of Olympiodorus, see Blockley (1981) 2: 152–220 (Greek with English translations). Other English translations include Freeze (1920) 134–48; Wilson (1994) 80–93. The Byzantine historian Zosimus (c. 500 CE) also relied extensively on the first ten books of Olympiodorus' history as a source for his own treatment of western events in the *New History*, V.26–end. For a translation of that work, see Ridley (1982).

⁵ Among the western notables discussed by Olympiodorus are Stilicho, Honorius, Alaric the Goth and his brother-in-law Athaulf, the Goth Sarus (who fought for

in either the eastern, or even less likely, the western court is likewise unknown. One thing certain about this shadowy figure is that he exhibited clear pagan sympathies in his writing.

Part II: Were Claudian and Olympiodorus the same person?

As obscure as these two men's lives are, a number of similarities can be found between them—which leads to the following proposal. Did Claudius Claudianus leave Italy around 404 CE to eventually become the historian Olympiodorus of Thebes? Before offering my reasons in support of this hypothesis, the reader should note that it is not entirely new. The famed classical scholar Arnaldo Momigliano once verbally suggested the possibility to a colleague, Dr. John F. Matthews, who reported the conversation in a book published in 1985.⁶ To the best of my knowledge, however, no one has ever seriously investigated this hypothesis or its implications and potential pedagogical uses in a published academic study.

The main questions concerning this possibility are: (1) What similarities between these two writers suggest that they may be the same person? (2) If we tentatively accept this transformation, why should Claudian have wanted to adopt a new identity, after creating a successful career for himself as a court poet in Italy by 404? And (3) What objections might be raised to this hypothesis, and how might one respond? For the purposes of this paper, I will address only the first two questions in depth.⁷ The last will be briefly discussed but can be left largely to the students, as part of the exercises described in Part III.

The following are among the most suggestive similarities between Claudian and Olympiodorus.

- Both were from Egypt and became professional literati. Both also wrote for patrons in the imperial courts: Claudian in the West, and Olympiodorus in the East.
- Both were enthusiastic travelers and took a special interest in the West. Olympiodorus appears to be unique among eastern historians of the early-

Stilicho), the usurper Constantine III, the princess Galla Placidia, her son Valentinian III and the Roman commander (later emperor) Constantius (III). The events are focused on the western court and Roman senate in Italy; on Britain, Gaul, Spain and North Africa; and on the activities of the Visigoths, who migrated from Epirus in western Greece to southern Gaul within the years covered in the history (c. 407–425). Olympiodorus also included a brief discussion of Stilicho's career, going back to c. 395, as an introduction.

⁶ Matthews (1985) "Additional Note" 2.

⁷ Establishing the mere plausibility of this hypothesis, rather than arguing it in detail, is the point of the present exercise. The reason for this approach is that I do not wish to provide evidence that can be simply repeated by students.

to mid-5th century for his detailed knowledge of western events during the reigns of Arcadius and Theodosius II.⁸

- Both knew Latin well and used it in their works. The use of Latin in histories composed for eastern readers was unusual in this period; Greek was considered more appropriate for such scholarship.⁹
- Both were considered pagans by their contemporaries because of their writings.¹⁰
- Each author also took special notice of and wrote about pagan statues. More curious still, they each discussed one particular statue that had been erected in honor of two pious brothers, Amphinomus and Anapias, who had saved their parents from the fires of Aetna in the legendary past. The statue was located at the Strait of Messina, on the Sicilian side, about six miles north of Rhegium.¹¹
- They seem to have been nearly exact contemporaries, at least from c. 370–404. If Claudian lived beyond that year, a 70-year lifespan—not unusual in the ancient world—could have made him an elderly gentleman in 440, which is considered the latest possible date that Olympiodorus could have submitted his history to Theodosius II.¹² The writers' known active years of service are separated by a period of eight years, but during this span we know nothing of Olympiodorus, though he was presumably active. Two further curious points relate to timeframes. First, Olympiodorus' history formally begins c. 407, shortly after Claudian stopped writing in early 404. Second, the parrot Olympiodorus claimed he kept for 20 years may have been ac-

⁸ Obtaining information about the western court was difficult for easterners during Stilicho's regime (395–408); see Eunap. fr. 66.2 Blockley = *Exc. De Sent.* 64. In the mid-5th century, other eastern historians who noted western events (namely, Philostorgius and Sozomen) largely used Olympiodorus as a source and added little to his information. However, these same historians often abbreviated Olympiodorus selectively, in an effort to offer alternate characterizations of western events and personalities for their politically sensitive eastern readers.

