

An Icon of Ugliness—Eutropius the Eunuch

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Abstract

Theoretically, ugliness as aesthetic concept—more than the absence of beauty—first came to the fore in the 19th century. This contribution uses the late Latin poet Claudian (370–404 CE) to show that his invective epic against the consul and eunuch Eutropius (d. 399 CE) already created a notion of ugliness through the juxtaposition of the splendid consular robes and the "ugliness" of Eutropius's body.

[1] The year was 399 CE, the venue Constantinople. Imagine the newly elected consul of the Eastern empire, clad in the *trabea*, the consular robe heavy with gold and glittering multicolored jewels, draped with artfully embroidered bands (*claves*), holding the *scipio*, or scepter of office, and carried by a special carriage.¹ His name and that of his colleague in the West, Manlius Theodorus, will be inscribed in "the *fasti* of the entire world" as befitting the holder of the highest office, surpassed only by the sacred Christian emperors, Arcadius, twenty-two, in Constantinople, and his brother Honorius, fourteen, in Milan.² This Eastern consul had already received an

¹ Claudian, *On the IV Consulate of Honorius* 565-567, 564-601; *On Stilicho* 2.339 (quotes from Claudian follow the edition by John B. Hall, *Claudius Claudianus. Opera*, Leipzig 1985; and the [amended] translation by Maurice Platnauer, *Claudian*, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA 1922, vol. 1, 138-229); *Codex Theodosianus* 14.12.1 (ed. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Martin Meyer, *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, 2 vols., Berlin 1905); Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Ithaca 1989, 111-115, with fig. 23 on p. 113 from the *Calendar of Filocalus* depicting the consul Gallus; Michael Dewar, "Spinning the *Trabea*: Consular Robes and Propaganda in the Panegyrics of Claudian", in: *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, eds. Jonathan Edmonson and Alison Keith, Toronto 2008, 217-237; id., *Claudian, Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, Oxford 1996; Dirk Schlinkert, *Ordo senatorius und nobilitas. Die Konstitution des Senatsadels in der Spätantike*, Stuttgart 1996, 162-177.

² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 29.2.15 (ed. *Loeb Classical Library* [LCL] 331, 222-224): *consulares post scipiones et trabeas et fastorum monumenta mundane*; for the name of the second consul see Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, ad annum 399, quoting Claudian, *In Eutropium* 1.8 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, *Chronica minora saec. IV, V, VI, VII*, vol. 2, Berlin 1894, 37-108 [= *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi*, 11]; *The Chronicle of Marcellinus. A Translation and Commentary by Brian Croke [with a Reproduction of Mommsen's Edition of the Text]*, Sydney 1995); for Manlius Theodorus, see John F. Matthews,

extraordinary honor in the preceding year, when the emperor had granted him the title *patricius*, a title that did not correspond to a specific office but simply expressed highest esteem.³

[2] Such esteem was well merited. In the two preceding years the newly minted consul had repelled Gothic and Hunnic incursions into Asia Minor and Armenia, but his association with and service for the imperial court had been of far longer durée.⁴ Already the emperor Theodosius I (379–395), Arcadius' and Honorius's father, had entrusted him with delicate diplomatic missions.⁵ While in Antioch on one of those missions, he had encountered a certain ascetic and priest called John, whose eloquence so impressed the later consul that he made him bishop of Constantinople against considerable resistance, above all from Alexandria, but with the support of the imperial court. Further, shortly after the death of Theodosius in 395, he had arranged Arcadius's marriage to a certain Eudoxia.⁶ So, there he is: a *patricius* and

Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364–425, Oxford 1975, repr. 1990, 258-261.

³ A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 28–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols., Oxford 1964, vol. 1, 176 on the *patricius*; Peter Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Stuttgart 1980, 136-137; Schlinkert, *Ordo senatorius und nobilitas*, 248-250; Helga Scholten, *Der Eunuch in Kaisernähe. Zur politischen und sozialen Bedeutung des praepositus sacri cubiculi im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Frankfurt 1995, 46-50.

⁴ Alan Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford 1970, 124-129: 132; Claudia Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Constantinople (398–404). Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches*, Tübingen 2002, 31-41.

⁵ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 35 (ed. PG 34); *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 1.64 (ed. and trans. André-Jean Festugière, *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, Brussels 1961); Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.311-316.

⁶ Palladius, *Dialogue* 5.55-57 (ed. SC 334) is the most detailed account of Eutropius's efforts to bring John to Constantinople, sparked by Eutropius's encounter with John while in Antioch to prepare for the resistance against Hunnic incursions into Asia Minor. The funeral oration by Ps.-Martyrius, closer to the actual events, does not mention Eutropius in that context; see *Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom*, trans. Timothy D. Barnes and George Bevan, Liverpool 2013, 2-3. See also Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.2 (ed. PG 67); Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 8.2 (ed. PG 67); Theodoret of Cyrillus, *Hist. eccl.* 5.27 (ed. PG 82). Wendy Mayer, "John Chrysostom as Bishop: The View from Antioch", in: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004), 455-466, esp. 456, cautions against trusting Palladius too much. See also ead., "John Chrysostom as Crisis-Manager. The Years in Constantinople", in: *Ancient Jewish and Christian Texts as Crisis Management Literature*, eds. David C. Sim and Pauline Allen, London 2012, 128-143. On page 137 Mayer calls Eutropius a non-Christian without further comment. I am not sure why, other than perhaps reflecting the fact that he sought to take away the Church's right to asylum, an attempt Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 8.7.3, calls impious. The fact that John also refers to him as an enemy of the Church does not make

Roman consul, a victorious military commander, a member of the sacred council, the *sacer comitatus*, a consummate palace insider and trusted advisor of the Christian imperial couple, and a vital supporter of John Chrysostom, the bishop of Constantinople (d. 407 AD): an exemplary representative of the highest elite. How do we picture him? What would he wear when not clad in the jewel-encrusted *trabea*, what might he have looked like? Here is one description:

*His skin had grown loose with age; his face, more wrinkled than a prune, had fallen in because of the deep lines in his cheeks. Less deep does the plough cut the fallows in the fields, [less deep are] the folds wrought in the sails by the wind. Loathsome grubs ate away his head and bare patches appeared amid his hair. It was as though clumps of dry barren corn dotted a sun-parched field, or as if a swallow were dying in winter sitting on a branch, moulting in the frosty weather. Truly, that the outrage to the trabea might one day be even greater, Fortune added to her luxury this brand (nota) to his forehead, this deformed face. [...] His pallor and nearly bare bones [...] roused feelings of horror [...] and his pale complexion and emaciated body offended all, scaring children, disgusting those who sat at table [with him], [...] terrifying as with an evil omen those that met him [...] like a troublesome corpse or an ill-omened ghost.*⁷

