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EUTROPIUS AS AN ORIENTAL

BUILDING THE INVECTIVE WITH REFERENCES TO ORIENT IN THE FIRST BOOK OF CLAUDIAN'S *IN EUTROPIUM*

ABSTRACT: Eutropius, eunuch who became the consul of the Roman Empire in 399 AD under Arcadius, is a villain of Claudius Claudian's invective *In Eutropium*. Argumentation in this piece is based on many negative *topoi* employed in the earlier Roman poetry. In doing this, the poet makes a particular use of stereotypes connected with the East, by dint of which he can attribute these features to the Eastern Roman Empire (epitomised by Eutropius) and – at the same time – to show that the right Roman virtues are fostered in the Western Roman Empire, controlled by the poet's patron, Stilicho.

KEY WORDS: Claudian, Eutropius, Roman invective, Eastern Roman Empire, Eunuchs, Ancient stereotypes

Claudius Claudian (*floruit* 395–404) is often considered the greatest Roman poet of the late antiquity. Though a Greek from Egypt by birth, he mastered Latin and wrote outstanding works by dint of which he won acclaim of contemporary readers and positive evaluations of modern scholars, especially in recent decades that have witnessed an intensive interest in late antiquity.[1] Claudian's political poems undoubtedly

[1] Fifty years later, A. Cameron's *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Cameron 1970) is still the basic reference for every student of Claudian. Generally on Claudian, see also: Döpp 1980; Garambois-Vasquez 2007; Ware 2012. It is worth citing H.L. Levy's (1958: 340) opinion of Claudian: "Claudian was an Alexan-

constitute the most important part of his poetic *oeuvre* written in Italy at the turn of the 4th and the 5th century.[2] They are usually divided into panegyrics and invectives, although this division is sometimes brought into question.[3] Two works, *In Rufinum* (397 AD) and *In Eutropium* (399 AD), written against the high-ranking officials of the Eastern Roman Empire, are clear-cut examples of political invective, being in line with Stilicho's unification policy and – for this reason – against the policy of the Constantinopolitan court. In my paper I would like to carry out an analysis of *In Eutropium* from the perspective of the references to the East, and to demonstrate how they co-create the negative image of Eutropius.[4]

The genre of invective (*vituperatio*, ψόγος) featured prominently in Graeco-Roman literature for ages, and its history has been examined thoroughly so far.[5] Some elements of invective, just like its generic opposition, praise (*laus*, ἐγκώμιον), can already be seen in the epic of Homer. Until the end of antiquity, the generic status of invective was unclear, since it merged elements of different genres and in addition appeared both in poetry and in prose (in Roman literature – especially in the last decades of the Republic). Both variants made extensive use of similar patterns[6] which were actually the opposite of the rules of panegyric,

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drian Greek who had imbued himself with Latin letters in a manner perhaps paralleled only by Joseph Conrad's feat in making himself a master writer of English prose."

2 Claudian's commitment to the policy of Stilicho, then *magister utriusque militiae* of the West, is incontrovertible. However, scholars argue about the scale of this commitment. Alan Cameron (1970: 30–62) put a particular emphasis on the propagandistic role of Claudian poetry. Cameron's opinions have not met with general approval, see e.g. Döpp 1980: 8–23; Long 1996a: 202–212; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 9.

3 There is no slightest doubt about the generic classification of *In Eutropium* and *In Rufinum*. However, the term "invective" is sometimes attributed also to the poem on the war against Gildo as well as to some epigrams of Claudian: Long 1996: 5; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 11–67.

4 On *In Eutropium*, see e.g. Cameron 1970: 124–155; Döpp 1980: 161–174; Long 1996a; Burrell 2003; Ware 2016.

5 The most comprehensive depiction is: Koster 1980.

6 This regular structure was made of an introduction (πρόλογος), descriptions of descent (γένος), upbringing (ἀνατροφή), exploits (πράξεις) and finally comparison (σύγκρισις) and conclusion (ἐπίλογος). The fullest example of application of this pattern in Claudian's poetry is *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto quartum consuli* (398 AD). Old but still useful description of this structure can be found in Struthers 1919.