⁹ Claudian's main extant works, written for the western aristocracy, were composed in Latin, though he clearly knew Greek. Ammianus Marcellinus, though raised and educated in Antioch, also wrote his *Res Gestae* in Latin, but arguably largely for western readers in Rome. Olympiodorus used numerous Latin terms and phrases in his otherwise Greek history, which was composed for readers in the eastern half of the empire. The more common practice among eastern historians of the period, however, was to translate Latin fully into Greek. For this tendency in Zosimus, see Matthews (1970) 85–7; for a general discussion of the limited use of Latin in eastern literature in the 4th–5th centuries, see Cameron (1970) 19–21. Sozomen and probably also Philostorgius composed their mid-5th-century histories entirely in Greek, even when using Olympiodorus (who included some Latin, as noted above) as a source for western events.

¹⁰ Augustine and Orosius said this of Claudian; see Aug. *Civ. Dei.* v.26; Oros. *Adv. Pag.* 7.35.21; Cameron (1970) 191–2. Photius attested the same of Olympiodorus; see Phot. *Bibl. Cod.* 80 (“Testimonium”) in Blockley (1981) 152–3; Matthews (1970) 79.

¹¹ Claud. *c.m.* 50; Olympiod. fr. 16 in Blockley (1981) 176–7; see also Clover (1993) 146, who discusses the historical location and history of this statue.

¹² The use of Olympiodorus' history by both Philostorgius and Sozomen necessitates this terminal date.

quired c. 405. The earliest possible date for Olympiodorus' submission of his history to the eastern court is 425. If Claudian vanished and traveled for a number of years before taking a new identity, he might have acquired the parrot just after he left Italy—perhaps in North Africa or his native Egypt.

- Both authors defended Stilicho's policies (especially his controversial actions in regard to the Visigoths) and his reputation as an honorable protector of the western empire.¹³ These views are unique in extant 5th-century sources. Stilicho had been executed by Honorius, and was considered a traitor by other writers in the period.
- Finally, both men upheld Stilicho's claim that Theodosius I had appointed him guardian over both Honorius in the West and Arcadius in the East just prior to Theodosius' death in 395.¹⁴ Among their contemporaries, only they are known to have supported Stilicho's early claim of authority over Arcadius. The eastern court, to which Olympiodorus dedicated his history, never accepted that claim.

If we suspend the urge to jump to counter-arguments for a moment, we can first consider some circumstances that might have prompted Claudian to disappear from both Italy and the public sphere around 404. To further the hypothesis, we might also ask: If Claudian did transform himself into Olympiodorus of Thebes in order to pursue another public writing career in the East, why might he have chosen that particular identity? Perhaps the most important potential motive is that, by 404, Claudian may have foreseen the difficulties Stilicho would soon face from his political opponents in the West. Stilicho was never popular with the western senators. His policies in regard to the Visigoths and their leader, Alaric, had forced even the supportive Claudian to stretch his propaganda skills to the utmost in his poetic defenses of Stilicho's dealings with these barbarians. If Stilicho's influence with Honorius were to suddenly fail (as it did in 408, when Stilicho was summarily executed after a palace coup), Claudian might have found himself without a protector, and possibly in a very uncomfortable position in Italy.

Having just completed yet another glorious panegyric for his imperial patrons (*Panegyric on the Sixth Consulship of the Emperor Honorius*, delivered in early 404), Claudian may also have seen 404 as a good time to take a trip, perhaps to spend time with his new wife in her native North Africa.¹⁵ Once there, he could fake a report of his

¹³ For Claudian's positive propagandistic treatment of Stilicho's actions in regard to Alaric and the Visigoths between 395 and 404, see Cameron (1970) 156–88.

¹⁴ For the contentious view that Theodosius I appointed Stilicho guardian over both his sons in 395, see Olympiod. fr. I.1 in Blockley (1981) 152–3; Claudian, *Panegyric on the Third Consulship of Honorius* (= *III. Cons. Hon.*) ll.151–8; *On Stilicho's Consulship II* (= *Cons. Stil. Libri II*) ll.52–62; *Against Rufinus II* (= *in Rufin. Libri II*) ll.1–6.

