

Claudian's *In Eutropium*: passages and questions

- background: the two Books of the *In Eutropium* were written at different times in 399. The second book against Eutropius, finished in late summer or early autumn, seems to have been written partly before and partly after the news of its subject's fall (if it had been completely after, it would have surely spent more time on Eutropius' fall). Eutropius fell from favour for internal reasons in August 399 (he failed to suppress a revolt by Gothic auxiliaries).

- how might Eutropius have been praised in panegyric?

"Eutropius had been lauded at Constantinople for his victory over the Huns in 398, receiving a consulship the following year, and being, for a time, the most powerful figure in Arcadius' court. He would have been subject to many panegyrics..." (Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* 2013: 57)

- how does Claudian attack/undermine Eutropius?

1. "The slaves of Egypt's kings have ever been a curse to the world; behold I suffer from a worse than Pothinus and bear a wrong more flagrant than that of which Egypt was once the scene. Pothinus' sword at Alexandria spilled the blood of a single consul [Pompey]; Eutropius brings dishonour on all." (*In Eutrop.* 1.480-4)

2. "can a slave, an effeminate [mollem], feel shame? Could a blush grace such a countenance?" (*In Eutrop.* 1.252-3)

3. "Had a woman assumed the fasces, though this were illegal it were nevertheless less disgraceful. Women bear sway among the Medes and swift Sabaeans; half barbary is governed by martial queens. We know of no people who endure a eunuch's rule." (*In Eutrop.* 1.320-4)

4. "Unhappy band, leave your womanly fastnesses, you whom the male sex has discarded and the female will not adopt." (*In Eutrop.* 1.466-7)

5. "Hast thou children to succeed to them? Marry or be married, thou canst never be a mother or a father: the former nature hath denied thee, the latter the surgeon's knife." (*In Eutrop.* 1.222-5)

6. "'Tis to the arts of that other Minerva thou shouldst apply thyself. The distaff, not the dart should be thine; thine to spin the thread, and, cunning craftsman that thou art, to urge on the spinning-maids when lazy; thine to wind the snowy wool for thy mistress' weaving." (*In Eutrop.* 1.273-6)

7. "They now despise the fan and aspire to the consul's cloak. No longer do they carry the maidenly parasol for they have dared to wield the axes of Latium. ...Change your habits and learn to follow the consul's chair, not the woman's litter." (*In Eutrop.* 1.463-74)

- which individuals are being attacked in the *In Eutropium*?

"By suggesting that Eutropius is a latter-day Pothinus, Claudian implied that the East, ruled by Pothinus/ Eutropius, had turned away from the Roman *mos maiorum*. Claudian could suggest the underlying discordia between Honorius and Arcadius yet he could not openly criticise the emperor's brother, especially one who was co-Augustus. Instead, he detached Arcadius from the West, identifying him with the East and, in his criticism of eastern ways,

tacitly allowed the eastern emperor to share the blame.” (Ware, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition* 2012: 76)

- What abuse of the East is there? does it change from Book 1 to Book 2?

“the second book, apparently started before but completed after this event [the fall], extends the individual criticisms of the first book to become far more comprehensively anti-eastern and more virulently anti-Constantinopolitan.” (Kelly, ‘*Claudian and Constantinople*’ in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* 2012: 244)

“[the narrative] shows far less of Eutropius. As he departs on the court’s customary summer holiday to Ancyra, Mars and Bellona look on in disgust, and Mars decides to rouse the Goths in Phrygia into revolt (2.95–177); Bellona pretends to be the wife of their Gothic chief Tarbigilus and urges him to rebel; a geographical digression on Phrygia follows and the metaphorical effect of the rebellion is shown in the despair of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, whose mural crown crashes to the ground (2.238–303). When Eutropius hears of the rebellion, and bribery fails, he calls a council ..., A member of the council, Leo, boldly offers to go against the Goths, suffers military disaster, and dies from fear (2.376–461). The Constantinopolitans find out that Asia Minor is devastated and hear rumors that the Persians are coming (2.462–84). They are horrified and repentant (2.485–526); Aurora goes to seek Stilicho; deploring the successive perfidy of Rufinus and Eutropius, she appeals to him to intervene and save her (2.526–602).” (Kelly 2012: 252)

8. “The senate of Byzantium has been deprived of thy loved voice;” (*In Eutr.* pr. 2.58, *dilecto caruit Byzantius ore senatus*)

- anti-Constantinople? (“Constantinople and its people (and to a lesser extent the east as a whole) are seen as culpable, the sort of city and the sort of population who could allow a eunuch’s consulship to happen.” Kelly 2012: 250)

9. “Do they not condemn him in their hearts? No: list the plaudits of the senate, of the lords of Byzantium, of the Grecian citizens of Rome [*Graiosque Quirites*].” (2.135-6, Mars; cf. Juvenal 3.60-1: *non possum ferre, Quirites, Graecam urbem*)

Evidence of relations between East and West

- Is it a sign of a split or even the definitive break between west and east, as Gnilka and Christiansen have suggested?
- what factors should we take into account if using as a historical source?

audience and aims

- who was the audience?