developed and codified in the age of the Second Sophistic.[7] In the poetry of Claudian, those patterns were not always followed because of – above all things – the influence of other literary genres: martial epic, love elegy and Juvenal-like satire.[8] Invective was frequently used as an instrument of the political struggle between the supporters and enemies of Stilicho. One should accept the argument of F. Garambois-Vasquez who stated that the political atmosphere at the end of the 4th century resembled that of the last decades of the Republic.[9] The creation of *In Eutropium* should be linked then with the current political situation in the corridors of power of the Empire ruled by brothers Honorius (393/395–423) and Arcadius (383/395–408), the sons of Theodosius the Great (379–395).[10]

Eutropius, the main villain of Claudian's poem, was one of the most important persons creating the politics of the Eastern Roman Empire at the end of the 4th century. This freedman and eunuch from the frontier area between Rome and Persia got an influential position of *praepositus sacri cubiculi* at the court of Arcadius, eventually becoming his "prime minister" after the assassination of *praefectus praetorio* Rufinus by the Gothic *foederati* in November 395 AD, for which he was at least partially responsible (possibly in collusion with Stilicho[11]). Although Rufinus was perceived as an enemy of Stilicho, his death did not contribute to the improvement in the relations between both parts of the Empire.

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7 As H.L. Levy (1946: 57) rightly put it: "The patterns prescribed for the two genres are identical, save that in the *ψόγος* each *τόπος* is to be treated as an occasion for revilement instead of as a theme of eulogy." In turn, F. Garambois-Vasquez (2007: 124) pointed out that invective was less restricted than panegyric, thus corresponding to Claudian's vivid poetic imagination.

8 Influence of other genres on Claudian's invective: Long 1996b; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 124–195; Ware 2016.

9 "Le coeur du conflit se trouve là, entre partisans et adversaires du regent, dans une atmosphère proche de celle des derniers combats de la République" – Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 77.

10 On panegyric and invective in the poetry of Claudian, see Struthers 1919; Levy 1946; Levy 1958; Long 1996: 17–105; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 68–123.

11 W. Liebeschuetz (1990: 92–93) rightly observed that even if Stilicho was an inspirer of that assassination (cf. Zos. V 8, 1), he did not profit from it. It was the Eastern elites who took advantage of the death of Rufinus, who was of Western origin (from Gaul). After 395 AD, the effective rule of the Eastern Roman Empire was in the hands of the Easterners, up to then in opposition to Rufinus and his henchmen. See also Zakrzewski 1927: 21–26, 34.

With Empress Aelia Eudoxia's support, Eutropius took control of the emperor, thus preventing Stilicho from becoming the omnipotent regent both in Milan and in Constantinople. The eunuch forced Stilicho and his armies to leave the Balkans and then inspired the rebellion of Gildo, *comes* of Africa, against the Western Roman Empire. Eutropius waged a successful campaign against the Huns in 398 AD, thanks to which he was given the title of *patricius* and the consulate for the next year. Those honours (never before enjoyed by a eunuch) did not stand him in good stead. The Western Roman Empire did not recognize his consulate and his eastern enemies seized every opportunity to overturn him. At the beginning of 399 AD the Gothic troops, being stationed in Phrygia, rose in revolt under the command of Tribigild, who demand the deposition of Eutropius. The general Gainas, sent against the rebels, failed to crush the revolt and blamed the "prime minister" for his own defeat. After some hesitation, Arcadius deposed the eunuch who fled to the Constantinopolitan church of the Holy Wisdom where the bishop John Chrysostom gave him asylum. Eutropius eventually left the church only to be expelled to Cyprus. He was later called back to the capital and executed there in autumn 399 AD.[12]

In Eutropium consists of two books (the first one – 513 hexameters, the second one – 602 hexameters). The second book is preceded by an elegiac preface. The first book was written after the news from the East had come about Eutropius' victory against the Huns and his nomination to consulate (the end of 398 AD). At that moment, the poet was working on the panegyric on Manlius Theodorus, who was offered consulate by the western government.[13] The second book was written later, probably in spring or summer 399 AD when the news of Eutropius' fall reached Italy. Both books differ in terms of content, argumentation and its hierarchization, thence G. Kelly rightly pointed out that the former is closer to "canonical" invective (just like *In Rufinum*), while the latter rather

[12] Zakrzewski 1927: 26–74; Döpp 1980: 150–152, 159–161; Liebeschuetz 1990: 89–110; Kelly 2001: 159–170.