[3] And here is the characterization of the ruling consuls of the year 399 in the succinct words of the sixth-century *Chronicle* of Marcellinus:

12th [indiction, the consulate of] Theodorus and Eutropius the Eunuch. This Eutropius of all eunuchs was the first and the last consul. Concerning him the poet Claudian says: 'all portents yield their place when a eunuch is made consul [omnia cesserunt eunucho consule monstra]',

him not a Christian—the "Church" in Constantinople always had enemies; John Chrysostom, *In Eutropium* (ed. PG 52.391-396), here PG 52.394 ll 27-28 (trans. Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom*, London 2000, 137-138). The edict is not extant. For a more detailed analysis of John Chrysostom's sermon see Wendy Mayer, "The Audience(s) for Patristic Social Teaching: A Case Study", in: *Reading Patristic Texts in Social Ethics*, eds. Johan Leemans, Brian Matz and Johan Verstaeten, Washington, D.C. 2011, 83-97: 92-94.

⁷ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.110-123: lamque aevo laxata cutis, sulcisque genarum/ corruerat passa facies rugosior uva:/ flava minus presso finduntur vomere rura,/ nec vento sic vela tremunt. miserabile turpes/ exedere caput tineae; deserta patebant/ intervalla comae: qualis sitientibus arvis/ arida ieiunae seges interlucet aristae/ vel qualis gelidis pluma labente pruinis/ arboris inmoritur trunco/brumalis hirundo./ scilicet ut trabeis iniuria cresceret olim,/ has in fronte notas, hoc dedecus addidit oris/ luxuriate Fortuna suae: cum pallida nudis/ ossibus horrorem dominis praeberet imago/ decolor et macies occurso laederet omnes,/ aut pueris latura metus aut taedia mensis/ aut crimen famulis aut procedentibus omen,/ et nihil exhausto caperent in stipite lucri. Helge Schweckendiek, *Claudians Invektive gegen Eutrop. Ein Kommentar*, Hildesheim 1992; Jacqueline Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium, or, How, When, and Why to Slander a Eunuch*, Chapel Hill 1996, 1; Catherine Ware, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition*, Cambridge 2012, 3-6.

quoting the very poem just cited.⁸

[4] The poet Claudian (370–404 CE) wrote his two invectives against the consul of the year 399 in that very same year.⁹ In them, he created the iconic picture of the powerful court eunuch by painting one of antiquity's most powerful literary images of ugliness; indeed, here he made ugliness itself iconic.¹⁰ He used all the well-known classic literary tropes used to denigrate eunuchs, but he combined them such that his depiction of Eutropius achieved a remarkable density: like a palimpsest, he layered his descriptions of the man to reveal a monster.¹¹ The impact was lasting.¹²

⁸ Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, ad annum 399, quoting Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.8 (ed. Mommsen, *Chron. min.*, vol. 2; trans. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*).

⁹ There is some debate in scholarship regarding when exactly *In Eutropium* 1 and especially 2 were composed, specifically regarding the question whether Claudian finished *Eutr.* 2 before or after Eutropius's recall from exile and his later execution, see below. However, there is consensus that most of both works was written in 299; Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 126-151; Alan Cameron, "Claudian", in: *Wandering Poets and Other Essays on Late Greek Literature and Philosophy*, ed. id., Oxford 2015, 113-146, esp. 140-142; Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium*, 13-14, 35-50; Schweckendiek, *Claudians Invektive gegen Eutrop*, 18-28.

¹⁰ For the complexities involved in characterizing ugliness see the seminal work by Karl Rosenkranz, *Ästhetik des Häßlichen*, ed. with a postscript by Dieter Kliche, Stuttgart 2007; Nerina Santorius, *Zerrbilder des Göttlichen. Das Hässliche in der französischen Skulptur des 19. Jahrhunderts als Movens der Moderne*, Paderborn 2012, 9-45; Gretchen E. Henderson, *Ugliness. A Cultural History*, Chicago 2015, 25-107. These works focus on post-Renaissance and early and late modern notions of the ugly. See also Jukka Gronow, *The Sociology of Taste*, London 1997, 1-46 for notions of "group taste".

¹¹ Claudian in fact created a new, highly inter-textual genre of which *In Eutropium* forms a part, hence my reference to Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Lincoln 1997. More importantly, though, he did create Eutropius's body like a palimpsest, as the citation above already indicates. I would like to thank Lucia Tang for our conversations about this aspect. For Claudian's intertextuality see, inter alia, Paul Roche, "Lucan in Claudian's *In Eutropium*: Rhetoric, Paradox, and Exemplarity", in: *Lucan and Claudian: Context and Intertext*, eds. Valéry Berliencourt, Lavinia Galli Miliç and Damien Nelis, Heidelberg 2016, 227-242; Catherine Ware, "Eutropius, Lucan and the Ladies of Elegy", *ibid.*, 243-254; Robert E. Colton, "Echoes of Juvenal in Claudian's *In Eutropium*", in: *Latomus* 323 (2010), 492-516.

¹² Thus Sidonius Apollinaris followed Claudian's description of Eutropius closely when characterizing a parasite in his *Ep.* 3.13.5-9 (ed. LCL 420); Valerio Neri, *La bellezza del corpo nella società tardoantica. Rappresentazioni visive e valutazioni estetiche tra cultura classica e cristianesimo*, Bologna 2004, 212-213, without noting the interdependence. Gavin Kelly, "Sidonius and Claudian", in: *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, eds. Johannes A. van Waarden and Gavin Kelly, Leuven 2013, 171-191, focuses mostly on Sidonius's panegyrics, but is immensely valuable here. See also Claudia Schindler, *Per carmina laudes*.

Like few others, Eutropius became the symbol of the pernicious court eunuch, whose imposing influences revealed a weak emperor, making both the paradigm of an empire in decline.¹³ But how exactly did Claudian do so? It is clear that Claudian made Eutropius into the paradigmatic eunuch, but how did he make him into a monster?¹⁴ What layers did he pile on, so that he could tear them apart to demonstrate ugliness? What does Eutropius's ugliness reveal about notions of beauty and character at that moment in time?

