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The emperor *pepaideumenos* in Claudian and Synesius**Abstract**

This article aims to analyse how the *De Regno* by Synesius of Cyrene (ca. 370-413) and the Panegyric for the Fourth Consulship of Honorius by Claudian (ca. 370-404) contributed to the portrait of the ideal ruler at the end of the 4th century. Writing under the empire of the young brothers Arcadius and Honorius, both authors dealt with a complex reshaping of imperial portraiture in order to adapt it to the new powerholders, known as 'child emperors' due to their age upon imperial accession. Studied with renewed interest even in recent times, the 'child-emperor' type defines an imperial type with a ceremonial rather than a military style. These circumstances influenced the imperial praise of Claudian and Synesius and led towards a new framing of imperial power in which *paideia* played a key role.

Keywords

Synesius of Cyrene, Claudian, Arcadius, Honorius

Riassunto

Il presente articolo intende analizzare come il *De Regno* di Sinesio di Cirene (ca. 370-413) e il Panegirico per il quarto consolato di Onorio di Claudiano (ca. 370-404) abbiano contribuito al ritratto del sovrano ideale alla fine del IV secolo. Scrivendo sotto l'impero dei giovani fratelli Arcadio ed Onorio, entrambi gli autori adoperarono una complessa rielaborazione della ritrattistica imperiale in modo da adattarla ai nuovi detentori del potere, noti come 'principi fanciulli' a causa della loro età al momento dell'ascesa al trono. Il nuovo tipo imperiale, dallo stile cerimoniale anziché militare, ha inevitabilmente influenzato l'elogio imperiale di Claudiano e Sinesio portandolo verso un nuovo inquadramento del potere imperiale in cui la *paideia* avesse un ruolo chiave.

Parole chiave

Sinesio di Cirene, Claudiano, Arcadio, Onorio

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The *Panegyric for the Fourth Consulship of Honorius* by Claudian and the *libellum* entitled *De Regno* by Synesius hold a valid ground for comparison¹. The Alexandrian poet moved to Rome around 394, Claudian, and his contemporary and philosopher from Cyrene Synesius (ca 370-413), who in Alexandria had studied with Hypatia before becoming bishop of Ptolemais were active under the rule of the brother emperors Arcadius and Honorius, elevated as Augusti by Theodosius I in 383 and 393, aged 6 and 8 respectively, and ruling right after their father's death in January 395, then aged 17 and 10. The features of Theodosius' descendants (up to Theodosius II and Valentinian III) conform to the portraiture of the so-called 'child emperors', which generally infantilized the emperors even long after they had reached the mature age. The interest in the *Kinderkaiser*, recently revived by McEvoy, has been lively since at least Hartke's monograph titled *Römische Kinderkaiser. Eine Strukturanalyse römischen Denkens und Dasein*, Berlin 1951². Rather secluded in their palace and never seen on the battlefield besides their soldiers,

¹ The parallelism between the two speeches was set very early in studies on Claudian by Birt 1892, 158; Fargues 1933, 154 nt. 2; Demougeot 1946, 191-206 and 1951, 211 nt. 473; Lacombrade 1956, 15-26.

² Besides Hartke 1951, cf. Lippold 1989; Molè Ventura 1992; McEvoy 2010; 2013.

these emperors contributed to the transformation of the imperial figure into a merely ceremonial one, devoid of martial connotations³. Accordingly, «imperial function and presentation were being adapted to deal with this development»⁴.

Exactly this adaptation of praise schemes brings together two authors completely detached like Claudian and Synesius are apparently. Both poets were involved in the politics of the years between the fourth and the fifth centuries, the former as the established panegyrist of the Western court, the latter as an ambassador for the African Pentapolis of Cyrene in Constantinople in the troubled years (either 397-400 or 399-402) that saw the coup of the Goth Gainas⁵. Probably in 399 or in 400, after the fall of Eutropius and around the rise of the PPO Aurelianus, Synesius is supposed to have delivered his στεφανοτικός λόγος in the face of Arcadius – a hypothesis that many found too daring due to the explicit criticism of the emperor under many respects⁶. The contents of this treatise match, albeit not unproblematically, with those of the ancient tradition of the *speculum principis*, where political philosophy served as a *vademecum* of use to the ruler in power⁷. For this reason, the treatise shows how the ideal ruler was conceived on the verge of the fifth century, at the same time when Claudian was devoting part

³ An exception can be considered Gratian, who effectively joined the campaign against the Alamanni *Lentienses* even though this did not entail a change in his presentation as an infant emperor. Cf. Amm. XXXI 10; McEvoy 2013, 189.

⁴ McEvoy 2010, 158. Cf. also Schneider 2000, 62 on the model of the *miles Marianus* in pseudo-Quintilian *decl. mai.* III (4th century CE) presenting the portrait of the *bonus princeps* as opposite of the *princeps clausus*, according to a tradition attested by the *Historia Augusta* and very dear to the Roman aristocracy in the 4th-5th century CE, Cf. also Stroheker 1970, 273-283; Chastagnol 1985, 149-161; Kolb 1987, 52-87.

⁵ The debate about chronology arose mostly in the 1980s: the Anglo-Saxon scholarship argues for a lower chronology of Synesius' three-years stay in Constantinople as an ambassador between 397 and 400 (cf. Barnes 1986; Liebeschuetz 1985; Cameron 1987) while the French and Italian scholarships (cf. Lacombrade 1951; Garzya 1989; Roques 1995) maintained the traditional dating of this sojourn to 399-402. For general reference cf. Lamoureux - Ajoulat 2008, 11-26.

⁶ For the date of *De regno* cf. Lamoureux - Ajoulat 2008, 11-26. Cf. Cameron - Long 1993, 127-133. Another argument generally used to discard its actual delivery in the face of the eastern emperor is its exceeding length compared to the average *stephanotikos logos* (whose length was around 150-200 lines, cf. Men. Rhet. II 423,5 Russell - Wilson). Most likely, the discourse was re-elaborated after delivery, cf. Lamoureux - Ajoulat 2008, 1-10.

⁷ Under the label of *speculum principis* lie different Greek genres from philosophical treatises to epideictic discourses, whose contents generally overlap with the Latin *speculum principis*, cf. Consiglia Alvino 2017, 6 and nt. 41 for more detailed bibliographical reference on the Byzantine tradition.

of his praise and all his political advice to the other ‘child emperor’, Honorius, still 13 when *IV cons. Hon.* was delivered in Milan, in 398.

The first section of this article addresses how the praise of the emperor changed in Claudian’s hexameter panegyrics compared to the former *specula principum* which celebrated the deeds in war and peace of emperors like Trajan and Theodosius, renowned for their military and civil merits. If, as it is attested in the tradition of panegyrics, former emperors asserted their power based on their merits, then how could emperors like Honorius and Arcadius be legitimised when they held the sceptre only thanks to their dynastic ascendancy? The second half of this article, instead, will focus on how both Claudian and Synesius contributed to re-framing the figure of the young emperor as *pepaideumenos* and prone to receiving advice in view of his future accomplishments.

1. *In the Shadows of the Optimi Trajan and Theodosius*

The *Panegyric for the Third Consulship of Honorius*, delivered by Claudian in Milan in 396, in front of an 11-years-old Honorius, opens with the description of Honorius’ *πορφυρογένεσις* (i.e., his birth in the purple, v. 11-14), his early years spent amidst the soldier camps while in his father’s following (v. 15-32), his military upbringing (v. 39-51), and Theodosius’ wishes for his son’s *future* military conquests (v. 33-38). The section devoted to the ancestry of the emperor closes with the memory of Honorius’ renowned grandfather Theodosius (v. 52-60) and the account of the usurpation of Eugenius and his right-hand man Arbogastes quashed by Theodosius I in 394 (v. 63-105)⁸. This section abode by the conventions established by Menander the Rhetor for the βασιλικὸς λόγος, according to which the praise of the addressee starts with the praise of his birth and ancestry. However, the disproportion between the long encomium of the two Theodosii and the lack of Honorius’ deeds, both in the civil and military spheres, produced a noticeable shift from the praise of deeds (those of Honorius’ ancestors) to the expression of hopes (for the emperor’s *future* accomplishments) to the effect of an unbalanced panegyric.