[13] Since Stilicho was made *hostis publicus* by Constantinople, he could not take consulate in 399 despite his success in suppressing Gildo's rebellion in Africa. That is why Manlius Theodorus became the consul of that year. Cameron 1970: 123–127.

resembles mock-epic. This can be justified by different political circumstances in which both books were written.[14]

The tradition of setting the effeminate East against the manly West was pervasive in the Graeco-Roman literature. In the Imperial Age, the image of the East, based on deep-rooted negative stereotypes, has become the antithesis of that of Rome. The authors ascribed to the East the vices treated by the Romans as dangerous to the moral health of the society: effeminacy, venality, debauchery, promiscuity, unfitness for military service and fanatical piety. Furthermore, the influence of Orient was blamed for the decline of Roman *mores*.[15] A eunuch, as a "non-male," was one of the most important (at least from the times of Terentius' *Eunuch* in the 2nd century BC) oriental *topoi* in the Latin literature and Claudian exploited skilfully this literary tradition in his invective. In the subsequent part of the paper, I will carry out an analysis of these passages of the poem in which one can discern the link between personal attack and negative associations with the Orient. In the second book, the target of Claudian aggression is actually not only Eutropius but the whole Eastern Roman Empire and the ψόγος is not based on the negative image of the Orient, so all the passages to be analysed will come from the first book. Admittedly, in this book we can also find critical opinions on the Eastern Roman Empire but they are supplementary to the main attack on Eutropius.[16]

Claudian begins his poem with a catalogue of horrifying *prodigia*, fading in comparison with the unprecedented scandal of a eunuch becoming a consul. Then the poet tries to depict the biography of Eutropius (the invective lacks the usual part called γένος, since hardly anything was known about his descent), starting with the fact that he was a slave whom his masters never wanted to keep, which resulted in frequent

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[14] Long 1996a: 149–191; Burrell 2003: 111; Kelly 2012: 252. H.L. Levy (1946: 65, n. 31) in his paper on the rhetorical structure of *In Rufinum* stated that *In Eutropium* (as opposed to the former poem) was not influenced so much by the tradition of the ψόγος pattern.

[15] The xenophobic satires of Juvenal (as already mention, one of Claudian's sources in *In Eutropium*), especially satires 3 and 15, serve as prime examples of that kind of accusations. See Sapota 2001: 75–86.

[16] For the description of the Graeco-Roman anti-Eastern stereotypes, see e.g. Sapota 2001: 45–95; Isaac 2004 (esp. 253–380).

sales. Claudian depicts the castration procedure which Eutropius underwent in his early childhood[17]:

Cunabula prima cruentis
Debet suppliciis; rapitur castrandus ab ipso
Ubere; suscipiunt matris post viscera poenae.
Advolat Armenius certo mucrone recisos
Edoctus mollire mares damnoque nefandum
Aucturus pretium; fecundum corporis ignem
Sedibus exhaurit geminis unoque sub ictu
Eripit officiumque patris nomenque mariti.
Ambiguus vitae iacuit, penitusque supremum
In cerebrum secti traxerunt frigora nervi (l. 44–53)

A very dramatic scene is shown to us: a child is suddenly wrenched from his mother arms (l. 45–46). Tension and abruptness are underlined by the use of verbs referring to speed: *rapitur* (l. 45), *suscipiunt* (l. 46), *advolat* (l. 47) and *eripit* (l. 51). The main person in this scene is an Armenian expert in carrying out castration. Claudian refers in this passage to historical reality: eunuchs were indeed brought to the Empire (in Rome castration was prohibited under the laws introduced by Domitian and Constantine) first and foremost from Armenia, Lazica and Iran, that is, from the eastern lands, frequently at war with Imperium Romanum. The poet makes use of an association between eunuchs and effeminacy (e.g. pejorative verb *mollire*, l. 47) and then takes notice of two negative effects of the procedure. First, it precludes men from getting married and producing offspring, thus affecting their social status. Second, the resulting sluggishness and passivity (referred to by the word *frigora*, l. 53) affect their intellectual skills. In spite of this, the loathly value (*nefandum* […] *pretium*, l. 48–49) of thus mutilated child rises, which shows the moral degeneracy of the environment in which Eutropius was born and