¹⁵ On Claudian's marriage date and his wife's homeland, see Cameron (1970) 409–14.

own death, so as to secretly return to his homeland in Egypt. After everyone had been informed of his death, no one would be likely to look for him, especially in the guise of another person. If he later returned as the parrot-carrying traveler Olympiodorus of Thebes—now in the East, which had been largely isolated from the West during Claudian's period of service with Stilicho, and eight years later—he could conceivably have pulled off this deception. Identities could be uncertain in the ancient world, after all, even without intentional disguises.¹⁶

As a final consideration, Olympiodorus' history appears to have been a present for the eastern royal family—perhaps especially for Eudocia, whose father Olympiodorus had known in Athens. The poet-historian seems to have wished to help the royal family to more fully understand the West and its Italian court, where their daughter would be sent in 437 to become the wife of Emperor Valentinian III. As the remains of his history indicate, Olympiodorus was not afraid to provide a detailed, realistic, possibly unpopular, and even ugly account of recent follies in the West. But in his praise for Stilicho, Olympiodorus offered what he may have believed was practical advice which, if followed, might still improve the condition of the western empire.¹⁷ He likewise defended the character of many noble Visigoths—a people with whom Stilicho had made a controversial

¹⁶ If we were to suppose that Claudian became Olympiodorus, our examination of Olympiodorus' known personal history does not indicate that he spent any significant time in Constantinople, where a chance encounter with a western visitor might have uncovered his secret. Likewise, we cannot prove that Olympiodorus ever traveled to Italy, either in 425 (as has often been suggested, to explain his detailed knowledge of the West and his brief description of Rome) or at any other time. The sources Olympiodorus used to compose his history of western events in Italy and southern Gaul are not known. They may have been entirely documentary, or possibly also testamentary, rather than first-hand observations. This may be true even for his description of Rome, for which see fr. 41.1–2 in Blockley (1981) 204–7. Thus, as Olympiodorus, Claudian could have kept himself away from the eyes of former associates or acquaintances in the West. For the possible sources used by Olympiodorus, see Matthews (1970) 89–92; Blockley (1981) I: 34–5.

¹⁷ Stilicho was known for his policy of using *foederati*, especially Goths and Huns, to supplement his western military forces. Though this policy was often the target of aristocratic scorn, it permitted Stilicho to win numerous battles, for which both Claudian and Olympiodorus praised him. Claudian frequently praised Stilicho for his prudent use of barbarians to defend the empire in his political poems, nearly any of which will provide examples; for Olympiodorus, see fr. 3 in Blockley (1981) 154–5. Claudian further regularly sang Stilicho's praises as a defender of Honorius and the empire, and as a selfless and honorable father-in-law to Honorius (also a common theme in his panegyrics and other political poems, whether officially written in honor of Stilicho or Honorius); Olympiodorus included praise for Stilicho in his brief eulogy for the commander, which has been preserved in the *New History* of Zosimus, who follows Olympiodorus; see Zos. v.34.6–7. Here, Stilicho was said to be moderate, scrupulously honest, honorable, and not ambitious for his son Eucherius, who was executed soon after him in 408, ostensibly due to a suspicion that Stilicho was trying to make Eucherius an emperor.

treaty shortly after Claudian disappeared in 404, and who were by Olympiodorus' *floruit* firmly entrenched in southern Gaul. If Claudius Claudianus had not been able to save his patron Stilicho from the commander's conspiring political enemies, perhaps as Olympiodorus he could still advance Stilicho's policies. This politically concerned poet could again provide the eastern royal family with well-intended political advice, while simultaneously offering his former patron Stilicho the long neglected eulogy that Claudian might well have wished to write.

A number of counter-arguments might be offered to this shared-identity proposition.¹⁸ First, Claudian was well known by 404–408. His poetry, much of which had already been read to senatorial audiences in Italy, was likely published during these years; a statue had been erected in his honor in the Forum of Trajan in Rome; and Claudian had been Stilicho's chief political propagandist from 396–404.¹⁹ We might therefore ask how Claudian could emerge as Olympiodorus only eight years after 404, and not be recognized and exposed by someone in the court or aristocratic circles of either Italy or Constantinople. Second, as Alan Cameron has shown, many professional poets from Egypt traveled widely within the empire in the early 5th century, and these men often possessed similar backgrounds and training.²⁰ Is it not possible then that Olympiodorus agreed with Claudian's appraisals of Stilicho simply due to their similar educations or backgrounds? Third, Claudian was known as a master poet, who wrote primarily in Latin. Yet Olympiodorus, though he claimed to be a poet, wrote about Stilicho in a prose history and in Greek; Photius later described this work as stylistically disorganized.²¹ We might thus reasonably argue that Olympiodorus' history was hardly the sort of work one would expect from a respected literary stylist like Claudian.