An intermediate passage (v. 73-87) breaks the narrative of Theodosius’ victory over Eugenius with the description of Honorius as eager to follow his father in his

⁸On the Battle of the Frigidus (394 CE) cf. Zos. IV 58; Socr. V 25,9ff.; Rufin. *hist.* XI 33; Soz. VII 24; Philost. XI 2; Theodoret. V 25,3; Eunap. *fr.* 60.1 Blockley (John Ant. *fr.* 187= *Exc. de Ins.* 79); Hydat. *Chron.* 24; Prosper. c. 1213 a. 398; Ambr. *obit. Theod.* 39 and *in psalm.* 36,25; Aug. *civ.* V 26; Oros. VII 35,17-22. Cf. Salzman 2010, 191-223 and Crawford 2012 on the differences between pagan and Christian narratives.

march westward (*ardor sequendi*, v. 73-74) and fight at his side against the usurper (*rabies Martis*, v. 73). While this showed that Honorius was willing to speed his way to becoming a soldier emperor like his father, Claudian's narrative of the defeat of Eugenius also featured the young Honorius as symbolically and indirectly influential, through the omens surrounding his first consulate, over the military accomplishments (*πράξεις*) of his father when stating that they both had fought against the usurper (*Pugnastis uterque: / tu fatis genitorque manu*, v. 88-89). Claudian was later to insist on Honorius' *fata* also in *IV cons. Hon.* 620-637, where he depicted the past episodes of Theodosius' victory against Odothaeus' Gruthungi and the usurper Eugenius at the river Frigidus as evidence of Honorius' good influence over the deeds of his father every time he had been elected consul (*quotiens te cursibus aevi / praefecit, totiens accessit laurea patri*, v. 621-2). In this way, Claudian attributed to a young and inept emperor the deeds of his ancestors and praised him for them.

Nelson states that the 'child emperors' were generally credited for the victories of their armies by virtue of their private prayers to God rather than through direct military involvement⁹. Such a new framing of the imperial figure into a distant and spiritual involvement revealed particularly helpful to justify the extensive praise—throughout the entire corpus of Claudian's *Carmina Maiora* – of the *generalissimo* who flanked Honorius until his murder in 408, that is the renowned *magister militum* Stilicho, portrayed at *III cons. Hon.* 142-162 as receiving from Theodosius I the guardianship of his son(s) right after his *καταστερισμός* (i.e. ascent to heaven)¹⁰. Entrusting Stilicho with the guardianship and the military defence (*geminos dextra tu protege fratres*, v. 153) of the two brother emperors perfectly matched Claudian's infantilising presentation of the 11-years-old Honorius and his 18-years-old brother—in fact, the infantilization of a 'child emperor' was not generally overcome upon reaching adulthood.

The *Panegyric for the Fourth Consulship of Honorius* also opens with the long encomium of the Theodosii (v. 18-121). Far from being addressed merely as the father of the ruling emperor, Theodosius appears in *IV cons. Hon.* as the main object of praise for being the emperor who in the turn of sixteen years since his official accession in 379 had replaced the dynasty of the Valentinians with his own by overcoming two Western usurpers (i.e. Maximus and Eugenius) and placing his younger son on the Western throne before his death in 395. Immediately after

⁹ Cf. Nelson 2011-2012, 169-192. On the lack of action by the emperor paired with his increasing Christianization cf. e.g., Ambr. *obit. Theod.* 55; Dvornik 1966.

¹⁰ Cameron 1970, 38 on the interpretation of this passage as proof that Theodosius entrusted Stilicho with the *tutela* of both his sons, and not solely of Honorius.

sketching the occasion for the panegyric, that is the consular *adventus* of Honorius in Rome in 398 (v. 1-17), Claudian turned to the eulogy of Theodosius' birthplace (the *Hibera domus* which linked him with Trajan v. 18-23) and father (v. 24-40).¹¹ The West-centred encomium of Theodosius' Spanish origins parallels the narrative of Theodosius' Eastern deeds (v. 41-120) which are said to have earned him the imperial title, by means of his virtue and merits. *IV cons. Hon.* 45-48 reads:

Haec tamen innumeris quaesita tropaeis.
 Non generis dono, non ambitione potitus.
 Digna legi virtus. Ultro se purpura supplex
 Obtulit et solus meruit regnare rogatus.

Yet he gained all these conquests through limitless triumphs, not through his family's legacy, nor bribery. His virtue was worthy of being elected. The purple, by her will, offered herself as a beggar to him and he alone deserved to reign, when asked to do so.

Paradoxically enough, in a panegyric for his younger son who in 395 had merely inherited the Western throne, Theodosius was featured as the most suited to be *elected* emperor, after twelve years of dynasticism, started with the 8-years-old Gratian's appointment by his father Valentinian I in 367¹². Just like Themistius (*Or.* 15,197c), Claudian presented Theodosius' election as a tribute to his virtue, reportedly demonstrated in his appeasement of barbarian unrest in Thrace (*gementem Rhodopen; Bistonios campos*), along the Danube, and in Moesia, where he had been appointed *dux* (*IV cons. Hon.* 59-69)¹³. While this and other similar remarks could not be fitted in the praise of an inept 'child emperor' like Honorius, they could still be part of the ancestry section of his consular panegyric and, eventually, represent the hope that Honorius could emulate his father's military prowess in future. This demonstrates how Claudian was struggling to rebuild a model of reference in a time when the exemplarity of the soldier-emperor type was still held in high value in panegyric tropes but found no correspondence in the new powerholders. Not Theodosius anymore, but his inept son was sitting on the throne of the West, flanked by a *generalissimo* who alone could inherit – as was to be displayed in almost all Claudian's later poems – the features of Trajan-Theodosius that we shall now see¹⁴.

¹¹ On Theodosius the elder cf. *PLRE* 1, 902-904 *Theodosius* 3. On the use of Theodosius the elder's fame to legitimate Theodosius cf. Icks 2014, 78.

¹² Cf. McEvoy 2013, 48-71.

¹³ Errington 1996, 438-453; Lançon 2014, 64-67.

¹⁴ The passages presenting Stilicho as the ultimate saviour and defence of the West are

Halfway between the veneration of a past model of the emperor and the necessity of building a new imperial type, *IV cons. Hon.* leaves no doubt as to the position held by Honorius *vis-à-vis* his father¹⁵. At v. 214-352 and 370-418, the *genitor* and *longaevus rector carinae* (v. 419-420) Theodosius I lectures his son on leadership (*praecepta*, v. 419) in the moment of his succession (*nato commendat habenas*, v. 422)¹⁶. Interestingly, the speech of Theodosius starts with a remark on the difference between West and East: had Honorius been born among the Persian Arsacid, his lineage (*sublime genus* and *nobilitas*, v. 217-218) would have been enough to secure him his throne, even if he indulged in idle luxury¹⁷. But the West–Theodosius states–does not conform to such a custom (*altera Romanae longe rectoribus aulae / condicio* v. 219-220) and requires the emperor to meet a certain standard of virtues and values of the ancient tradition. The main headings of Theodosius’ speech are listed hereby:

<i>IV cons. Hon.</i>	Message conveyed
220-224	Virtue must be shown, especially when united with power.
225-254	None shall find virtue if they don’t know themselves first. How man is structured: Prometheus’ creation of man <i>aetheriis miscens terrena</i> . The emperor self-knowledge is in the interests of all his subjects.
254-268	Self-control leads to virtue and earns the emperor his right to rule.
269-275	The ruler lives in the sight of the whole world ¹⁸ .
276-277	On the importance of <i>pietas</i> and <i>clementia</i> to earn the love of the subjects.
278-280	On the necessity to ignore rumours and adulators.

impossible to list in their entirety. Cf. e.g. Rufin. *hist.* I 259-267 for his encomium as *turris et clipeus* of the West and for his solitude against all kinds of dangers run by the state; *Get.* 115-119; 210-212; 267-277; Charlet 2017, 351 nt. 70 (p. 204). Such remarks are constantly accompanied by his praise as the embodiment of all virtues, cf. e.g., *Stil.* I 39-59 (*mens ardua; erectus et acer; conspicuus; venerabilis; nitor ingneus oris; membrorum modus*).

¹⁵Theodosius had been described as an instructor to his sons already in *Prud. c. Symm.* I 25-41 (where he is defined *dux sapiens*) and II 18-22; *Pacat. Paneg.* II [12]15, cf. Moroni 2002, 24-25 and 28-29.

¹⁶The ancient metaphor of the ruler as steersman of the vessel of the state was also in *Plin. paneg.* 6,2 cf. Ware 2013, 315; *Pacat. Paneg.* II/12.24.3; *Claud. Stil.* I 286.

¹⁷The passage contains an anachronism which is also in *Syn. De Regn.* 16 where the Persian Sassanid are referred to as Arsacid, cf. Consiglia Alvino 2017, 78. However, it was customary in Claudian’s epic style to use the most ancient ethnic names, cf. Fo 1982, 126-188.

¹⁸Cf. *Plin. paneg.* 48,3 and 49,4-8.

281-289	On the importance of the love of the subjects for the emperor; on how love holds together all the elements of the cosmos by limiting each of them to a specific sphere.
290-295	The emperor should follow the model of the <i>princeps civilis</i> .
296-299	The emperor should abide by the laws he issues ¹⁹ .
299-302	On the emperor as model of conduct for all his subjects.
303-320	The emperor should follow the model of Trajan, not scornful but mild towards his subjects (Romans never allowed the excesses of the Etruscan Tarquinius nor of the Julio-Claudians) ²⁰ .
320-352	The emperor should be the first of his soldiers ²¹ .
396-418	While still too young to fight, the emperor should cultivate the arts and study the history with its exemplary heroes and their deeds (e.g., Horace, Camillus, Fabricius <i>et al.</i>).
412-418	On the importance of <i>paupertas sobria</i> .