[17] R.T. Bruère (1964: 239–240) in his article on the influence of *Pharsalia* on Claudian's invectives mentioned this passage as well. Lucan rebuked ambitious and powerful eunuchs while describing Ptolemaic Egypt. Court eunuchs, first and foremost Pothinus, were responsible for the pitiful death of Pompey. To some extent, Eutropius can be viewed as the new Pothinus and the Eastern Roman Empire – the new Egypt with all of its negative connotations. See also Ware 2012: 75–78; Tougher 2015: 155–156. On Claudian's reception of Lucan in *In Eutropium*, see Roche 2016; Ware 2016.

raised. At the same time, this statement mitigates the reader's compassion for the poor child. In the following lines, the dehumanization of Eutropius goes even further, resulting in showing the eunuch consul as an infernal threat to the world order.[18]

Next, Claudian relates the very specifically understood "exploits" of Eutropius (the so called πράξεις part of panegyric or invective): first as a sexual slave,[19] next – a procurer, and finally – a personal servant to his master's daughter. In his old age, he was freed and then – owing to the support of Abundantius – entered public service, displaying enormous avarice and selling various state offices:

Quidquid se Tigris ab Haemo
Dividit, hoc certa proponit merce locandum,
Institor imperii, caupo famosus honorum.
Hic Asiam villa pactus regit; ille redemit
Coniugis ornatu Syriam; dolet ille paterna
Bithynos mutasse domo. Subfixa patenti
Vestibulo pretiis distinguit regula gentes:
Tot Galatae, tot Pontus eat, tot Lydia nummis;
Si Lyciam tenuisse velis, tot millia ponas,
Si Phrygas, adde; parum (l. 196–205)

The catalogue of provinces that fell prey to the eunuch is several lines long. All of them were sold to people who offered rather low prices for the highest honours. Even the attribution of the word *caupo* (l. 198) to Eutropius shows the decline of the eastern administration, suitable rather for innkeepers or petty tradesmen than for statesmen. The richest provinces of the empire, Asia or Syria, were sold for a villa or for women's jewelry. The question arises again not only about the seller but also about the participants of the auction. Eastern elites take advantage

[18] Long 1996: 35, 114–116; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 160–161; Tougher 2002: 143–144. R. Smith (2007: 200) puts an emphasis on the fact that in the Eastern Roman Empire (in contrast to the West), the highest-ranking officials were not infrequently of humble origin which could be seen as another transgression of accepted socio-political norms.

[19] The lament of Eutropius, rejected by his former lover, Ptolemaeus, is a clear-cut parody of the elegiac motif of abandoned girl and a prime example of Claudian's versatility and generic consciousness, see Ware 2016.

of the "prime minister's" greed, whereas the state loses its properties and faces a severe crisis. One could discern in these lines a strong and widespread criticism of the ruling circles of the Eastern Roman Empire: this criticism grows even stronger in the second book. Eutropius' environment is again shown in an unfavourable light by dint of which the need of change in Constantinople (that can be only introduced by Stilicho) becomes evident once more.[20]

In the following lines, Claudian continues addressing the problem of Eutropius auctioning off eastern cities and provinces:

> *Non pudet heu, superi, populos venire sub hasta?*
> *Vendentis certe pudeat. Quid iure sepulto*
> *Mancipium tot regna tenet, tot distrahit urbes?*
> *Pollentem solio Croesum victoria Cyri*
> *Fregit, ut eunucho flueret Pactolus et Hermus?*
> *Attalus heredem voluit te, Roma, relinqui,*
> *Restitit Antiochus praescripto margine Tauri,*
> *Indomitos curru Servilius egit Isauros*
> *Et Pharos Augusto iacuit vel Creta Metello,*
> *Ne non Eutropio quaestus numerosior esset?*
> *In mercem veniunt Cilices, Iudaea, Sophene*
> *Romanusque labor Pompeianique triumphi* (l. 210–221)