[5] To address this question in greater detail requires that we keep present the question I posed at the outset. How should we picture a consul, one of the highest-ranking men in a hierarchical society at whose apex stood the *sacratissimus imperator*, the most sacred ruler? Because that is also what Eutropius was, a consul. Phrased differently, because Claudian, our most important source for the man and his time, was so effective in making Eutropius into the iconic ugly eunuch, the fact of his being a eunuch has attracted far more scholarly attention than that of his role and significance as consul.

[6] However, the radiance of Eutropius's consular robes, grave with gold (*graves auro*),¹⁵ also represented and augmented the splendor of the emperor's sacred majesty. As John Chrysostom pointed out, the emperor's clothes *were* his body.¹⁶ The emperor's actual body or his real face did matter, but far less than the shining radiance of his diadem and his purple, his vestments and those of the high-ranking courtiers and their retinue arrayed around and next to him. Together, they composed a living picture that embodied and made manifest another kind of beauty every time the emperor "appears in the midst of his followers like an angel of God descended from heaven:" they brought to life and made vivid the presence of the

Untersuchungen zur spätantiken Verspanegyrik von Claudian bis Coripp, Berlin 2009, 59-172.

¹³ Schlinkert, *Ordo senatorius und nobilitas*, 266; Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch. Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*, Chicago 2001, 65-69; Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 126-129; Helga Scholten, "Der oberste Hofeunuch. Die politische Effizienz eines gesellschaftlich Diskriminierten", in: *Comitatus. Beiträge zur Erforschung des spätantiken Kaiserhofes*, ed. Aloys Winterling, Berlin 1998, 51-73: 51.

¹⁴ Also of interest in this context are Michael E. Stewart, *The Soldier's Life: Martial Virtues and Manly Romanitas in the Early Byzantine Empire*, Leeds 2016, 8-6, 130-137; Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, Oxford 1999; Claudia Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual*, Oxford 2016.

¹⁵ Claudian, *Stil.* 2.339; *In Eutr.* 1.301.

¹⁶ John Chrysostom, *De sanctos martyros* 3 (ed. PG 50.650): ἱμάτιόν ἐστι βασιλικὸν τὸ σῶμα.

divine.¹⁷ The emperor was sacred, his purple adored (*adoratio purpurae*), his majesty revered, his law-giving hand divine, his countenance heavenly, and the members of his court reflected and enhanced his sacred beauty.¹⁸ The splendor of the robes of those surrounding him revealed through their multifaceted luminosity the *animus divinus* manifest in the emperor's person as *deus consors*.¹⁹

[7] This too was the case whenever Eutropius appeared in public and at court. The resplendent consul and the horrendous monster were one and the same. The combination of power and monstrosity was, of course, not unusual in the ancient world; it was the hallmark of a tyrannical ruler. Yet, with Eutropius we have an exceptional example of this nexus, not least because he was not a tyrant since he was neither the emperor nor a usurper, for whom the term "tyrant" had by then become standard.²⁰ Further, given that our sources and thus scholarship portray Eutropius as an exception, what does his office tell us about the rule to which he

¹⁷ John Chrysostom, *De Maccabaeos homilia* 1.1 (ed. PG 50); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini* 3.10.3 (ed. Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Eusebius. Werke*, vol. 1, Berlin 1975); Ambrose of Milan, *Exp. in ps.* 118.8.19 (ed. PL 16); Augustine, *Serm.* 373.2 (ed. PL 39); Christopher Kelly, "Emperors as Gods, Angels as Bureaucrats: The Representation of Imperial Power in Late Antiquity", in: *Antigüedad, Religiones y Sociedades* 1 (1998), 301-326; R. R. R. Smith, "The Public Image of Licinius: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997), 170-202. See also the contribution by Valerio Neri in this special issue, and Maria Cristina Carile, "Imperial Icons in Late Antiquity and Byzantium the Iconic Image of the Emperor between Representation and Presence", in: *Ikon* 9 (2016), 75-98.

¹⁸ Mark Masterson, *Man to Man: Desire, Homosociality, and Authority in Late-Roman Manhood*, Columbus 2014, 138-140; Henrik Löhken, *Ordines Dignitatum. Untersuchungen zur formalen Konstituierung der spätantiken Führungsschicht*, Köln 1982, 48-68; William T. Avery, "The *adoratio purpurae* and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century", in: *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 17 (1940), 60-80; Karl L. Noethlichs, "Hofbeamter", in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 15 (1991), 1111-1118; id., "Strukturen und Funktionen des spätantiken Kaiserhofes", in: *Comitatus. Beiträge zur Erforschung des spätantiken Kaiserhofes*, ed. Aloys Winterling, Berlin 1998, 13-49, esp. 16-35; Beat Näf, *Senatorisches Standesbewusstsein in spätrömischer Zeit*, Freiburg i. Ü. 1995.

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, *De perfectione caritatis* 6 (ed. PG 56); *In epistulam ad Romanos* 14.10 (ed. PG 60); *Ad viduam iuniorem* 4 (ed. PG 48); Ambrose, *De Noe* 7.17 (ed. CSEL 32); Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.10.7-10; Pacatus, *Panegyricus* 2(12).6.2-4; 6(7).17.3-4 (eds. C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini. Introduction, Translation and Historical Commentary with the Latin Text of R. A. B. Mynors*, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ Oxford 1994); Michael Mause, *Die Darstellung des Kaisers in der lateinischen Panegyrik*, Stuttgart 1994, 151-162; Neri, *La bellezza del corpo nella società tardoantica*, 133-143, 161-165; Andrea Scheithauer, *Kaiserbild und literarisches Programm. Untersuchungen zur Tendenz der Historia Augusta*, Frankfurt 1987, 36-39.

²⁰ Johannes Szidat, *Usurpator tanti nominis. Kaiser und Usurpator in der Spätantike (337-476 n. Chr.)*, Stuttgart 2010, 25-42.

was allegedly so contrary? What does the fact that Eutropius as eunuch did reach such a culmination of influence, rank, and honor reveal about concepts and representations of sacred imperial power in the later Roman Empire?