These objections would certainly permit skeptics to challenge the proposition that Claudius Claudianus adopted the persona of Olympiodorus of Thebes between 404 and 412 CE. All these objections can be countered with reasonable rebuttals, but I will admit

¹⁸ Because students who will engage in the exercises described in the next section may access this article during the course of their research, I will not suggest further rebuttals to these objections, beyond what has been said. These should instead be generated by the students, and evidence should be presented and carefully evaluated for all arguments. Instructors should also require students to provide citations for all sources used to prepare their exercises.

¹⁹ Cameron (1970) 417 argues for the publication of Claudian's poetry between 404 and 408. For the inscription on the statue base that had once held Claudian's statue (erected in 400 CE; *CIL* VI.1710), see the picture, description and transcription at www.haverford.edu/classics/faculty/bmulligan/claudian/claudianinscription.html.

²⁰ Cameron (1965) 470–509.

²¹ For Olympiodorus' claim to be a poet and Photius' critique of his history, see Phot. *Bibl. Cod.* 80 ("Testimonium") in Blockley (1981) 152–3.

that it would be challenging to prove this hypothesis beyond all doubt. Fortunately, this does not signify an end to the proposition's potential utility in the sphere of education.

Part III: Pedagogical exercises for skills-training, with "interest hooks"

What follows are some pedagogical uses for the Claudian-Olympiodorus comparison. The exercises are designed for an upper-level university course in History or Classical Studies, though they could easily be adapted for an advanced high-school writing course. Each exercise may be modified in any way an instructor deems appropriate; they may also be used selectively, for smaller groups or individuals. But students will naturally explore the unifying topic more deeply and create a broader fund of related sources if the exercises are assigned as a progressive sequence. The deeper their research, familiarity and engagement becomes, the deeper too should an increasing number of "interest hooks" take hold of them. These hooks will begin to present themselves—or rather, the students will begin to create them for themselves—as they engage in these focused exercises.

A final bit of advice before we explore the exercises: A few introductory lectures or readings on the historical and cultural context of these poets can be designed for students unfamiliar with the 4th–6th centuries, and included at the beginning of the course at the discretion of the instructor. The lectures can be brief and basic, as the students will learn a great deal on their own through their personal research while completing the exercises. But students can also be asked to look up pertinent people and terms—e.g. panegyric, Photius, Honorius and Arcadius, or places such as Milan, Constantinople, Alexandria and Thebes—as introductory homework assignments. One introductory lecture might focus on methods and places for conducting research; proper formatting and procedures for citations and bibliographies; and how to locate writing resources (MLA Guide, etc.) in libraries or online. Another lecture might include how to distinguish scholarly publications from popular writing; the importance and utility of scholarly footnotes and bibliographies; and how *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* or similar resources can help with abbreviations. Common readings could include a modern historical and geographical survey of the late Antique period; a short study of late Roman professional and historical writers; or Alan Cameron's wonderful "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," which discusses *inter alia* the two poets' backgrounds and personal histories within their 5th-century context.²² Further topical lectures and readings, included as the course progresses to provide a com-

²² See n. 2, above.

mon base of knowledge and opportunities for additional instructor input, might include Claudian's and Olympiodorus' works; Blockley's study of how Olympiodorus can be uncovered in other writers' works; and individual biographical studies of each poet.

Suggested Progressive Exercise Sequence

A. Argumentative essay writing: The number and type of sources used, and the paper length, can be specified in any way that is appropriate for the course-level and time allotment. My suggestion is to have half the class argue for and half against the same-person thesis in their essays. This way, the exercise can either be repeated—with the two halves reversed to enhance argumentative writing training—or followed by a debate (see below). If only one argumentative paper is assigned, a strong concession statement that acknowledges and dismisses the opposing view can be required in the introduction. As this is the first exercise in the sequence, instructors may wish to allow the use of secondary studies alone in its preparation, as opposed to requiring both primary and secondary sources. This would allow students time to familiarize themselves with the topic and its historical context before they immerse themselves in primary readings. Source citations (e.g. footnotes) and a bibliography should be required in these essays.