This enumeration, based for its greater part on Lucan's description of Cesar plundering the temple of Saturn (Luc. III 112–168), continues the previous catalogue and encompasses a long series of historical *exempla*. Claudian alluded eagerly to the heroic past of Rome (especially from the republican age) in order to praise or criticise the characters of his poems.[21] In *In Eutropium*, the activities of the eunuch-consul are juxtaposed with the eastern achievements of Roman commanders of the good old days. They conquered new lands for Rome, whereas Eutropius diminishes her power, selling what they achieved.[22] Thus, for them, the

[20] Cameron 1970: 129–130; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 78–79; cf. *Stilicho, quid vincere differs, / Dum certare pudet? Nescis quod turpior hostis* / *Laetitia maiore cadit?* (l. 500–502).

[21] On the pervasive power of *exemplum* over the Roman culture see Roller 2018.

[22] It is worth pointing out that in the first part of the poem Eutropius is said to have been sold many times and now he is the seller because of Fortune's cruel joke.

activities in the East were a claim to fame, for him – a reason for notoriety. Eutropius turns out to be a completely unworthy successor of the previous consuls. Making a reference to the kingdom of Lydia, conquered by the Persians in the 6th century BC, Claudian exploits the old Greek *topos* of Lydian wealth, which has been transferred to Persians and Orientals in general.[23] This example emphasises the greed of the voracious eunuch, showing that even the whole wealth of Asia cannot satisfy him. At a more general level, Eutropius' avarice deprives Romans of the effects of their conquests. Entire lands and their wealth, symbols of the Roman rule over the East, the results of past efforts (*Romanus labor*, l. 221) are to be lost. In the good old days, Romans were conquering the East but times have changed and the power of the Oriental wealth promotes the decline of the Empire, which again leads to the conclusion that the ruling circles of Constantinople are the cause of this crisis.[24]

In a very scornful way, Claudian depicts the triumphal parade of Eutropius which took place after his successful campaign against the Huns in 398 AD. Afraid of excessive power of the generals, the "prime minister" decided to lead the army himself. The armies of the Huns, sacking Asia Minor, were defeated, and Eutropius was granted permission to lead a triumphal parade.[25] Claudian makes his best to depreciate those achievements of his enemy (even though from the military point of view it secured Asia Minor for several decades):

> *Ille tamen (quid enim servum mollemque pudebit?*
> *Aut quid in hoc poterit vultu flagrare ruboris?)*
> *Pro victore redit: peditum vexilla secuntur*

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[23] Cyrus and Croesus were often paired in Latin poetry (cf. Prop. II 26a 3; Claud. *In Ruf.* I 198; Sid. *Carm*. IX 30–33). They symbolised two aspects attributed to the world of Orient: wealth and monarchical system. It is worth noting that in spite of negative connotations of the Latin noun *rex*, Cyrus was generally shown in a positive light as a just ruler – cf. Babnis 2016: 178–179.

[24] Long 1996a: 135–136; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 234–235; Tougher 2015: 152–153; Roche 2016: 232–233.

[25] At the end of the 4th century AD, successful commanders regained the right to lead triumphal parades, formerly an exclusive prerogative of emperors and members of their families since the Augustan age. The description of Eutropius's triumphal parade given by Claudian is quite precise, see McCormick 1986: 35–130 (esp. 48–50); Long 1996a: 184–185.

Et turmae similes eunuchorumque manipli,
Hellespontiacis legio dignissima signis (l. 252–256)

Vel, si sacra placent, habeas pro Marte Cybelen;
Rauca Celaenaeos ad tympana disce furores.
Cymbala ferre licet pectusque inlidere pinu
Inguinis et reliquum Phrygiis abscidere cultris (l. 277–280)