[8] However, before addressing in greater detail how Claudian made Eutropius ugly, a brief recapitulation of the historical context of author and subject is in order. Eutropius, according to Claudian, was born in Assyria, outside the Eastern edge of the Roman Empire. The location may reflect 'historical truth', since this was a region that did indeed furnish eunuchs, but it also alerts us to the topics of invective: Eutropius was not like 'us' and hence could only have come from a region very distant from those 'we' customarily inhabit.²¹ Castrated as a small child, Eutropius was sold to several Roman owners until he entered the *sacer cubiculum* of the emperor Theodosius, probably thanks to the sponsorship of the general and consul of 393, Abundantius. After Theodosius's move West in 394, Eutropius remained with Arcadius in Constantinople, where he soon advanced to the rank of the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*.²² This rank first appears in the sources under Constantine (272–337 CE).²³ At the helm of a sizeable *apparatus* of slaves and other eunuchs, the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* was responsible for the personal affairs of the emperor, endowed with *primae dignitates*, highest honors, and exempt from *sordida munera*.²⁴ Theodosius elevated the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* to the senatorial rank of the *clarissimi et illustres viri*, equal to the *comites consistoriani*, the highest-ranked palace officials, and he was member of the *sacer comitatus*, the highest

²¹ In part because castration of Roman citizens was outlawed as confirmed by a law re-issued under Constantine (r. 306–337). Castration within the empire nonetheless continued to occur; *Codex Iust.* 4.42.1 (ed. and trans. Samuel Parsons Scott, *The Civil Law. The Twelve Tables, The Institutes of Gaius, The Rules of Ulpian, The Opinions of Paulus, The Enactments of Justinian, and The Constitutions of Leo*, 17 vols., Cincinnati 1932, reprint Union, N.J. 2001); Augustine, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 115.17 (ed. PL 35); Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, 28–36, 45–51.

²² For Theodosius and his death, Ambrose, *De obitu Theod.* (ed. PL 16); Meaghan A. McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367–455*, Oxford 2013, 135–171, for the relationship between Theodosius, Honorius, Stilicho and Arcadius prior to 399.

²³ Zosimus, *Hist. nova* 5.12.1; 5.9.2 (ed. Ludwig Mendelssohn: Zosimus, *Historia nova*, Leipzig 1887); Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 11.4 (ed. GCS 21); Eunapius, *Fragmenta* 65.8 and 66 (ed. and trans. Roger C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire. Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, Liverpool 1983); Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364–425*, 249–250; Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, 130 nr. 43, 36, 96, and 136–157; Noethlichs, "Hofbeamter", 1127.

²⁴ *Codex Theodosianus* 11.16.15 (382); Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, 136.

advisory council of the emperor, because of the continuing and indispensable service he rendered the imperial house, as a law of 384 informs us.²⁵

[9] Eutropius's service was no exception. Already in 395, soon after Theodosius's death, he took a successful stance against the consul of 392 and Arcadius' *praefectus praetorii*, Rufinus, whose intention to marry his daughter to the emperor Eutropius contravened, championing instead Eudoxia, the daughter of Bauto, another now deceased military commander under Theodosius. Eudoxia was then living in the household of yet another Theodosian general who was one of Rufinus's rivals. The 'true' reason for Arcadius' choice was, so we are told, Eudoxia's beauty.²⁶ Thus effectively neutralized, Rufinus was killed in 395. Further, Eutropius eliminated two military commanders, who also had reached the consulship under Theodosius; one of them was Abundantius, Eutropius's sponsor. In short, within a year of Theodosius's death, Eutropius as *praepositus sacri cubiculi* had removed high-ranking members of the military and the court, who had come to prominence under Theodosius and who were thus powerful competitors in the *sacer comitatus* and potential threats to Arcadius, while promoting others—thus the narrative of our sources.

[10] That such actions would have been inconceivable without Arcadius's consent goes without saying. The Western court, as Ambrose of Milan's funeral oration for Theodosius confirms, similarly realigned the civilian and military leadership, whose loyalty to Honorius was by no means guaranteed.²⁷ Indeed, the actions attributed to Eutropius are quite in line with earlier purges of leading personnel, for example after the accession of Constantius (in 337), Valens (in 360), or Julian (in 364). Interestingly, though, scholarship has been hesitant to note the similarities, captivated by the notion of the 'weak emperor' and the 'powerful eunuch' for which the relationship between Arcadius and Eutropius stands paradigmatic.²⁸

[11] Evidently, Eutropius stabilized Arcadius's regime. In 397, he halted Gothic incursions into Illyricum with the help of a new *magister militum*, Alaric, and in 398

²⁵ *Codex Theod.* 7.8.3 (384); Schlinkert, *Ordo senatorius und nobilitas*, 243-251; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 28-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2, 557-558; Scholten, "Der oberste Hofeunuch", 64-65.

²⁶ Zosimus, *Historia nova* 5.3.2; Claudian, *Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorius Augustus* 23; Neri, *La bellezza del corpo nella società tardoantica*, 158-159; Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium*, 10.

²⁷ McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West*, 144-152.

²⁸ Zosimus, *Hist. nova* 5.3; 8.1-10.5; Eunapius, *Fr.* 65; Schlinkert, *Ordo senatorius und nobilitas*, 266. Thus, Ammianus tells us at 29.2.6, that Heliodorus was made *praepositus sacri cubiculi* so as to initiate proceedings against persons accused of high treason: though he was not a eunuch, he acted much as Eutropius did; Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, 144-145.

he himself assumed military command to repel a Hunnic incursion into Armenia.²⁹ As a result, he was designated consul in the fall of 398 and awarded the title *patricius*; in January 399 he became consul for the year, the highest civilian office in the empire, frequently held by the *sacratissimus imperator* himself.³⁰ According to our sources, continuing troubles with Gothic auxiliaries and with another military commander, Gainas, accompanied by the loss of Eudoxia's favor, led to Eutropius's fall. A law dated to August 17, 399 subjected his *memoria* to condemnation by declaring all his *acta* void, his possessions confiscated, his titles and offices removed, his name to be excised from all statues and inscriptions.³¹ Eutropius was exiled to Cyprus, recalled to Constantinople and executed toward the end of 399.³²

[12] The reason I highlighted the viewpoint of our sources to such an extent in my brief summary, is that the principal source for Eutropius and indeed much of the history of the Eastern and Western court between 395 and 404 are Claudian's poems, particularly his epic invectives against Rufinus and Eutropius.³³ Originally from Alexandria and hence a native Greek speaker, Claudian arrived in Rome around the year 394 or 395—perhaps from Constantinople in the course of the arrival of Theodosius, Honorius, his sister Galla Placidia, Theodosius's adopted daughter Serena, and her husband Stilicho, or on his own from Alexandria.³⁴ He belonged to what Alan Cameron in a seminal article has called the wandering poets, and he immediately made his name at the court of Theodosius: already in January of 395 he praised the consuls of the year, followed by panegyrics for the consulships of the emperor Honorius in 396 and 398.³⁵ More importantly, he soon

²⁹ Peter Heather, *Goths and Romans*, Oxford 1991, 202.