B. Debate between two teams (an in-class exercise with preparation beforehand): If only one argumentative essay is assigned (half the class for, and half against), the two sides can debate the issue. Two or more independent debates, with smaller teams, can be arranged for large classes; these should have separate meeting times. Team members should share and compare their argumentative essay results during the debate preparation. This exercise can stand alone, but would then require substantial initial student research, possibly team-organized. Following the argumentative essay, the debate reinforces attention to the opposing view, and requires thoughtful responses to challenges. It also requires coordinated team/group-work, and has the potential to help students develop speaking skills. Instructors who wish to emphasize speaking skills can require that all students take an active part in the debate via a simple "taking turns" rotation.

C. In-depth research report (individual submissions): In this exercise, the depth of research can be increased, and primary sources can be included, if they have not been before. The purpose is also altered from one-sided argument (A. and B., above) to the generation of a more balanced assessment of both possibilities. Detailed descriptions and short critical evaluations of the primary and secondary sources used for the paper should be required. The report can be broken down into several stages to more thoroughly meet the needs of writing-

intensive and skills classes. Stages might include the production of a thesis, a draft, an annotated bibliography and a brief abstract after the paper is complete. All of these are optional but can offer opportunities for deeper instructor input and guidance. The stages also help break down the overall grade into smaller units. Students can be introduced in this exercise to the idea of distinguishing between peer-reviewed, academic sources and “popular”/encyclopedic sources of information.

If an annotated bibliography of sources is required, this can be completed either as a first step in the writing process, to allow instructor input before the report is completed (this is the approach I recommend), or as an appendix to the finished paper. Students can also be asked to briefly justify their selection of sources. Again, the number of studies required can vary depending on the course-level. This exercise reinforces the students’ research, critical assessment, writing and citation skills. It also permits them to make their own informed decisions in regard to the shared identity-proposition, as opposed to being required to support and argue one position or the other, as in A. and B. above.

D. Website evaluations: Whether their instructors like it or not, undergraduate and high-school students now generally use internet sources as a first and preferred option when conducting research for papers and exams. As we all know, however, internet information is often of low or questionable quality. This exercise requires students to select a number of websites relating to the topic at hand, and to evaluate their content in terms of information quality, depth of coverage, organization, references to academic sources and possible problems. As this assignment follows the research report, the students will be in a better position to critique the sites and offer a detailed list of suggestions for improvements. As an optional component, the students could present their lists of suggested changes, with justifications and supporting sources, to the authors/editors of the websites in the form of a formal letter, to encourage the editors to make responsible changes and enhance the students’ sense of engagement. Follow-up results, if available, can be shared at the end of the course. An alternative assignment might be to correct or create Wikipedia entries for related topics. Truly enterprising and web-skilled students may even wish to create their own informational websites. All these activities could be done by individual students or in small groups. Students could also first crosscheck one another’s entries for factual and grammatical correctness, and pose suggestions regarding additions, alterations or footnotes/bibliography.

E. Student-driven, derivative question generation and offshoot research project: This assignment initially requires students to apply

their imagination to generate a list of viable research questions related to the focal topic. A final research project (and optional oral presentation) may then be assigned to complete the skills sequence. In this exercise, students first assemble a list of potential research topics derived from questions they developed while researching for the previous assignments. (For examples relating to the Claudian-Olympiodorus hypothesis, see below.) Students then select a topic, after performing a preliminary search for usable sources. The completed findings reports can take the form of individual research papers or—for added variety—oral presentations (either individually or in small groups, which would necessitate group research). A stage progression similar to the one for the in-depth research report exercise—thesis, draft, abstract and annotated bibliography—can be used here as well. As an extra option, the class can be asked to help evaluate either the oral presentations or the completed papers. They should first develop their own grading rubric, subject to the instructor's input and approval, to guide their assessment and increase their communal ownership of the project. How to create a rubric could be the topic of a short initial lecture. Papers can be traded or copied, allowing students to read and critique one another's work. For all mutual grading, students should fill out standardized grade-sheets that follow their rubric. Instructors can then average the student-suggested grades and include them as a set percentage of the overall grade the writer/presenter will receive, ensuring some instructor control of the grading process. (For example, students' and instructor's grades could each be 50% of the total.)