A part of the invective referring to the exploits of the protagonist (πράξεις) was usually divided into sections describing the achievements in times of peace (κατὰ εἰρήνην) and in times of war (κατὰ πόλεμον). The condemnation of Eutropius' greed can be attributed to the former, whereas the passage about the triumph – to the latter. According to Claudian, the mere fact that Eutropius led an army is shocking (actually, a *praepositus sacri cubiculi* had never been given command before), all the more his claims to the title of imperator and to the triumphal parade. In order to depreciate this campaign, the poet added maniples of eunuchs to his enemy's troops (l. 255) and called them "worthy of Priapus banners" (l. 256), that is, promiscuous rather than valiant. The opposition between eunuchs and worshippers of a phallic deity shows another tension in Eutropius' army. Priapus is referred to by the adjective *Hellespontiacus*, emphasising the place where his cult was especially strong – Lampsacus in Asia Minor. This negative Oriental connotation can also be seen in the following passage, mentioning the goddess Cybele. Eutropius is said to have worshipped not Mars but Phrygian Cybele (l. 277), in whose orgiastic cult castrated priests participated.[26] The fact that Cybele replaces Mars overturns the traditional order of things and deprives the army of its patron deity. The use of *cymbala* (l. 279) instead of military horn is another symptom of the military decline.[27] Both Eastern deities

[26] The cult of Cybele (especially autocastration performed by her priests called *galli*) was castigated by Juvenal (II 111–116) and this part of the invective is yet another example of Claudian's reception of the poet. The first book of *In Eutropium* shows an important influence of Juvenal's second satire, the second book – of his fourth satire. In respect of *galli*, it seems obvious to mention Catullus's poem 63, although the image of Attis' autocastration there is by no means unequivocal.

[27] Another motif belonging to the sphere of sound is eunuchs' voice referred to as *rauca* (l. 278) because of the lack of voice mutation. See e.g. *fracta et rauca et effeminata voce clamores* (Apul. *Met*. VIII 26)

(coming from regions quite close to Constantinople) were not only unmilitary, but also strange in terms of morality, and as such they are a very accurate argument against Eutropius, an outrageous eunuch triumphator. It is worth noting that this pseudo-triumph could be connected with the triumph of Marc Antony in 34 BC: it was also questionable and the West did not accept it, took place in Alexandria (therefore, in the East!), not in Rome, and was granted to the triumvir after the fights in Armenia.[28]

The success in repulsing the enemy was the reason why Eutropius was finally granted consulate. Claudian depicts scoffingly the ceremony of its inauguration, emphasising that a woman would be a more suitable person to become a consul than a eunuch.[29] This link between women and eunuchs is used in the following passage, in which the poet discusses the origin of eunuchs, whom he calls unnatural creatures. He considers two possible reasons for "inventing" eunuchs, and both are linked to two Oriental monarchies, Babylon and Parthia:

> *Hos fecere manus: seu prima Semiramis astu*
> *Assyriis mentita virum, ne vocis acutae*
> *Mollities levesve genae se prodere possent,*
> *Hos sibi coniunxit similes; seu Parthica ferro*
> *Luxuries vetuit nasci lanuginis umbram*
> *Servatoque diu puerili flore coegit*
> *Arte retardatam Veneri servire iuventam* (l. 339–345)

According to Claudian, Semiramis, a legendary queen of Assyria/Babylon frequently mentioned in Latin literature, is supposed to have created eunuchs so as to hide her real sex.[30] Another possibility men-

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[28] Long 1996a: 119–121, 240–241; Long 1996b: 328; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 165–167; Tougher 2015: 151–152. On the Alexandrian triumph of Marc Antony, see Balbuza 2016.

[29] The poet mentions female rulers of Medians and Sabaeans (cf. Claud. *In Eutr*. I 320–324), adding that there have never been eunuch rulers. However, it is not true, since, for example, we know of Hermias, the tyrant of Atarneus, and Philetaerus, the founder of the Pergamene Kingdom. Furthermore, they both came from Asia Minor and this fact could have been included as another example of Eastern degeneracy, but it was more suitable for Claudian to claim that eunuchs have never ruled.