³⁰ Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 128-135, 176-180.

³¹ *Codex Theod.* 9.40.17; Zosimus, *Hist. nova* 5.17.2-5; Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 11.6; Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 8.7.3; Otto Seeck, "Arkadius", in: *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 2/1 (1895), 1146; Eva Elm, *Memoria Damnata. Verordnetes Vergessen von der frühen Republik bis in die christliche Spätantike*, Marburg 2007 (Habilitationsschrift).

³² Siegmar Döpp, *Zeitgeschichte in Dichtungen Claudians*, Stuttgart 1980, 159-174; Schweckendiek, *Claudians Invektive gegen Eutrop*, 16-18; Scholten, *Der Eunuch in Kaisernähe*, 223-227.

³³ Döpp, *Zeitgeschichte in Dichtungen Claudians*, 159-160 for the other sources.

³⁴ Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 1-29, does not think that he arrived in the West with Theodosius but sailed separately from Alexandria; Cameron, "Claudian", 113-146; Jean-Louis Charlet, "La romanité de Claudien, poète venu d'Alexandrie", in: *Les Grecs héritiers des Romains: huit exposés suivis de discussions*, eds. Paul Schubert, Pierre Ducrey and Pascale Derron, Geneva 2013, 321-350; Isabella Gualandri, *Aspetti della tecnica compositiva in Claudiano*, Milan 1968, 8-9.

became the principal voice of Honorius' guardian, or regent, the *magister militum* Stilicho.³⁶

[13] This voice was both novel and powerful.³⁷ Sponsored by Stilicho, Claudian inaugurated the new practice of panegyric epic, producing "a sequential 'stream' of propaganda that could maintain and modify relations between political elites" that targeted the audience at the imperial court and in the city of Rome by narrating "the continuing story of the hero, Stilicho, and his maintenance of Roman order" and greatness.³⁸ Stilicho's political program, according to Claudian, was to fulfill the trust the dying emperor Theodosius had placed in him by making him, his son-in-law, guardian of his sons, then ten and eighteen, and hence solely responsible for the Western and the Eastern parts of the empire.³⁹ From that vantage point, anyone who claimed to fulfill a comparable function at the court of Arcadius was a threat and an enemy, especially since Stilicho's claim had been tenuous from the beginning. Needless to say, the Eastern court openly challenged Stilicho and declared him public enemy in 397 in the course of disputes over the African grain supply.⁴⁰ Thus, when Eutropius became consul in 399, tensions had been high for some time and it should not come as a surprise that the Western court, in retaliation for the affront against Stilicho, refused to recognize his office. Thus the immediate context of Claudian's epic immortalization of Eutropius as ugliness impersonated.

[14] What is ugly? Aesthetic theories argued early on that ugliness is more than the opposite or the absence of beauty; rather, beginning with the Greek term *aischros*, "ugliness" connotes formlessness as absence of moral value, expressed in Latin as *deformitas* and *turpitude*. While beauty, that is, harmony of form, was intrinsically liked to the good, the sublime, and the sacred, the absence of all three stood *ipso*

³⁵ Alan Cameron, "Wandering Poets. A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt", in: *Historia* 14 (1965), 470-509; Claudian, *Panegyricus dictus Probrino et Olybrio Consulibus*, in: *Claudian* 1.2-23.

³⁶ Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 253-273.

³⁷ Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium*, 1-5; Ware, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition*, 5-6; Andrew Gillett, "Epic Panegyric and Political Communication in the Fifth-Century West", in: *Two Romes. Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, eds. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly, Oxford 2012, 265-290.

³⁸ Gillett, "Epic Panegyric and Political Communication in the Fifth-Century West", 265-266; Ware, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition*, 5.

³⁹ Claudian, *On the III Consulate of Honorius* 142-162; Ambrose, *De obitu Theodosii* 5; Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 39; McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West*, 141-144.

⁴⁰ McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West*, 156-159; Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium*, 9-13; Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 92-123.

facto for ugliness.⁴¹ Thus, Latin terminology provides a rich arsenal to describe the condition and the emotions it evokes in the viewer or reader—horrendous, obscene, monstrous, grotesque, terrible, savage, cruel, wild, unlovely, repellent, disgusting, despicable, loathsome, filthy, polluted and polluting, barbarous, beastly, curious, and so forth—even if, as was freely acknowledged, the art of the sculptor, painter, or poet could make the most ugly beautiful through the mastery of the representation.⁴² In sum, ugliness, perhaps even more so than beauty, is culturally determined; it lies in the eye of the beholder. Thus, already Xenophon of Colophon (d. ca. 475 BCE) noted that if oxen and lions had hands like humans and could sculpt, they would represent their gods as oxen and lions; one person's ox is another person's deity.⁴³

[15] In the case of Eutropius, as the citation above shows, Claudian layered and intertwined three social categories that best expressed deformity and hence turpitude for his audience: being neither male nor female or both male and female and thus a third gender, *tertium genus*; being old; and being a slave. In nearly every line he combined these categories with metaphors derived from illness or natural phenomena to create the picture of a deformed and hence depraved hybrid, someone who moved progressively down the sliding scale of virtue and honor, from male to animal-like. In short, he created a *monstrum*.⁴⁴ *Monstra* came in many forms, but one of their characteristics was physical hybridity, a melding of man and beast, such as the Medusa or the Minotaur, or, closely related, a dire portent, challenging nature to produce effects such as talking cattle, wolves in cities, rains of

⁴¹ Plato, *Hippias maior* 1.286C-289B (ed. LCL 167); Plato, *Republic* 3.401BC (ed. LCL 237); Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b (ed. LCL 199); Longinus, *On the Sublime* (ed. LCL 199); Dieter Kliche, "Häßlich", in: *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, ed. Karlheinz Barck, vol. 3, Stuttgart/ Weimar 2001, 25-66: 26-33; James B. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, Cambridge 2016, esp. ch. 3 and 4.

⁴² Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 7 (ed. LCL 352); the power immanent in the deformed or ugly increasingly takes on its own form, other than as negation or absence of the beautiful. Theorists locate this process in the Renaissance and later, but perhaps Claudian's *Eutropius* is an early example. I have not found him cited in any of the theoretical works I consulted, though my consultations have remained cursory; Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, repr. of the second 1759 edition, New York 1971; Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, Stuttgart 2001; Michael Hagner, ed., *Der falsche Körper. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Monstrosität*, Göttingen 2005.