• What are the aims? What were Stilicho’s What would Stilicho’s agenda be in 399? (“However, perpetual disunity was not envisioned, but rather the reunification of the empire, under Stilicho”, Tougher, S. ‘Eunuchs in the East, Men in the West? Dis/unity, Gender and Orientalism in the Fourth Century’. In: *East and West in the Roman Empire of the Fourth Century*, Vol. 5. 2015. 147-63. Radboud Studies in Humanities, 161). Contrast Christiansen (1970: 114) “those [poems] of 399 show a world splitting into two parts; and all later works picture a hopelessly divided empire.”. NB “as a political manifesto, the poem has astonishingly little content” (Cameron 1970 *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court*

of *Honorius* 133, 134); “*Eutr. i.* had the very limited objective of simply crafting an unfavourable climate of opinion” (Cameron 1970:134, sees anti-Byzantinism was only a feature of the second book)

10. “Why art thou so wearied of the world whereon I shine? Leavest thou me thus to be the sport and laughing-stock of slaves and carest only for Italy, thou that wert once my guide and my leader?” (*In Eutr.* 2.534-6, Aurora to Stilicho)

11. “I seek not to draw thee away from Italy; thou art enough defence for both empires. Let both have the benefit of thine illustrious arms; let the same shield defend us and one hero work the salvation of a twofold world” (*In Eutr.* 2.599-602, Aurora to Stilicho)

- what aspects of the poem may make it seem less like direct criticism or extreme criticism?

12. “Why seek to divide the two empires and embroil loving brothers in strife? Madman, remember thy former trade; ’twere more fitting thou shouldst endeavour to reconcile them.” (*In Eutr.* 1.281-4, of Eutropius: as a pander, Eutropius should be keen on bringing relationships together)

13. “The world had begun to form one single empire under the rule of the two brothers (for who, with the awful example so fresh in his mind, would dare embark upon a like venture?) when suddenly (it is a monstrous story which scarce bears the telling) a eunuch came forward as Rufinus’ heir.” (*In Eutr.* 2.546-50, Aurora to Stilicho); nb “Rufinus was the prime cause of the trouble; ’twas he who wrought disunion [discordia] between the two empires.” (*Eutr.* 2.539-41, of Rufinus, Aurora’s speech)

14. “O’ercome us, Neptune, with thy trident and overwhelm our defiled soil along with all the guilt. One city we yield to the Furies, a scapegoat for the sins of the world.” (*In Eutr.* 2.37-9, of Constantinople)

15. “That name erased, our annals breathe once more, and better health is restored to the palace now that it has at last vomited forth its poison [*luem*]” (*In Eutr.* 2.pr.12-13)

16. “Ere the deed was done you should have realized its horror; you should have erased the blot ere it had dried. When the body is overwhelmed by long-standing disease ’tis all in vain that thou makest use of healing medicines. When an ulcer has penetrated to the marrow of the bones the touch of a hand is useless, steel and fire must sane the place that the wound heal not on the surface, like any moment to re-open. The flame must penetrate to the quick to make a way for the foul humours to escape; in order that, once the veins are emptied of corrupted blood, the fountain-head of the evil may be dried up. Nay, even limbs are amputated to assure the healthy life of the rest of the body. Think you the Court fitly cleansed by Eutropius’ exile in Cyprus? The world avenged by the banishment of a eunuch? Can any ocean wash away that stain? any age bring forgetfulness of so great a crime?” (*In Eutr.* 2.10-23)

17. “Since our soldiers’ valour is numbed and they have learned to obey an unmanned [lit “soft”] master, let a stranger from the north avenge our outraged laws and barbarian arms bring relief to disgraced Rome.” (*In Eutr.* 2.156-9; Christiansen goes so far as to suggest a reference to Stilicho: “Since Stilicho was half Vandal, the latter passage may be expressing Western interest in another Eastern intervention. External force must be applied to the East.” Christiansen ‘Claudian and the East,’ *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 19.1, 1970: 118)