In his speech, Theodosius constantly refers to the *optimus princeps* Trajan, a model to which he had largely conformed himself. It has been claimed that the posthumous fame of Trajan reached its peak exactly with Theodosius' ascent to power, especially when, after the murder of Gratian by Arbogastes in 383, Trajan was defined Theodosius' πρόγονος καὶ ἀρχηγῆτες (Them. Or. 26,205a). The direct ascendancy of Theodosius from Trajan was mostly based on their Spanish origin and their merits earning them the election as emperors outside any dynastical scheme²². However, the polity of compromise and alliance with the Goths that Theodosius had pursued in the early years of his reign hardly matched the most traditional image of Trajan as the conqueror of Dacia and defender of the Danubian *limes*, which Theodosius seems to have recovered only after the closing of his pro-Gothic polity, that is between 386 and 388²³. Theodosius' defeat of Magnus Maximus and his permanence in Italy between 388 and 391 also contributed to

¹⁹ Cf. Plin. *paneg.* 65,1.

²⁰ Cf. Sidon. *carm.* 7,115 (*fortis, pius, integer, acer*) and 5,314-327; *epist.* V 7,6.

²¹ Cf. Plin. *paneg.* 13,1ff. and 15,5.

²² Cf. Them. Or. 19,229c; Oros. VII 34,2-4; [Aur. Vict.] *epit. de Caes.* 48,1; Claud. IV *cons.* 18-20; 93-100. Brocca 2003-2004, 281; Icks 2014, 79-80; Zecchini 1993, 125-145; Schmidt-Hofner 2012, 43-50 on the perception of Trajan as the ideal emperor as mostly relevant within the urban space of Rome. The overlap between the two emperors became physically visible in the *Forum Tauri* in Constantinople, inaugurated in 393. Cf. Mango 1990, 43; Neumann 1976, 117-141.

²³ Cf. Veg. *mil.* 1 *praef.* establishing a comparison between Theodosius' polity and the *anquitam consuetudinem* (i.e. military polity) of Augustus, Trajan, and Hadrian. Baini 2008, 483-487 and nt. 173 on the rebellions of the Goths *foederati* in 386 and the violent repressions by Promotus and Theodosius in Zos. IV 35,1; 45,3; Claud. *Stil.* I 94-115.

a further re-elaboration of the parallelism with Trajan in terms of *civilitas* and *fortitudo* (*Inst. Traian.* 559a, ed. Kloft - Kerner), which were the dearest values to a senatorial class increasingly concerned with the barbarian unrest along the borders and highly favourable towards a non-dynastic emperor who had recently won over a usurper.

Especially the victory over Maximus lies behind the words of Theodosius as *persona loquens* in Claudian's panegyric, where Theodosius' mildness in civil life is brought to the fore. The respect and preservation of the social order after a civil conflict were in official rhetoric one of the most noticeable virtues of an established emperor, as his full public approval took place when he showed *clementia* towards the former supporters of his defeated challenger and respect for the *status quo*. Exactly for Trajan's deference towards the Romans and their institutions Pliny had defined him *pater et civis* in *paneg.* 2,4, a passage which Claudian recovered more explicitly at v. 294-295 to lavish the same advice on Honorius²⁴:

Plin. *paneg.* 2,4

[...] non enim de tyranno sed de cive,
non de domino sed de parente loquimur.

Claud. *IV cons. Hon.* 294-295

Tu civem patremque geras, tu consule cunctis,
non tibi nec tua te moveant, sed publica vota²⁵.

Pliny's *Panegyricus* for Trajan (100 CE), which opened the late-IV-century collection of the *XII Panegyrici Latini*, certainly had set the new terms of imperial praise after Nerva's adoption of the Spaniard Trajan in 98. The novelty of adoptive election—allegedly based on the merits and values embodied by the elected ruler—juxtaposed dynastic succession, which had imposed on the throne emperors whom later sources had depicted as inept or harmful to the state²⁶. In the fifth century, as Sidonius' *Carmina* demonstrate, such a juxtaposition between elective and hereditary succession became a recurring *topos* for any break in dynastic succession²⁷. While the election of a new pretender out of dynastic claims was

²⁴ The equation between domestic dimension and state-dimension in Plin. *paneg.* 49,2 can be traced as far back as *Od.* II 47; V 12; Brock 2013, 30. On mildness cf. *Od.* II 230s. where the βασιλεύς is defined ἀγανός and ἥπιος; Stenida VII, 63 Delatte 1942, 56.

²⁵ Cf. Lacombrade 1956, 18 nt. 21 focusing on *cunctis non tibi* and its similarity with Syn. *De regn.* 5 and Dion. *Or.* 1; 3; 62; Them *Or.* 1; 7; 10; 11; 19.

²⁶ On the debauchery of the Julio-Claudians cf. e.g., Charlesworth 1993; Vessey 1971; Griffin 1990; Green 1998; Ramondetti 2008, 39-40; the Julio-Claudians' bad fame lasted until the fourth and fifth century, cf. e.g., Claud. *IV cons. Hon.* 310-315; Sidon. *carm.* 5,314-327.

²⁷ Sidon. *carm.* 7,357-362; 5,358-361; 551 unveil open criticism towards Theodosius' successors on dynastic basis and juxtapose to it the encomium of the emperors Avitus, Majorian, and Anthemius (respectively *carm.* 6-7; 4-5; 1-2) based on their military/civil deeds and virtues. For general reference on Sidonius Cf. Kelly - Van Waarden 2020; Beck-

based on his strong support by the army, the Senate, and the *plebs*, official rhetoric brought to the fore the virtues and merits of the newly elected as causes of his election²⁸.

As a consequence, the long lists of *virtutes* in Latin panegyrics are far from unoriginal tools of the encomium and rather concealed the lack of formal legitimacy of the praised. Thence, Trajan was made to embody, among many other virtues, *frugalitas*, *clementia*, *liberalitas*, *benignitas*, *continentia*, *labor*, and *fortitudo* (*paneg.* 3,4-5), kindness towards the ambassadors (48,1-2), approachability towards his subjects during official *adventus* (85,5), the ability to live in the public eye (49,4-8; 83,1-2), *pietas* (52), and the participation in military life with his fellow-soldiers whom he allegedly called by name and considered as his comrades (10,3; 13,1-3; 15,5; 19,3)²⁹. Pliny's presentation of Trajan certainly highlighted his civilian traits (*aequatus plebis ac principis locus*, 51.4), so making him the emblem of the *civilis princeps* whose approachability and deference towards the Republican institutions had earned him the support of the Senatorial class³⁰. All these virtues had allegedly made him the *optimus* (88,6; 4,5), a qualification soon becoming part of his official titles when he was proclaimed *pater patriae* in 98 – as could be inferred from Plin. *paneg.* 2,7 – or later, in 114, when a new official decree was issued³¹.

Claudian's passage largely overlaps with Pliny's list of imperial virtues, although it remains confined to the sphere of mere instructions given to Honorius by his father for a later day when he was meant to effectively hold the reins of the West³². Still in 398, Honorius was asked to invest in his education and postpone

er 2022, 33-68 on the dynastic and divine legitimation of late-antique emperors; 62-68 on Sidonius' re-elaboration of imperial legitimacy.

²⁸ Cf. Szidat 2010, 39ff. and 249-250; on the importance of the armed troops in the election of a new pretender to the throne cf. Cassius Dio *Hist.*LXXVI 15,2 on Severus' final advice to enrich the soldiers; cf. also e.g., Tac. *hist.* II 76.4 and Hier. *epist.* 146,6: *exercitus facit imperatorem*.

²⁹ Cf. Rees 2001, 149-168; Ware 2013, 313-331.

³⁰ Pliny stresses several times the *civilitas* of Trajan: cf. e.g., Plin. *paneg.* 2,4-7; 63-64 (on his deference to the *comitia centuriata*). Cf. Levene 1997, 78. The *reverentia patrum* was also attributed to Honorius in Claud. *IV cons. Hon.* 504-509, conveying a sense of republican antiquity which was revitalised by Honorius' laws. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 43-48; Sánchez Salor 2000, 451-474.

³¹ On the title of *optimus* cf. Scardigli 1974, 57-103 (esp. 65-67; 89 nt. 129; 96-99) *contra* Rees 2001, 160 and nt. 1 with reference to Bennet 1997, 107; Durry 1938, 231-232; Radice 1969, 326-327; Hammond 1938, 124 nt. 4; Syme 1958, 36 nt. 9.