⁴³ Quoted in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5.109 (ed. PG 9).

⁴⁴ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.8: omnia cesserunt eunucho consule monstra.

stones and clouds of blood.⁴⁵ In Claudian's description, Eutropius is both, portent or prodigy and monster.⁴⁶

[16] The key aspect characteristic of the three social categories Claudian employs to make Eutropius into such a monster is abject powerlessness.⁴⁷ Therefore, Eutropius embodied the greatest deformity and hence turpitude of all, the height of ugliness, because he was a monster defined by abjection who rose to supreme power. A monstrosity of indeterminate gender, resembling at best an old woman, and a foreign-born slave to boot occupied a position that belonged, by right, to the beautiful and hence the good. Thus Eutropius the person embodied a hybridity, which made his position of consul into a hybrid one as well—nothing could be more deformed than the rule of abject powerlessness.

[17] Hence, following in part the rhetorical rules of *psogos* or invective that proscribe a narration of origin, deeds, honors or their opposite, and comparison with appropriate models,⁴⁸ Claudian's multi-layered, highly allusive language—evoking and reimagining Juvenal among many others—reflects Eutropius' hybridity. Claudian reveals Eutropius as a hybrid monster through his physical self, his ugly body (especially in *In Eutropium* 1), and through that ugliness condemns all those who allowed such a monster to reside and preside at the sacred court of the most sacred emperor (*In Eutropium* 2). He does so by entwining, or overlaying, almost every description of the ugly body of the eunuch with the tangible manifestations of his power: his honors, his regalia, his offices, his riches, his juridical and military actions.⁴⁹ Because a hybrid monster lurks underneath them all like a hidden illness now made visible by Claudian the physician, they are all deformed and polluted, until the monster is removed; the question remains to what degree the sacred, sublime ruler himself, the brother of Honorius, had also become infected or affected:⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.4-5; his reference to *semiferos partus* evokes Chiron, whom he describes as such in the *Epithalamium* 145.

⁴⁶ Luc Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, trans. Janet Lloyd, Berkeley 2002, 7-40; Paul Murgatroyd, *Mythical Monsters in Classical Literature*, London 2007, 1; Dunstan Lower, *Monsters and Monstrosity in Augustan Poetry*, Ann Arbor 2015. For the dispatching of hermaphrodite newborns and others considered deformed at birth as prodigies, and the sacred connotations, see also Anthony Corbeill, *Sexing the World. Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex in Ancient Rome*, Princeton 2015, 150-168.

⁴⁷ Catherine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge 1993, 137-172.

⁴⁸ Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium* 17-50.

⁴⁹ Colton, "Echoes of Juvenal in Claudian's *In Eutropium*", 492-516 analyses numerous allusions.

Fortune [...] if it was your will to disgrace the consul's chair with the crime of slavery, let some consul come forward who broken his foot chains, let a fugitive workhouse slave wrap himself in the robes of Quirinus—but give us a man! Even slaves have their own grades of dignity and splendor; he who lived with one master bears a lesser mark of his condition. But to number Eutropius's masters means to [have counted] the waves of the sea and the sands of Lybia. How many owners has he had, in how many sales catalogues has he appeared, how many times has he changed his name! How often has he stood naked, while the buyer consulted the physician to check for lurking flaws caused by hidden disease! [...] When all he remained was a deformed cadaver, a mass of senile pendulous flesh [...] he was proffered as a gift to the unsuspecting [...]. To so many yokes did he submit his neck, this slave, old in years but always new to the house.⁵¹

[18] Eutropius, cruelly castrated at birth (*conabula prima cruentis debet suppliciis; rapitur castrandus ab ipso ubere*, 1.43-45), became all things to all men and women, himself *ambigui [...] mares*.⁵² His vital force cut, Eutropius is *frigidus*, cold to the core, robbed of his chance to become a man, husband, and father; masculinity made *mollis* (1.54).⁵³ Thus, he becomes first a catamite or plaything, then the beautiful wife of a certain Ptolemy (*lectusque iugalis*), who makes him into a widow, *viduus*, when he tires of her yet without an old woman's consolation of having born children.⁵⁴ Next he becomes a pimp and a lady's maid each step bringing him closer to the inner circles of power, but also making him progressively

⁵⁰ This is a highly controversial topic in scholarship, involving also the dating of *In Eutr.* 1 and 2, since the involvement of Arcadius reflects how one wishes to interpret the relationship between East and West. Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, 128, points out that Arcadius is never mentioned; Schweckendiek, *Claudians Invektive gegen Eutrop*, 18-30, provides a good overview of the debates, and see now Gavin Kelly, "Claudian and Constantinople", in: *Two Romes*, 241-264, esp. 250-261.

⁵¹ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.24-43: Hoc regni, Fortuna, tenes? quaenam ista iocandi/ saevitia? humanis quantum bacchabere rebus?/ si tibi servili placuit foedare curules/ crimine, procedat laxata compede consul, rupta Quirinales sumant ergastula cinctus;/ da saltem quemcumque virum. discrimina quaedam/ sunt famulis splendorque suus, maculamque minorem/ condicionis habet, domino qui vixerit uno./ si pelagi fluctus, Libyae si discis harenas,/ Eutropii numerabis eros. quot iura, quot ille/ mutavit tabulas vel quanta vocabula vertit!/ nudatus quotiens, medicum dum consulit emptor,/ ne qua per occultum lateat iactura dolorem!/ omnes paenituit pretii venumque redibat,/ dum vendi potuit. postquam deforme cadaver/ mansit et in rugas totus defluxit aniles,/ iam specie doni certatim limine pellunt/ et foedum ignaris properant obtrudere munus./ tot translata iugis summisit colla, vetustum/ servitium semperque novum, nec destitit umquam./ saepe tamen coepi.

⁵² Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.461-2.