This final project deserves particular attention, as it strongly encourages student-initiated creative work. This is an "interest hook" generator, powered by the students themselves, which will further enhance their enthusiasm. In addition, oral presentations (with visuals, PowerPoint slideshows, skits, costumes or whatever) allow students to practice presenting information creatively to an audience. The shared grading aspect helps students understand the grading process. Again, rubrics should be discussed in a formal rubric creation workshop before students do their grading. To ensure that grades are awarded responsibly, instructors can reserve the right to override or reduce biased assessments, and should alert the students to this possibility before the communal grading commences.

Below, I offer as an instructor reference a list of potential topics for exploration. These topics can be suggested to students who are struggling with a focus for the final exercise. Suggestions should be used sparingly, however, to avoid over-reliance on instructor input. It is essential to remember that interest hooks are useful mainly because they encourage students to think, question and explore independently.

Some topics for further exploration:

1. Problems of verifying identity in the ancient world—impostors, runaway slaves, frauds. This topic can be compared to false or switched identity cases in other times, including today.
2. The historical utility of primary sources written by authors whose biographical details and motives are questionable or largely unknown. Examine one ancient source in detail—e.g. the *Scriptores Historia Augusta*, Procopius' *Secret History*, Claudian's poems—and comment on how it must be handled to serve as a historical source.
3. Travel, travelers and travel writing in late Antiquity. Explore the various purposes for travel and the different literary accounts that resulted; examine the traveler's experience on land and sea, or the "wandering scholars" of Egypt in the 4th and 5th centuries CE, or imaginary or fictional travels.
4. Literary circles in late Antiquity, schools, patronage and/or careers for literati; manuscript publication and literary circulation; or ancient libraries and manuscript preservation.
5. Art historical, archaeological and literary artifacts related to ancient writers (e.g. the "Claudian and his Muse" diptych; Claudian's statue-base in Rome); or the manuscript history of any work by a late Antique author (how it came down to the present).
6. Late Roman-barbarian diplomacy and relations, and their representation in court literature; reality vs. propaganda in late Antique literature; Alaric and the Goths; Roman *foederati* policies.
7. Specific studies of any individual extant work by these focal writers, or of works that have been attributed to them but are of uncertain authorship.

This list is by no means exhaustive; again, the students should be asked to generate such topics for themselves. Note also that all these topics are related somehow to the focused central theme the students will have already investigated extensively, if the exercises suggested above have been assigned sequentially. Bibliographical materials from previous research exercises can thus be carried over to be put to new uses in this project, and might even be shared among students (one happy result of peer collaboration).

Alternative central topics for the focus of the exercise sequence are best left to the discretion of the instructor, who may select them based upon his or her own interests and specialties. I offer three possibilities, by way of example and to whet the imagination. Instructors may also wish to ask their students to generate a list of such proposals, based on the model of the Claudian-Olympiodorus theme, to use in future iterations of this course or in individual exercises derived from it.

(1) Was Catullus' character "Lesbia" actually the 1st-century BCE Roman woman named Clodia, the infamous second sister of Publius Clodius? If so, should that identification alter how we read Catullus' poems?

(2) Was Procopius' *Secret History* a sincere record of Justinian's reign, as its author claimed? If so, what does Procopius' later employment by Justinian suggest about his character? Was he a hypocrite, and should such an assessment affect our view of his trustworthiness as a judge of other individuals' moral character?

(3) For perhaps even broader appeal: Which single historical character known from the ancient sources *most* resembles the fictional Maximus in Ridley Scott's film "Gladiator"? (The potential "interest hooks" relating to this topic boggle the mind.)

Whether the Claudian-Olympiodorus focus or another is used as the basis of the proposed exercises, the key goals and benefits are that the sequence allows students to continually build upon what they have already learned; to gradually expand and deepen their understanding of the ancient context of the focal topic; and to practice a variety of academic skills that build upon one another progressively. Interest hooks are not merely topics that draw students into a project, but opportunities for active engagement, interaction, personal inquiry and creativity.²³

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²³ Some useful websites on Claudian and his works (in Latin and English):

www.curculio.org/Claudian/index.html;
www.forumromanum.org/literature/claudianx.html;
<http://homepage.mac.com/bmulligan/classics/Claudian/claudian.html>;
www.haverford.edu/classics/faculty/bmulligan/claudian/claudian.html;
www.divusange.lus.it/claudianus/claudioano.htm.

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