³² Cf. Plin. *paneg.* 3,4-5 lists virtues such as: *frugalitas*, *clementia*, *liberalitas*, *benignitas*, *continentia*, *labor*, and *fortitudo*.

the moment to enact the precepts he was given³³. Unlike the bees and the calves which since their birth claim their power over their swarm and pack (*IV cons. Hon.* 380-387), the emperor had to work diligently on his *paideia* to first master himself and then his imperial powers. The long list of *exempla virtutis* made by Theodosius for his son at *IV cons. Hon.* 396-418 is probably the section where Honorius emerges most prominently as *pepaideuementos*: he is fictitiously instructed by his father through stories (between history and legend) from which he is invited to draw the best teachings for his future deeds³⁴. Claudian makes no mystery that Honorius still falls short of all the examples mentioned by his father and eventually makes Stilicho – not Honorius – the embodiment of such values (v. 430-487)³⁵.

Moreover, in the final section of the panegyric, Claudian alternatively addresses Theodosius (*adspice nunc, quacumque micas, seu circulus Austri, / magne parens, gelidi seu te merere Triones*, v. 428-429)³⁶ and his son Honorius (*post otia Galli / limitis hortaris <Stilichonem> Graias fulcire ruinas*, v. 459-460) by conjugating the verbs in second person. On the one hand, this leaves the reader – and most likely the audience of 398 court in Milan – with the impression that the praise of the father directly flowed into his son's. In this way, the praise of Theodosius for appointing Stilicho as *fratribus... clipeum defensoremque* (v. 432-433)³⁷ – and therefore allowing him to pacify the Rhine region and the Peloponnese (v. 439-483), becomes that of Honorius, who is credited with all these accomplishments despite his absence from the battlefield (*Honorius absens*, v. 448). On the other hand, Claudian's ambiguous use of the verbs in the second person might arguably have prevented the inconvenience of listing military-renowned examples for more than twenty lines (v. 396-418) and then facing the impossibility of associating their

³³ The *paideia* was a topical feature of the good emperor, good in thoughts and words no less than in deeds, cf. the education of Achilles by Phoenix described in *Hom. Il.* II 434-605; IX 443; *Men. Rhet.* II 371,20-372,2.

³⁴ The *exempla* mentioned are: Brutus (v. 401); Mettius (Fufetius, v. 402); (Manlius) Torquatus (v. 403); the Decii (v. 404); Horace Cocles and Mucius Scaevola (v. 405-406); Fabius (Maximus the 'Cunctator', v. 407); Camillus (v. 408); Atilius Regulus and Cato *Uticensis* (v. 409); (Manius) Curius (Dentatus), Fabricius, and Serranus (= Coruncarius) (v. 412-418). Cf. Moroni 1993, 37 and nt. 72 on the circulation of lists of *exempla* and their importance for the imperial *paideia*. For general reference cf. Charlet 2000, 198 nt. 1; Støher-Monjou 2014, 89-110; Berrendonner 2001, 97-116.

³⁵ Cf. e.g., *Stil.* II 322-327; *Get.* 124-134 (Curius Dentatus; L. Aemilius Paulus; Marius; Fabricius); 138-165 (Fabius Maximus *Cunctator*; Marcellus; Scipio); 430-434 (Camillus).

³⁶ The ascent in heaven and the subsequent admiration of his son's deeds on earth is a panegyric *topos*, cf. *III cons. Hon.* 163-184; *Nupt.* 300-301.

³⁷ Originally, Stilicho was not mentioned in Claudian's text but lay as the obvious referee of the line cf. Charlet 2000, 167 nt. 1 (p. 34).

deeds with the addressee of the encomium. In the turn of sixty lines, by always maintaining the second person singular, the shadow of Theodosius vanishes and hands the praise over to Stilicho and, lastly, Honorius.

In the end, Honorius is credited for the good choice of collaborators and their long-tenured magistracies (v. 488-493), in the military and civil spheres, which had made the subjects—and especially the senatorial class—allegedly feel as if ruled by Romulus and Numa at once³⁸. In this way, Claudian narrowed down his praise to the civil merits of the young Honorius: his *munificentia* which did not discolour into prodigality (v. 500); the loyalty of his soldiers that he did not earn through gifts (v. 501-503); his *iustitia* in private trials and in law-making with deference to the ancient laws (*reverentia patrum*, v. 504) which made him resemble Solon and Lycurgus (v. 503-517); lastly, his *pietas, rigor, tranquilla vis animi, nullo terrore moveri nec nova mirari facilis, docta facultas, ingenii linguaeque modus* (v. 513-517). At the same time, however, the poet did not renounce featuring the young Honorius as also a soldier, especially as he appeared in his *adventus* in Milan. *IV cons. Hon.* 520-522 reads:

iam patrias implēs galeas; iam cornus avita
temptatur vibranda tibi; promittitur ingens
dextra rudimentis Romanae vota moratur.

You already (although you are just a boy) wear your father's helmet and try to brandish your grandfather's spear. Your first military exercises foreshadow vast strength in manhood and make the votes of the Romans hold on to you.

As underlined by Cameron in his comment on the *Diptych of Probus*, the infant age of the ruler did not prevent his description in military attire³⁹. Nonetheless, the immediately-following σύγκρισις between Honorius and the *puer* Mars bathing in the waters of the Rhodope after his first battle, and with Heracles *Alcides* (i.e. grandson of Alcaeus) and Apollo after their first deeds as children (v. 525-538) only points towards interpreting these first signs of Honorius' military value as premature manifestations of a non-yet-accomplished prowess⁴⁰. Besides the σύγκρισις with the Messagetes, the Thessalians, and the Centaurs, the final cluster of epic hyperboles only manages to eulogise the speed of a boy on the horse (v. 539-50), while the portrait of the dusted and dishevelled ruler carrying the signs of toil

³⁸ Cf. Moroni 1993, 38-39 on Claudian's strategies to please the Senate.

³⁹ Cameron 2007, 191-202.

⁴⁰ The mythical references are to Heracles trying out the darts of Dircae that were later to defeat the Giants, and Apollo defeating the snake Python. Cf. Charlet 2000, 41 nt. b and c.

(v. 551-552) merely conformed to a stereotypical imperial characterisation⁴¹. The very end of the poem reiterates the message that, up to the date of the panegyric, Honorius had only been of good influence over the deeds of his father and was still expected to accomplish some of his own in the future (*sed patriis olim fueras successius auctor, / nun eris ipse tuis*, v. 638-639). The wish could be easily extended over his brother in Constantinople, as Claudian does in *IV cons. Hon.* 652-656 and had done more explicitly in *III cons. Hon.* 189-211.

In fact, around the same time as Claudian's recitation of *IV cons. Hon.* in Milan, Synesius was lavishing very similar advice to Arcadius in Constantinople, under or right before the prefecture of Aurelianus, in 399. The dependency of the two authors has been hypothesised by Birt in 1885, then reappraised by Lacombrade in 1956, while Cameron excluded any direct derivation of one work from the other on chronological and political grounds⁴². The speech of Theodosius to Honorius in *IV Cons. Hon.* shows indeed many similarities with Themistius' *Protrepticus* for Valentinian Galates (*Or.* 9)⁴³, Symmachus' *Oratio III*, the *Panegyrici Latini* corpus, and the oration of Valentinian I to his son Gratian in *Amm.* XXVII 6,6-9⁴⁴. As concluded by Moroni, these numerous similarities do not necessarily prove any direct derivation but point to the sheer fact that the political and cultural concerns expressed by Claudian in this section of his poem were widely shared in the second half of the fourth century⁴⁵. Accordingly, all the topical features attributed to Honorius were indeed a must for anyone outlining the ideal imperial *paideia* as both Claudian and Synesius were. The following table confronts some of the *loci similes* found in *IV cons. Hon.* and *De regno*⁴⁶:

⁴¹ Cf. e.g., *Sid. carm.* II 99-102.

⁴² Cameron 1970, 321-323; Moroni 1993, 34; Perrelli 1993, 239-240.

⁴³ Cf. Perrelli 1993, 239-247 concludes that while Themistius' advice to Valentinian focused mostly on rhetoric and culture, Claudian's/Theodosius' focused rather on the military development of the emperor to hold the reins of his empire, according to Verg. *Aen.* VI 847-853.

⁴⁴ Cf. Moroni 1993, 34 and nt. 64 for general reference.

⁴⁵ Moroni 1993, 35.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lacombrade 1956 analyses some of the *loci similes* in *De regno* and *IV cons. Hon.* such as: «la domination de soi-même» (v. 261-262 - § 10.1); the *clementia* (v. 276 - § 8); the love of the subjects (v. 281 - § 13.3); the renunciation to selfishness (v. 294 - § 5); accessibility (v. 303 - § 15-16); the choice of good collaborators (v. 489 - § 11); carefulness in public expenditure and fair taxation (v. 496-500 - § 25).