⁵³ Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, 63-97 on mollitia; Williams, *Homosexuality*, 30-38 on slaves, 172-218 on *cinaedi*; and, foundational for all aspects, Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*, Princeton 1995.

less beautiful and less woman-like; older, uglier, and animalesque. When he finally assumes the consular robe, Eutropius has become an ape:

*How beautiful the sight to see him strain his bloodless limbs into the toga, to appear with the dress heavy with gold made more obscene through his old age—like an ape, the imitator of man, dressed in sumptuous silks by a laughing youth, who leave the back and buttocks naked to amuse the guests at dinner: richly dressed he strides about with erect breast made even more deformed by his brilliant trappings. Dressed in white, the senate follows the polluted fasces.*⁵⁵

[19] Abject powerlessness implied, in the economy of the later Roman world, absence of self-control made manifest in unrestrained libido, expressed through excess; excessive greed, excessive cruelty, and excessive sexuality.⁵⁶ Of course, Claudian's Eutropius is rapacious to the utmost; just as he was once ceaselessly sold he now sells everything, even entire provinces.⁵⁷ Cruelly and bloodily cut at birth, he now rules with cruelty, especially directed against the elites.⁵⁸ Once used as a *delicious* or sexual plaything, everything Eutropius does is sexual, as Claudian showcases through ceaseless double entendre. Eutropius was a slave of many masters, which in Latin means "*eros*", thus the equivalent of the Greek (and modern) Eros.⁵⁹ When he became consul, he was already a *deforme cadaver* [...] *in rugas totus defluxit aniles*, so that "our cities had to see an old woman clad in the *trabea* [the consul's robes], who gives a woman's name to the year"; an

⁵⁴ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.72-74; *In Eutr.* 1.49-51: *unoque sub ictu eripit officium patris nomenque mariti*; 1.69 for *viduus*. While *viduus*, -a, -um is often reduced to a feminine *vidua*, -ae, Claudian decides here to have it agree with the gender of Eutropius' name; Corbeill, *Sexing the World*, 143-169, on eunuchs and hermaphrodites in grammar.

⁵⁵ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.300-316: *Quam pulcher conspectus erat, cum tenderet artus/ exanguis onerare toga cinctuque gravatus/ indutoque senex obscaenior iret in auro:/ humani qualis simulator simius oris,/ quem puer adridens pretioso stamine Serum/ velavit nudasque nates ac terga reliquit,/ ludibrium mensis; erecto pectore dives/ ambulat et claro sese deformat amictu./ candida pollutos comitatur curia fasces,/ forsitan et dominus.*

⁵⁶ Prudentius, *Amartigenia* 279-299 (ed. CCL 126); Kuefler, *Manly Eunuchs*, 55-69, 96-102.

⁵⁷ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.187-188; 1.190-193; 1.198; 1.207; 1.221-229; 2.87; 2.585-588; a common accusation against eunuchs; Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, 164-176.

⁵⁸ Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.174-193: *sed peius in aurum aestuat; hoc uno fruitur succisa libido. Quid nervos secuisse iuva? Vis nulla creuntam castrat avaritiam.*

⁵⁹ This refers to Juvenal, *Satire* 8.65-66 (ed. J. D. Duff, *Fourteen Satires of Juvenal*, Cambridge UK 1932) and horses no longer fit to be raced because they have been raced by so many different masters, but the Latin plural of masters, *eros*, also evokes the Greek word for erotic love, *eros*; Kelly, "Claudian and Constantinople", 246-250, esp. 249; for *delicii* see Pliny, *Hist. nat.* 7.34; Corbeill, *Sexing the World*, 167-168.

untranslatable chain of allusions that leaves nothing to the imagination: *trabeata per urbes ostentatur anus titulumque effeminat anni* (Eutr. 1.9-10). Eutropius accepted the *trabea* as compensation for his wily right hand, *accipit et trabeas argutae praemia dextrae* (1.370), and once in power he offers a hand to those in need, *quidquid amas, dabit illa manus* (1.367).⁶⁰

[20] Such sexual double entendre reflects Claudian's use of old age, especially the trope of the old woman.⁶¹ Both *senex* and *anus*, old man and old woman, are grammatically ambiguous, and staples of satire, where old women are the epitome of the repulsive.⁶² Thus, Martial, Horace, or Juvenal dissected and selectively depicted distinct parts of the old woman's body, particularly her genitalia, comparing them to animals and excrement when describing their deformities to make clear, first, that old women are separated from family roles, neither wives nor mothers, and second, excessively eager for intercourse.⁶³ Thus, a woman is told that *vis futui gratis cum sis deformis anusque*, another that her anus resembles that of a cow with diarrhea.⁶⁴ More even than depicting Eutropius throughout as a slave of many masters, recasting the *topoi* used to satirize old women allowed Claudian to highlight at every step that Eutropius's body was composed only of hideous parts and hence deformed and animal-like, in sum, ugly.

[21] Claudian made Eutropius's ugliness iconic by layering notions of deformity into a palimpsest. He focused relentlessly on his body, deformed and thus depraved, exposed through the very regalia of power that clothed him. Such a focus on the physical aspects of Eutropius, the old womanish eunuch slave, was a deliberate choice, I think, and more than the layering of satirical allusions and tropes. Two considerations lead me to such an assumption. First, when Sidonius Apollinaris,

⁶⁰ Or, he is easily moved to mildness toward those who supplicate him, *lenis facilisque moveri supplicius*, but such movements are also those of the *cinaedus*; Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.363-364; fears no treason behind his back, 1.362: *nil timet a tergo*, and so on.

⁶¹ For Claudian's frequent references to *anus*, -a see *In Eutr.* 1.10, 1.240; 2.398. Other forms of feminization include comparison of Eutropius to a *socrus*, 1.269; eunuchs trading in their *flabella* for the consul's cloak and *umbracula* [...] *virginibus* for the fasces, 1.463-465; or the exhortation that eunuchs *verso iam discite more curules, non matrum pilenta sequi*, 1.473-475.

⁶² E.g. Claudian, *In Eutr.* 1.77 for *senex*. *Senex*, -is is classically masculine, but is also used later for women as well, see *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, v. "senex", 1734.

⁶³ Amy Richlin, *Arguments with Silence: Writing the History of Roman Women*, Ann Arbor 2014, 62-80 (ch. 2: "Invective against Women in Roman Satire").

⁶⁴ Martial, *Epigramms* 7.75.1 (ed. W. M. Lindsay, *Epigrammata*, Oxford 1902; my trans.): "you want to be fucked for free, when you're ugly and an old woman!"; Horace, *Epodes* 8 and 12 (ed. LCL 33); Catullus, *Carmina* 97.7-8 (ed. LCL 6); Richlin, "Invective against Women in Roman Satire", 71-78.

some seventy years later, wanted to denigrate a person he considered a parasite at the court of Theoderic II, he used Claudian's Eutropius as a model.⁶⁵ Claudian's impact on Sidonius is known though still insufficiently explored; here, the allusions are evident. Sidonius, too, focused on the body to make the man in question repellent. That man's body is also more sordid and deformed than a cadaver, his half-bald head riddled with bald patches and scars, the lines in his face exceedingly deep, his obese form that of an old woman with pendulous breasts. Strikingly, the man here described is not a eunuch, but Sidonius uses Eutropean tropes to evoke his ugliness; being Eutropean no longer required being an actual eunuch.