[30] E.g. Prop. III 11, 21–26; Iuv. II, 108–109. In both poems Semiramis is paired with Cleopatra as a part of the catalogue of famous queens. In his panegyric on Probinus and Olybrius, Claudian uses an adjective *Semiramius*, meaning 'Babylonian', which shows

tioned by the poet is the Persian fondness for young boys, whose maturation could be stopped by castration. Both ideas recalled in this passage show a clear-cut infringement of the natural state of affairs in the East: women have political control and the biological process of growth is artificially stopped. The phrase *Parthica* […] *luxuries* (l. 342–343) brings to mind another *topos* of classical literature connected with the East, that is, the opinion of the great wealth and excess of Persian (later Parthian) kings.[31] In such a context, the mention of "service of Venus" (*Veneri servire*, l. 345) is another allusion to Eutropius' previous career of a sexual favourite of his masters. Once again, the East, "homeland of eunuchs," is linked with unnaturalness, excessive wealth and sexual degeneration.

The conclusion of the first book of the invective is made of a long (l. 371–513) speech of the goddess Roma. The employment of a divine character is frequent in Claudian's poetry, serving the purpose of exposing the idea of eternal Rome, one of the central concepts in his poetic *oeuvre*.[32] The goddess takes pride in recent achievements of Stilicho (above all, the victory over Gildo), but then notices the dangers to Rome coming from the East:

> *Pridem tolerare fatemur*
> *Hoc genus, Arsacio postquam se regia fastu*
> *Sustulit et nostros corrupit Parthia mores,*
> *Praefecti sed adhuc gemmis vestique dabantur*
> *Custodes sacroque adhibere silentia somno* (l. 414–418)

This passage is thematically connected with above mentioned lines 339–345 discussing the origins of eunuchs. Roma decides in favour

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the distinct link between Semiramis and this Mesopotamian city. It was Ctesias of Cnidus (5th/4th century BC) who introduced her character in classical literature. Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century AD) also called her an inventor of eunuchs (Amm. XIV 6, 17).

31 A prime example of this idea is the ode I 38 of Horace (*Persicos odi, puer, apparatus*). In this poem Horace rejects extravagant Persian luxury, choosing traditional moderation instead. The mention of a boy-servant (though in different contexts) is a linking point between these works, see Babnis 2016: 174–175.

32 On this important motif in Claudian's poetry, see Long 1996a: 212–219; Brodka 1998: 91–118, Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 235–244. On Claudian's use of personifications, see e.g. Cameron 1970: 142–143; Döpp 1980: 36–37.

of Parthian descent and attributes their appearance to "Arsacid pride" (l. 415), which means that in Claudian's opinion it was a deliberate action calculated to stir up moral degeneracy in the Roman Empire, the greatest enemy of the Parthian monarchy. The poet exploits a very well-known idea that the Orient contributed to the decline of old Roman *mores*. However, he also states that this process has already advanced in Rome when eunuchs – initially used only as guardians of bedchambers[33] – began to reach for the highest positions in the state. This assertion shows not only the opinion about Parthian hostility towards Rome, but also the criticism of the political realities of the Eastern Roman Empire where eunuchs became so powerful.[34]

In the next passage the goddess starts, now in a more clear-cut way, her attack on the Eastern Roman Empire. She sets the declining and effeminate East (called here *Aurora*[35]) against the morally healthy and virile West that has to resist the disgrace of the eunuch consul:

> *Auroram sane, quae talia ferre*
> *Gaudet, et adsuetas sceptris muliebribus urbes*
> *Possideant; quid belligeram communibus urunt*
> *Italiam maculis nocituraque probra severis*
> *Admiscent populis? Peregrina piacula forti*
> *Pellantur longe Latio nec transeat Alpes*
> *Dedecus; in solis, quibus extitit, haereat arvis.*
> *Scribat Halys, scribat famae contemptor Orontes* (l. 427–434)

Anti-Eastern objections, rather allusive in the previous passage, now become explicit. Claudian returns to the old idea of the East that threatens Rome, concluding that the West has to protect its own values from the contagious Eastern ideas. Eutropius as a consul is a reason for estranging the two parts of the Empire. Peder G. Christiansen emphasised

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33 In this respect Claudian refers to the Greek etymology of the word: εὐνοῦχος comes from ὁ τὴν εὐνὴν ἔχων, which means 'having/protecting bed'. Theoretically, Eutropius' official position was actually *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, i.e. a guardian of the bedchamber.