<i>IV cons. Hon.</i>	<i>De Regn.</i>	Message conveyed by Synesius
220-224	4,6; 5,1; 28,1	On ἀρετή and how it combines with εὐτυχία. On how virtue must be shown to lead as an example for others ⁴⁷ .
225-254 Prometheus' creation of men	10,2-3 (<i>De Prov.</i> 10,6)	Description of the different organs of which man is composed. Among these organs, reason must reign over the soul of the king ⁴⁸ .
254-268	10	On self-control (αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ βασιλέα εἶναι, 10.1) ⁴⁹ .
269-275	13,2; 28,3	The ruler lives in plain sight ⁵⁰ .
276-277	10,1	On εὐσέβεια.
278-280	12	On the necessity to keep away from adulators.
281-289	13,3	On the importance of the love of the subjects for the emperor as his most solid defence ⁵¹ .
290-295	7-10; 18,1; 26	On the attributes of good kingship: (7) φρόνησις, ἰσχύς, σοφία ⁵² ; (8) πρόνοια; (9) τὸ ἀγαθόν; (10) εὐσέβεια; (26) τὸν δωρητικόν, τὸν ἴλεων (these last imitating God's attributes); (18.1) σωφροσύνη; (10.2-7; 26) ἐγκράτεια.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ecph.* VII 64 (276, 1) Delatte 1942, 50; *Diotog.* VII 62 (266, 1) Delatte 1942, 53.

⁴⁸ *Syn. De regn.* 10,2-3: ὡς οὐχ ἀπλοῦν τι χρῆμα οὐδὲ μονοειδὲς ἄνθρωπος [...] καὶ ἔσμεν ὕδρας, οἶμαι, θηρίον ἀτοπώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον τι πολυκέφαλον. [...] ἔνι δὲ τις ἡ μέση διὰ πάντων φύσις, ἦν νοῦν καλοῦμεν, ὃν ἀξιώ βασιλεύειν ἐν τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως ψυχῇ τὴν ὀχλοκρατίαν τε καὶ δημοκρατίαν τῶν παθῶν καταλύσαντα.

⁴⁹ Cf. e.g., *Lib. Or.* 13,8 (= 6 Criscuolo).

⁵⁰ *Plin. paneg.* 45,64 (*vita principis censura est eaque perpetua*).

⁵¹ *IV cons. Hon.* 281-291: *non circumstantia pila / quam tutatur amor. non extorquebis amari; / hoc alterna fides, hoc simplex gratia donat.* [...] *qui terret, plus ipse timet; sors ista tyrannis /convenit.* Throughout Claudian's *carmina* there is a neat juxtaposition between the spontaneous love of the subjects for their good ruler and the fake one displayed to usurpers under constraint, or the terror spread by tyrants to be feared and so protect themselves: cf. e.g., *Claud. Stil.* II 173-183 (Charlet 2017, 310 nt. 27); III 26-29; 221-222 (*contentus lictore venit nec inutile quaerit / ferri praesidium solo munitus amore*); cf. also *Paneg.* II [12] 25,4 describing the fake displays of love to the usurper Magnus Maximus.

⁵² The images of Hermes and the Sphinx also occur in *De Prov.* I 11,1-2 and *De dono* 2,5; cf. also *De regn.* 7,5 where Synesius defines φρόνησις as major and leading among the other virtues (ἔψεται γὰρ ἡ τριττὺς τῇ πρεσβυτέρᾳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν, καὶ πάσας εὐθὺς ἔξεις συσκήγους καὶ συστρατιώτιδας ἐπὶ σοί). On the identification of ἡ τριττὺς with the canonical φρόνησις, ἀνδρεία, σωφροσύνη, δικαιοσύνη of Pythagorean, Platonic, and Neoplatonic conception (corresponding to the Latin *quadrige virtutum*) cf. Garzya 1989, 394 nt. 21; Consiglia Alvino 2017, 106-108.

296-299	6,5	The emperor should abide by the laws he issues (βασιλέως μὲν ἔστι τρόπος ὁ νόμος) ⁵³ .
299-302	28,3; 29	The emperor leads as example of conduct for all his subjects ⁵⁴ .
303-320	17,2-7	The title of βασιλεύς was ditched in Rome after the expulsion of the Tarquini in favour of αὐτοκράτωρ. The good ruler should be approachable towards his subjects, dwell among his soldiers, and avoid luxury while cherishing measure and prudence ⁵⁵ .
320-352	13; 14,5; 15,8; 19,1-2	The emperor should be the first of his soldiers ⁵⁶ . Against seclusion (14).
396-418	29	On the importance of education for the young emperor (παιδεία).
412-418 ⁵⁷	16-17,1	On the custom of imperial ἀγροικία (<i>rusticitas</i>) e.g., Carinus (16.4-9), Galerius, and Diocletian (17.1).
488-489	11; 23,2; 27,3	On the choice of good collaborators (φίλοι) that can multiply the ruler's eyes and ears ⁵⁸ .

⁵³ Cf. Consiglia Alvino 2017, 100-104 on Synesius' position *vis-à-vis* the precedent conceptions of the νόμος ἔμψυχος, on which cf. e.g., Diotog. VII 61 (263, 14) = Stob. IV 7,61 (Delatte 1942, 245-249), and which was later to be recovered by Procopius of Gaza, cf. *Paneg. Ad Anastas.* 11.

⁵⁴ Cf. Plin. *paneg.* 44,8, cf. Ware 2013, 323-324.

⁵⁵ On the imperial εὐπρόσοδον cf. Men. Rhet. II 375,10; Plin. *paneg.* 24,5; Pacat. *Paneg.* II/12, 21 with probable reference to Valentinian II as secluded emperor who considered it demeaning to intermingle his subjects cf. Galletier 1955, 88 nt. 2 and Cameron - Long 1993, 138 and nt. 111.

⁵⁶ Cf. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1.22; Diotogen. *Ext.* VII 61 (264.1) Delatte 1942, 52-53. On the importance of calling the soldiers by their names, highlighted by Synesius especially at § 13,5, cf. also Suet. *Iul.* 67,3; Wallace Hadrill 1982, 34 on Xenoph. *Ages.* 9 and 11 with the contrast between the seclusion of the Persian king Cyrus and Agesilaus' conduct, approachability and military activity.

⁵⁷ Cf. also Claud. *IV cons. Hon.* 342-343 *solabere partes / aequali sudore tuas* echoing Pacat. *Paneg.* II [12] 13,3 *terrarum hominumque dominum, parce contenteque viventem.*

⁵⁸ Cf. Syn. *De regn.* 11,1-4 on the careful choice of collaborators (φίλοι) echoing Plin. *paneg.* 45,3 (*tu amicos ex optimis*). On the echoes of the Greek literature behind the image of the collaborators of the emperor as his eyes and ears cf. e.g., Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1,32; Them. *Or.* 15,196D-197A; 8,117A; cf. also Them., *Or.* 1,17 c-d with possible reference to the *curiosi*, proper imperial intendants that appear in *CTh* VI 29,7-12 and *CI* XII 22; Consiglia Alvino 2017, 126-128; Maisano 1995, 150 nt. 56.

Even without hypothesising the existence of a specific common source for the quoted passages, the similar education of Claudian and Synesius in fourth-century Alexandria could have played a role in this commonality of tropes⁵⁹. Discussing the circumstance and the scope of Synesius' *libellum* would exceed the purpose of the present article, but the highlighted passages show that Synesius' can be safely defined, if not a proper *speculum principis*, certainly a *περὶ βασιλείας* which recovers reflections on the figure of the ruler dating as far back as the Homeric poems⁶⁰. The position held by Synesius in the face of Arcadius is that of the philosopher who addresses his speech to a *pepaideumenos*, as was typical of the discourses *περὶ βασιλείας* by Dio Chrysostomus, Ecphantus, Diogenes, and Sthenida in the Hellenistic or early imperial age (then recovered by the Latin Stoic-Cynic tradition)⁶¹. While presenting himself as the spokesperson of philosophy, Synesius devotes to the eastern emperor a speech full of philosophical precepts that could make him closer to the ideal good ruler (§ 6,4). As philosopher and counsellor of the powerholder, Synesius felt legitimated in remarking since very early in his discourse (§ 4,6; 5,1-3) that Arcadius did not hold his position due to merits of his own but to the fortune (i.e. the accident) of inheriting his father's power. In such new circumstances, he provided the *pepaideumenos* ruler with useful advice (§ 3; 4,6; 5,1), insofar as the only response to dynastic succession was *paideia*.

The following sections aim to show some of the striking coincidences of Synesius' work and Claudian's political *vademecum* to Honorius.