[22] Second, I think that Claudian deliberately focused so much of his characterization of Eutropius on his physical deformity to counter a tendency well described by Valerio Neri among others. This is the tendency observable in literary sources as well as in material representations to foreground the regalia rather than the body in the depiction of the most sacred imperial person. As mentioned above, John Chrysostom pithily observed that the clothes make the emperor, not his face or his actual, physical body. The imperial diadem, the purple robes, the splendor of the gold-encrusted vestments sparkling with jewels, the scepter made the emperor imperial, reflected his divine person.⁶⁶ This goes hand in hand with the notion of the *princeps clausus*, the ruler removed from ordinary human contact to reflect his sanctity.⁶⁷ Part and parcel of such a development is, I would argue, a lessening of the gendered qualities of imperial representation. If jeweled clothes represent imperial majesty, than the actual shape of the person wearing them is less crucial—it could be, for example, a woman, a child, or a eunuch.

[23] This brings me back to the issue I raised at the outset, namely the implications of the fact that Eutropius was indeed the consul of the year 399. As Dilianna Angelova, among others, has recently argued, from Constantius's (337–361) wife Eusebeia onward, imperial women consorts were increasingly addressed as *koinonos tes basileias*, as "partner of the emperor". This tendency increased with the reign of Theodosius, as Ambrose's funeral oration for Theodosius manifests, where he deliberately makes Helena into an imperial consort (*nota bene* as mother

⁶⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistula* 3.13.5-9; Joop van Waarden, "Sidonius in the 21st Century", in: *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*, 3-22; Jill Harris, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, Oxford 1994, 396-401; Neri, *La bellezza del corpo nella società tardoantica*, 211-213.

⁶⁶ Neri, *La bellezza del corpo nella società tardoantica*, 133-151, with further bibliography.

⁶⁷ Karl Friedrich Stroheker, "*Princeps clausus*. Zu einigen Berührungen der Literatur des fünften Jahrhunderts mit der *Historia Augusta*", in: *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1968/69*, Bonn 1970, 271-283; the relationship between maleness and sanctity is a highly complex one and clearly in flux in the later Roman empire, see Gleason, *Making Men*, 166; Kuefler, *Manly Eunuchs*, 70-76, 209, 282; Virginia Burrus, '*Begotten Not Made:*' *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*, Stanford 2000, 138-140.

rather wife), and the nails of the cross she found part of the imperial diadem.⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, for Paulinus of Nola (354–431), writing in 405, Helena was Constantine's *conregnans*, in large part because of her faith, *Helenaefide*. Indeed, coins increasingly depict empresses with the diadem, clad in a purple *paludamentum*, originally a military cloak, and holding a scepter. In Angelova's view, "the empress's attributes in the late fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries underscore the gradual masculinization of the imperial iconography".⁶⁹ Rather, I would argue, the imperial iconography, by foregrounding the sumptuous regalia of office, made the imperial figure more gender-neutral or indeterminate. *Paludamentum* and scepter, diadem and imperial purple also sparkle when they are worn by a child or a young boy. As Meaghan McEvoy has recently highlighted again, the later Roman world saw a marked increase in such child-emperors: In 367 the eight years old Gratian became Augustus, in 375 his half-brother Valentinian II became co-Augustus at four.⁷⁰ Honorius had become Augustus at eight, and he had become ruler of the West only four years prior to Claudian's *In Eutropium*, at age ten. As McEvoy also observes, the long rule of Honorius, nearly three decades, reveals the framework within which a boy-emperor could successfully transition into a male one, and it is clear that Stilicho's stabilization of his own position with the help of Claudian played a key role in establishing just such a framework. However, in 399 the key elements of that construct were in the very early stages of conception and implementation.

[24] The challenges facing Stilicho and hence Claudian when a eunuch became consul in the East are manifest. Honorius was a boy, a child. Yet, he had to be represented as fully capable of being able to fulfill his masculine imperial duties, which Claudian achieved by presenting him as a youth full of imperial promise. Stilicho on the other hand had to be presented as the embodiment of Roman imperial military virtues, without being the emperor.⁷¹ To be confronted by a *patricius*, a title evoking the notion of the *parens patriae*, who was a eunuch, was a formidable challenge, given that the regalia of imperial office were in fact

⁶⁸ Julian, *Panegyric for Eusebia* (ed. LCL 13) following Menander Rhetor; Diliانا Angelova, *Sacred Founders: Women, Men, and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Rome through Early Byzantium*, Berkeley 2015, 183-202, with further bibliography.

⁶⁹ Angelova, *Sacred Founders*, 186.

⁷⁰ McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West*, 1-2.

⁷¹ McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West*, 135-136; Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*, Berkeley 1994, 357-358; Giacomo Raspanti, "'Clementissimus Imperator': Power, Religion, and Philosophy in Ambrose's *De Obitu Theodosii* and Seneca's *De Clementia*", in: *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski, Aldershot 2009, 45-56; Isabella Gualandri, "Claudian: From Easterner to Westerner", in: *Talanta: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society* 45 (2013), 115-129.

increasingly designed to downplay the young person, or female person, wearing them, highlighting instead the display of the *sacratissimus imperator*. The increasing emphasis on the emperor's Christian virtues, already indicated above, made the process even more complex: *pietas* and *fides* in a Christian context are not solely male virtues either.⁷²

[25] Thus, Claudian's ferocious emphasis on Eutropius' physical body can also be read as drawing a line into the sand of imperial representation. The splendor of the representational vestments may clothe the body of a young boy or even that of a woman but not that of a eunuch. Even though Eutropius's rise to the position of consul was consistent and in many ways entirely appropriate,—he was powerful, he was capable, he was effective, and his body, once truly beautiful, was less important than the *trabea* that signaled his rank and splendor—from Stilicho's point of view, he was an impossibility. Thus, Eutropius the consul could not exist, only Eutropius the monster and the icon of ugliness.

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⁷² The scholarship on the Christianization of imperial virtue is vast, see Samuel C. Zinsli, "Gute Kaiser, schlechte Kaiser: Die eusebische *Vita Constantini* als Referenztext für die *Vita Heliogabali*", in: *Wiener Studien* 118 (2005), 117-138, with further bibliography.

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