



Claudian's In Eutropium: Or, How, When, and Why to Slander a Eunuch

Jacqueline Long

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From A.D. 395 to 404, Claudian was the court poet of the Western Roman Empire, ruled by Honorius. In 399 the eunuch Eutropius, the grand chamberlain and power behind the Eastern Roman throne of Honorius's brother Arcadius, became consul. The poem *In Eutropium* is Claudian's brilliantly nasty response. In it he vilifies Eutropius and calls on Honorius's general, Stilicho, to redeem this disgrace to Roman honor. In this literary and historical study, Jacqueline Long argues that the poem was, in both intent and effect, political propaganda: Claudian exploited traditional prejudices against eunuchs to make Eutropius appear ludicrously alien to the ideals of Roman greatness. Long sets *In Eutropium* within the context of Greek and Roman political vituperation and satire from the classical to the late antique period. In addition, she demonstrates that the poem is an invaluable, if biased, source of historical information about Eutropius's career. Her analysis draws on modern propaganda theory and on reader response theory, thereby bringing a fresh perspective to the political implications of Claudian's work.

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