⁵⁹ Lacombrade 1956, 21 hypothesised Claudian's influence on Synesius on historical basis «les similitudes d'expressions qui, dans certains cas, presentent le texte grec comme un démarcage prosaïque des vers de Claudien» *contra* Birt 1892, 158 (sustaining the reverse) and considered the hypothesis of a common source (possibly identifiable with Themistius, as hinted at by Demougeot 1951, 239 and 211 nt. 473) a partially satisfying solution. Recovering Fargues 1930, 204 nt. 7, Cameron - Long 1993, 81 reads: «The parallels between this speech [Claud. *IV cons. Hon.*] and Synesius's *De regno* are so close that actual derivation of one from the other has often been suspected - unnecessarily and implausibly: both Claudian and Synesius wrote in the same well-established tradition.» Cf. also Cameron - Long 1993, 137 nt. 109; 321-323.

⁶⁰ Under the label of *περὶ βασιλείας* lie three different genres: the epideictic speech called *λόγος βασιλικός*, the philosophical treatise, and the philosophical epistle. Cf. Pernot 1993 I, 77; Consiglia Alvino 2017, 20 nt. 9 on various *loci* in Homer attesting the presence of *βασιλεία*-related *topoi*.

⁶¹ Barnes 1986; Lacombrade 1951, 88-107; on the Neopythagoreans cf. Thesleff 1961; Delatte 1942; O'Meara 2003.

2. *On self-control: Claud. IV cons. Hon. 228-254 and Syn. De regn. 10,2-3*

Although interwoven with very different literary frames, these passages are fundamentally coincidental. Claudian entrusts the myth of Prometheus with illustrating to the young Honorius how human nature works: Prometheus created man by taking his unperishable mind from heaven (*Prometheus, / sinceram patri mentem furatus Olympo*, v. 229-230) and placing it in his head. Man's two other souls, anger (*ira*) and lust (*cupido*), instead, reside below the neck, respectively in the chest and the lower part of the body, from where they obey the will of the rational soul and are kept apart from it to avoid interference. Through the lower body, man suffers from avarice, joy, misery, and love, which all enflame and enhance his unquenchable lust, always returning with more insistence than the oft-beheaded hydra's heads. The division of the soul into earthly and heavenly elements placed in different parts of the human body seems to combine two major concepts of Platonic thought: the myth of the creation of man by Prometheus on the one hand, and the theory of tripartition of the soul on the other⁶².

Similarly, according to Synesius, God created man as a single living being where a dissonant crowd of forces live together – which makes him a beast more extraordinary and with more heads than the hydra (καὶ ἔσμεν ὕδρας, οἶμαι, θηρίον ἀτοπώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον τι πολυκέφαλον). Besides comparing the complexity of human instincts to the monstrous multi-headed hydra, with a self-evident overlap of images, Synesius and Claudian specify that it is not through the same organ that men think, desire, and suffer, nor through the same organ that they get angry, rejoice or fear. The nature of so many different emotions leaves space, for both authors, for one natural faculty that mediates between and deserves to reign over all other passions and faculties, that is reason. If the reign of reason over the soul makes the common man rational and wise, it can turn the king into the best or even a divine one⁶³. Accordingly, the only faculty that must reign over the soul of the king is reason.

More openly than Claudian, Synesius enunciates the importance for the king to rule over himself and establish a monarchy over his soul (τὸν βασιλέα πρῶτον αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ βασιλέα εἶναι καὶ μοναρχίαν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καταστήσασθαι) as a necessary premise for ruling over his subjects. To do so, the king must quash the

⁶² On the creation of man by Prometheus cf. Plato *Protag.* 320 D; Hor. *carm.* I 16,13-16; Claud. *Eutr.* II 490; on the theory of tripartition of the soul cf. Plato *Resp.* IV 439 D-E; IX 571C-572 A and 580 D; *Tim.* 79 C-80 D; Cic. *Tusc.* I 20 and Apul. *Plat.* 1,13; cf. Platnauer 1922, 302 nt. 1; Charlet 2000, 165 nt. 1 (p. 21).

⁶³ Plat. *Theaet.* 176B and Plot. *Enn.* I 8,7,12-6 where virtue is defined as living a god-like life free from evil.

sovereignty of the mass and the democracy of passions through the only faculty that could do it, which is reason ([...] ἔνι δέ τις ἡ μέση διὰ πάντων φύσις, ἦν νοῦν καλοῦμεν, ὃν ἀξιῶ βασιλεύειν ἐν τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως ψυχῇ τὴν ὀχλοκρατίαν τε καὶ δημοκρατίαν τῶν παθῶν καταλύσαντα, in Synesius' words). As the wording shows, the passions are compared to a chaotic ὀχλοκρατία or δημοκρατία, political metaphors of the lack of a common direction and the disorder of passions which the rational νοῦς should cast away⁶⁴. Synesius' description of the human soul with reason as the go-between among all faculties strongly echoes (or is echoed by) Claudian's Platonic division of the human soul into τὸ λογιστικόν and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν that the poet projected onto his description of *mens* on the one hand, and *ira* and *cupido* on the other. The victory of the νοῦς/*mens* over all the passions is a must for the good king and he must pursue this aim with tenacity, through constant exercise. In Synesius' *De providentia*, the outgoing king Tauros recommends his neo-elected son Osiris to take great care of himself and resist the constant attacks of demons, made through the irrational parts of his soul (*De Prov.* I 10,6-11).

These remarks can be linked to Proclus' *In Parm.* 127C, where Athena wins over the Giants and, consequently, over the multiplicity of matter and instincts⁶⁵. According to Vian, Proclus developed a peculiar interpretation of Gigantomachy by accepting the role of Athena, the goddess of reason, as decisive in the fight against the Giants⁶⁶. According to this interpretation, if reason controls the soul, Athena triumphs and the person holds a life that resembles that of a philosopher or a king (ὁ σοφός in *Syn. De Prov.* I 10,6). But as the lowest instincts and feelings take hold, then the man becomes a tyrant. Despite the different conceptions of matter in Plotinus and Proclus, we find a similar thought in *Enn.* I 8,4,14-22, where Plotinus says that evil takes control over us when reason (τὸ λογιζόμενον) is hindered by the passions and darkened by and inclined to matter⁶⁷. It is not accidental that the Neoplatonist Synesius stresses the same point in *De Regno* 10,4, by saying that whoever manages to temper and subdue the passions to the reason is divine (ὁ θεῖος) insofar as they emulate and tend to the perfection of God, whether they are a private citizen or a king. Especially in the case of a king, given that his example is echoed by many, he must rule over himself and put his rationality over

⁶⁴ Cf. *Them. Or.* 2,35b for the metaphorical use of δημοκρατία; cf. Lamoureux - Aujo-
ulat 2008, 100 nt. 53. Cf. also *Prov.* I 10,5-6.

⁶⁵ Cf. Luna - Segonds 2007, 93 and 280-281. The authors translate the victory of Athena as that over «toutes les causes divisées et encosmiques» (πάντων τῶν διηρημένων καὶ περικοσμίων αἰτίων).

⁶⁶ Cf. Vian 1952, 36-37.

⁶⁷ Nikulin 2019, 181-183.

the beasts living within his soul (*De Regno* 10,7), which is the same advice Claudian/Theodosius gives Honorius in *IV cons. Hon.* 220-224⁶⁸.

According to Fargues and Courcelle, passages like *IV cons. Hon.* 228-254 demonstrate Claudian's adherence to Neoplatonism.⁶⁹ This hypothesis was later reversed by Moreschini, who rather considered Claudian an interpreter of contemporary *Popularphilosophie*, merely acquainted with streams of thought from Epicureanism and Stoicism to Neoplatonism and Christianity but not fundamentally identifiable with neither a Neoplatonist nor a Christian.⁷⁰ Following Moreschini's arguments, in the same way Claudian's *carmen minus De Salvatore* does not make him a Christian, passages of clear Neoplatonic influence such as this here analysed are not enough to make him a Neoplatonist. In fact, what we read in Claudian's passage does not transcend the political dimension to land in a theocratic one like Synesius'.

3. Against seclusion: *Claud.* *IV cons. Hon.* 320-352 and *Syn. De regn.* 14

Synesius recommended that the king make frequent appearances and travel from town to town (§ 22), always meeting the needs of local communities by sparing them from conflicts, releasing taxes (§ 23), or lavishing goods and monetary help with measure (§ 25) – despite the long distances and the many different cares of a sovereign. On the one hand, such a strong emphasis on the imperial *praesentia* seems merely to pay tribute to the solid literary tradition of the *speculum principis* as consolidated during the Tetrarchy and throughout the fourth century⁷¹. On the other, as his speech was addressed to a civilian emperor, increasingly

⁶⁸ Cf. Lamoureux - Aujoulat 2008, 99 nt. 51 with reference to Corn. *Cinna*, 1696; Plat. *Resp.* 606d; Isocr. *Nikokl.* 26. The existence of evil within the soul and with matter is typical in Plotinus' thought, cf. Nikulin 2019, 182: «Evil for Plotinus resides not in the realm of a shared action that might result in atrocities or mass murder, but rather in the soul, as moral and cognitive evil of vice and ignorance, and in the body, as physical evil of personal misfortune, of being not well, poor, unattractive, and old». Cf. also *De scientia politica dialogus*, V 130 (Mazzucchi 2002, 46).