34 Long 1996a: 232–233; Tougher 2015: 157–159. On eunuchs in the Eastern Roman Empire, see Tougher 2002; Ringrose 2003; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 155–158; Smith 2007: 203–208; Tougher 2015.

35 On terms referring to the East in Claudian, see Kelly 2012: 257–258.

the importance of 399 AD[36] for the real split of the Roman Empire (after the transitional period of 395–399 AD, when a possibility of a reunion under the auspices of Stilicho still existed). In fact, in the invective against Eutropius, in contrast to Claudian's earlier poems, we encounter no mentions of the united Empire or Stilicho's unification policy. The split between the Eastern and Western parts has intensified and for Rome's own sake it would be better to keep away from the moral danger coming from the East than to aimlessly try to fight it. The shame following the consulate of Eutropius and other negative transformations happening in Constantinople should be restricted to the Eastern part of the Empire (symbolised by rivers: the Halys in Asia Minor and the Orontes in Syria).[37]

The above-mentioned passages of Claudian's *In Eutropium* build a negative image of Eutropius using various negative stereotypes connected with the East drawn from the Graeco-Roman literary tradition. The poet merges these *topoi* very skilfully, so as to castigate his adversary and the environment that enabled him to take power. He mentions the concepts of Oriental wealth, venality, effeminacy, transgression of the natural order of things, in a word, everything that is in contradiction with traditional Roman virtues and values. In this respect, the relation between the East and the West corresponds to the relation between Eutropius and Stilicho.[38] The latter is the only person who can manage the overwhelming crisis and stop the danger advancing from the East.[39]

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[36] Christiansen 1970 (esp. 114). C. Ware (2012: 76), in turn, dates the abandoning of the Empire's unity idea not to the times of Eutropius but to 400 AD.

[37] Long 1996a: 233–235; Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 116–119; Ware 2012: 69, 76–80; Roche 2016: 238–239. The Orontes was already mentioned as a polluting symbol of the East in the third satire of Juvenal (*Iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes*, Iuv. III 62), but generally rivers were frequently mentioned as such symbols, see Babnis 2019 (esp. 7–8).

[38] Another contrast can be easily identified when comparing Claudian's pictures of two consuls of 399 AD: Manlius Theodorus in panegyric and Eutropius in invective – Cameron 1970: 126.

[39] In Claudian's poetry, Stilicho is always portrayed in contrast to villains. Through this juxtaposition, the almost godlike figure of Stilicho and his wretched enemies become two opposite parties to the great struggle between the forces of order and chaos, a conflict crucial to the entire idea of invective, see Garambois-Vasquez 2007: 244–249; Ware 2012: 117–170, 220–230.

In this opposition between these two politicians one could discern Claudian's attempt to pass on Stilicho's agenda to the traditional pagan aristocrats of Italy, to whom brilliant careers of such *parvenus* as Eutropius were downright outrageous.[40] The feeling of superiority over the despised eastern provinces, typical for this social group, could become a way of reaching a political agreement against the omnipotent eunuch. The use of old stereotypes is understandable in the situation where the poet lacked strong evidence to describe any genuine crimes of Eutropius and he badly needed some foothold to develop his poetic attack. It appears that in this invective Claudian merged the traditional negative picture of the Orient (a very generalized one) with the image of the Eastern Roman Empire:[41] Eutropius is thus a reliable representative of the circles that possess all of its vices and drawbacks. In Claudian's invective, as in the earlier Roman literature showing a distinct connection between the description of the East and the desire to dominate it, we can easily discern the tendencies to subordinate the Orient on the one hand, and, on the other, to separate from it. Paradoxically, this time, at the end of the 4th century AD, the centre of this Eastern world became the New Rome, Constantinople.

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[40] Zakrzewski 1927: 33, 44; Levy 1958: 340–341. Such an opinion was in line with general tendencies of the ancient (rather elitist) literature to dislike people who became powerful despite being of humble origin. On the purpose of the whole poem, see Long 1996a: 221–262 (esp. 238–239).

[41] However, one should bear in mind that in either book of *In Eutropium* the emperor, Arcadius, is never mentioned. Claudian had to be very careful so as not to offend the dynasty and the cherished concept of *concordia fratrum* – Cameron 1970: 128.

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