⁶⁹ Courcelle 1948, 121 nt. 4 on *Claud. III cons. Hon.* 162-170 (the *katasterismos* of Theodosius I after his death); *IV cons. Hon.* 228-256; Rufin. *hist.* II 483-493 (Radamantus on *metempsychosis*).

⁷⁰ Cf. Moreschini 2004, 57-77.

⁷¹ The *Panegyrici Latini* celebrated in many *loci* (or asked for) the *praesentia* of the emperor, i.e., his rapid movements between far places of the empire cf. VI [7] 7,5; VIII [4] 6,1; XII [9] 15,3; III [11] 6,2-7,1.

sheltered within his court, Synesius put a stronger emphasis on the imperial entourage, composed of the king's close friends, governors, and ambassadors (§ 11; 23,2; 27,3) who metaphorically extend the king's own body by lending him extra eyes and ears to keep in touch with the particular realities of his kingdom, from the centre to the periphery. In fact, according to Synesius, the king should hold in high value the contact with his subjects, through mediators (§ 27,1) who represent him as his direct emanations⁷².

Claudian, instead, warned Honorius against adulators and false rumours that flourished within the court and could harm the imperial polity (v. 278-280). These remarks confirm the secluded nature of the Western emperor, which Claudian's later description of him as *princeps civilis* (v. 488-503) highlighted to the utmost. The choice of collaborators, who officially represented the emperor on the battlefield as much as in the juridical sphere (488-489: *fortes in Marte viros animisque paratos, / sic iustos in pace*), is considered crucial to the emperor's good rule. Besides the parallelism of Claudian's remarks with *De regn.* 11; 23,2, and 27,3, the first thing that meets the eye is that they certainly pleased the senatorial elite, among whom such collaborators were chosen, and who expressed the utmost gratitude for being kept in office for long (v. 490)⁷³. In the same way, Honorius was praised for not proscribing nor exiling influential men nor confiscating their possessions nor replenishing his private *aerarium* at their expense (v. 493-495; 499)⁷⁴. Moreover, Claudian praised the emperor's carefulness in imposing public taxes (*impia continua cessant augmenta tributi*, v. 496) and expenditure (*munificus largi, sed non et prodigus, auri*, v. 500)⁷⁵.

However, not even when warning Honorius against adulators Claudian dwelled, in *IV cons. Hon.*, on the real danger lurking around the emperor within the imperial court. To these dangers and, more specifically, to individuals such as Rufinus and Eutropius the poet had devoted and was to devote proper invectives featuring the right-hand men of Arcadius as greedy adulators who eventually de-

⁷² Cf. *Men. Rhet.* II 375,18-21.

⁷³ Cf. above nt. 38.

⁷⁴ Cf. Charlet 2000, 39 hypothesising a possible allusion to the anti-senatorial govern of Valentinian I juxtaposed to *IV cons. Hon.* 488-489 and 503-504 highlighting Honorius' deference to the collegiate orders, cf. Cameron 1968, 19-20; 1970, 388. Cf. also *Paneg. Lat.* II/12 20,3 and 45,4-7 on Theodosius showing *clementia* towards the senatorial elite for not imprisoning, killing, expropriating, nor exiling anyone; Nixon/Saylor Rodgers 1994, 513 nt. 163; Oros. VII 35,7-8, Socr. V 14. Wallace-Hadrill 1981, 312: key points of concern for the senatorial elite were the protection of their property, their security, and their social standing.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Syn. De regn.* 25.

prived the emperor of his intention and rights⁷⁶. These characters were targeted primarily as Eastern political enemies of Stilicho and, to a closer reading, as the enemies of the *concordia fratrum* between Honorius and Arcadius.

On the contrary, in *De Regno* 14, Synesius openly denounced that imperial seclusion primarily hindered a wise choice of collaborators and enhanced the proliferation of despicable figures within the imperial court, eventually affecting the ruler's knowledge of the situation of the empire. The passage is an anti-eunuch tirade behind which Lacombrade detected an allusion to Eutropius⁷⁷. The seclusion of the emperor is associated with the extraordinary power held by the eunuchs in the court «who received most of the blame for keeping the emperor shut up in his court, ignorant of what was happening outside» according to a *topos* widely shared by the Latin tradition⁷⁸. Less threatening to the emperor than aristocrats when brought to a position of power, eunuchs had grown increasingly popular at the Eastern Court. Their lack of descendants and the general contempt surrounding them among the other social classes relegated their figures to ministers of trust that the emperor could remove from office at any moment without fear of drawbacks such as usurpations or coups d'état. While entirely relying on the patronage of the emperor, however, they could reach extremely powerful positions, with great wealth and influential administrative duties⁷⁹.

In *De regn.* 14,5 Synesius brought the emperor's attention to the need to recover the roots of his power and be one of his soldiers like the leaders of Parthians, Macedonians, Persians, and Medes. These led by example as men of the people (ἄνδρες δημοτικοί) who shared with their soldiers all sorts of pains and efforts in the military camp while refusing any ease⁸⁰. The criticism against seclusion, which

⁷⁶ *Ruf.* I dates to 395-397, *Ruf.* II to 397; *Eutr.* I and II to different moments of 399 cf. Cameron 1970 and Döpp 1980 in disagreement on many points; for a general perspective on dates cf. the introductions to Charlet 2000, IX-XXXV and 2017, IX-XXVII. In these invectives, Claudian charges the Eastern PPOs Orientis Rufinus and Eutropius of depriving Arcadius of his decisional power, cf. e.g., *Ruf.* II 169-170 (on Stilicho's banishment from the East in 395 per decree of Rufinus); *Eutr.* I 308-309.

⁷⁷ Lacombrade 1951, 110.

⁷⁸ Cf. Cameron - Long 1993, 108 and nt. 8 (the passage is discussed at p. 107-109). Cf. *Hist. Aug. Alex. Sev.* 66,3; *Aurel.* 43,4; *Ambr. hex.* V 8,21,68; Stroheker 1970, 273-283.

⁷⁹ On eunuchs in both the Byzantine and in the Latin world cf. Tougher 2002; 2008, 36-53; 2021; Gioseffi 2015, 67-86 on the eunuchs appearing in Latin literature; cf. e.g., Eusebius, Grand Chamberlain of Constantius II, cf. *Amm.* XIV 11.2 and XXI 15.4; Tougher 2021, 83-89; Betancourt 2020; cf. also Hopkins - Hopkins 1993, 62-80, with a parallel historical analysis of the reasons why such figures held so much power in Late Antiquity. Cf. also Garambois-Vasquez 2007, 155-158.

⁸⁰ This was common *topos* cf. e.g., from the presentation of Julian in Mamert. *Paneg.*

made the emperors attend only debauched eunuchs and servants, runs parallel to the recovery of ἀγροικία (i.e. the martial frugality featuring the third-century soldier emperors) at § 16-17. In this passage, Synesius dwells on the examples of Carinus (mistaken for his father Carus), Galerius, and Diocletian, together with Agesilaus, and Epaminonda to illustrate nostalgically the old custom of imperial ἀγροικία (*rusticitas*) or λιτότης (*simplicitas*) which Arcadius was recommended to imitate⁸¹.

However, the description of the ideal ruler as a companion to his soldiers in exercises and fight or expert in military activity – as much as the shoemaker is an expert of shoes (§ 13,7) – rather than presenting Arcadius as a good king, strongly remarks that Arcadius did not stick to this military-emperor type and even risked being ridicule (γελοῖος) by not knowing the very instruments of his job. This is stated even more plainly at § 15,7, where Synesius criticises again the seclusion of the emperor by representing him as a lizard shut in his apartments whereas the ancient kings were used to cross the Euphrates and the Danube to face their enemies. The more reprehensible this attitude was, the philosopher argues, as in the very conception of *De regno*, the aesthetics of kingship is paradigmatic and functional to the transmission of divine features into the world (§ 27,2-3; 28,3), according to the concept of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ (Plat. *Tht.* 176b)⁸². Precisely the exemplariness of the king imposed his ideal communion with every component of social and military life and made the secluded court in Constantinople even more distant from the ideal and subject to the influence of oriental models, towards which Synesius' conservatism is strongly polemic.

Such a mixture of advice and blame motivated scholarship to doubt whether Synesius ever delivered his speech – at least as we read it – in the face of Arcadius. This makes the *libellum* fundamentally different from Claudian's purpose and context of delivery of *IV cons. Hon.*, where the poet merely dwells on the advice

III/11 11-12; Lib. *Or.* 13,44 (τράπεζα δὲ σοι μετρία [...]); Amm. XVI 5,1: *ambitosam mensam fortuna, parcam virtus apponit*; XXI 9,2; 16,5-6.

⁸¹ Cf. Garzya 1989, 418 nt. 68; Consiglia Alvino 2017, 76-81 arguing that behind the erroneous name of Carinus lies the good fame of Probus, especially for his anti-gothic policy, cf. Hist. Aug. *Prob.* 17.4-6 reporting an embassy to Probus.

⁸² Cf. Lamoureux - Aujoulat 2008, 97 nt. 42; Delatte 1942, 123ff. where the author analyses the legacy of Egyptian, Mesopotamic, Persian, and Iranian traditions left to the Greek and Latin tradition from Plato to Zeno, Cleantes, Sphairos and Perseus; Cracco Ruggini 1982, 9-91; Moroni 2002, 14-31; Consiglia Alvino 2017, 151. Typical of Late Antiquity was also the idea that not only the emperor resembled and imitated God, but he served as a mediator between Him and the subjects to teach them how to cherish Him (emperor θεοδίδακτος), cf. Eus. *Vita Const.* II 28,2; Iul. *Or.* 11,44,157d-158a; Ambr. *Spir. sanct.* 1,4.

he could give to the young emperor while glossing over any open criticism of the Western imperial court. Accordingly, Claudian presents Theodosius' speech to his son as a proper instructive section on how Honorius should train the troops (in different weather and geographical conditions) and be part of them, sleep in their tents, eat their food, and refuse any luxury that would distinguish him from them. In this way, Theodosius' *vademecum* for his son easily turned into a *περὶ βασιλείας*. While nobody in the audience in Milan could believe that Honorius embodied the portrait given by Theodosius, anyone could be reassured that Theodosius' advice was soon to be followed by his son. Honorius' reply (v. 353-369) showed his eagerness to fight and enact his father's suggestions, so maintaining at once the emperor's and the poet's credibility in front of the audience of his speech⁸³.

4. Conclusions

A parallel analysis of Claudian's *IV cons. Hon.* and Synesius' *De regno* opens a view of the brothers and emperors *pepaideumenoï* as they received advice on power-holding by two very different *paideutai*. On the one hand, Claudian concealed himself behind the *persona loquens* Theodosius I, so giving his speech the *facies* of the epic dialogue between the *prosopopoeia* of the deceased emperor and his son Honorius; on the other, the philosopher-ambassador Synesius openly (see § 1-2 on Synesius' *λόγος ἐλεύθερος*) stated his position as master in front of the young Arcadius, thus recovering the long Greek tradition of philosophical speeches *περὶ βασιλείας*.

Despite the difference between the two authors' self-presentation, they equally advise the brother emperors to pursue virtue and avoid vices. By investing in inner virtues rather than in outer accidents of power⁸⁴ Arcadius (and Honorius) could secure their virtue even though they simply owed their power to their father and no merit of their own. Synesius explicitly preferred the elective model of Theodosius to his son's *ἀπόνως* succession to the throne⁸⁵. Claudian expressed the same prefer-

⁸³ Cameron - Long 1993, 137.

⁸⁴ Syn. *De regn.* 4 lists a greater wealth than the Persian Darius', thousands of horses and armed men, or innumerable cities as outer accidents of power.

⁸⁵ Cf. Consiglia Alvino 2017, 94: «La preferenza accordata al modello di regalità fondata sul criterio elettivo fa sì che Sinesio si discosti dalla concezione patrimoniale dell'impero propugnata da Eusebio di Cesarea per legittimare la dinastia di Costantino. [...] Al contrario, Sinesio annovera tra gli esempi di buon governo Diocleziano, Galerio, Caro. Il primo è ricordato per la sua concezione, dimostrata dalla scelta dell'abdicazione, del governo come servizio; Galerio e Caro, condividono con Teodosio la proclamazione a imperatore per meriti militari».

ence through his praise of Theodosius' victories against the usurpers Maximus and Eugenius, which paid tribute to the panegyric tradition, always versed in praising virtues and deeds of an emperor as parts of the merits earning him the throne⁸⁶. Although Synesius did not downgrade in *De regno* the efforts required of Arcadius to maintain what Theodosius had left him⁸⁷, *De prov.* 1,6, was later to describe Synesius' ideal of imperial accession as the election of the best candidate (i.e. Osiris) by the vote of priests, acolytes, prophets, soldiers, and ultimately the gods⁸⁸.

This ideal could hardly be reflected in the reality of a hereditary monarchy in which the power holders evidently fell short of the virtues of the ideal good ruler. Thence the focus was ultimately drawn to the values of παιδεία and εὐσέβεια which allegedly spread from the example of the king among the subjects who emulate him⁸⁹. These were the only values to which emperors ever infantilised and ever to be overshadowed by the memory of their renowned father could try to conform. *Paideia* became thus the only way to transfer the outer accidents of Fortune (i.e. the inheritance of power by dynastic right) into inner values that made a man deserve the role and name of a king. The young brother emperors were equally recommended to start and pursue that path to virtue. The role of the rhetoricians was thence to lead them through their speeches. *Paideia* also represented one of the few possible remedies to Arcadius and Honorius' complete lack of virtues, especially in the military sphere. The latter was one of the dearest to the most traditional Roman conception of imperial education to which both Synesius and Claudian adhered closely, unlike other authors of *περὶ βασιλείας*⁹⁰.

Synesius did not conceal his strong criticism towards Arcadius' luxurious seclusion and ceremonial attitude (§ 13-16) and blatantly denounced the emperor's shortness compared to his father and to the model of the frugal soldier emperor.

⁸⁶ Cf. Claud. *Prob.* 136-141; *III cons. Hon.* 63-105; *IV cons.* 45-48.

⁸⁷ § 4,4: Arcadius must preserve the Theodosius' legacy through τὴν φυλακὴν αὐτοῦ θεοῦ, δεῖ δὲ νοῦ, δεῖ δὲ τέχνης, δεῖ δὲ καιροῦ, δεῖ δὲ ἔργων πολλῶν [...]. Cf. also § 5,2.

⁸⁸ On divine election of power as a legitimising tool cf. Delatte 1942 on Ecphantus, Diotogenes and Sthenida whose influence over Synesius is proved, cf. also Consiglio Alvinò 2017, 21ff. with examples from Aesch. *Pers.* 762-764. Trajan was as well styled as Jupiter's choice to be the ruler on earth, cf. Plin *paneg.* 1.1; 1.3; 1.4-5; 8.1: 80.3-2, which made Levene 1997, 72 talk about a *numinousness* 'something well beyond the human' as the main emperor's feature. While Pliny never explicitly styled the emperor as *deus* or *numen*, he depicted him as the mortal, blessed, recipient of divine favour.

⁸⁹ Cf. also Syn. *De prov.* I 12; 15,1; *De regn.* 29,1; Plut. *De Isid. et Os.* 356A-B. cf. also Mena Patricius *De Scientia Politica dial.* V. 130-1 and Ecphantus 274,1 (Delatte 1942): the virtue of the king makes his subjects imitate him.

⁹⁰ Perrelli 1993, 147.

As Barnes has emphasised, in fact, Synesius was able to use in the *De Regno* «traditional material in a surprising fashion: whereas generations of panegyrists had described the ideal ruler in ways that emphasised the degree to which the ruler being addressed exemplified perfection, Synesius continually invokes the ideal in order to proclaim how far short Arcadius falls»⁹¹. Despite the closeness of the contents of the *De regno* to works like Isocrates', Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Dio Chrysostomus' *Four Orations* to Trajan (especially the first one), Themistius' and Libanius' orations, Synesius placed the same contents in a peculiar *libellum* which Barnes impressively defined «opposition literature in an age dominated by panegyrics»⁹².

In the other half of the empire, Claudian offered Honorius one of the longest lists of *exempla virtutis* in his works (v. 412-418), landing us a brilliant proof of how Honorius was declaredly considered a mere *pepaideumenos* still in 398. After stating that his son did not owe his power to his father but to his nature (*nostro nec debes regna favori, / quae tibi iam natura dedit*, v. 379-80), the ghost of Theodosius provided Honorius with exemplary models from the most ancient Latin tradition (*Latium retro te confer in aevum*, v. 400) by whom he could be inspired or warned while preparing for his adult, active life. All these *exempla* being from the military sphere, Theodosius showed that only age prevented his son from already embodying such values. By portraying Honorius as eager to follow his father's path, every hope was projected onto his future accomplishments, and he was spared from the open criticism shown by Synesius to Arcadius.

While the bulk of Synesius' speech blamed his elder brother for his lack of political sight and military vigour, towards the end of it Synesius exhorted Arcadius to love philosophy and true culture to further allow the same love to spread among his subject and generate an enlightened society, for in *paideia* and philosophy lay the only hopes of renewal for a degenerated empire.

⁹¹ Barnes 1986, 107.

⁹² Barnes 1986, 112; the author considered the *De regno* closer to the verve of Procopius' *Secret History* than to the nuanced tailoring of Claudian's official poems.

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