

## THE VICTIMS OF RUFINUS

Claudian's poem *In Rufinum* is a historical epic with at least two unusual features: the first book contains many of the standard elements of a formal invective, and the two books were composed and recited some eighteen months apart, since Book One celebrates the death of Rufinus on 27 November 395 as a very recent event (i, pr. 15 ff.), while the preface to Book Two refers explicitly to Stilicho's expedition to Greece in 397.<sup>1</sup> The interval in composition is matched by a gap in content: Book One treats Rufinus' career down to 393, with some forward references to 395, explicitly marked as such (especially lines 321/2: *Hunnorum laturus opem, quos adfore bello norat*), while the narrative of Book Two begins from the death of Theodosius on 17 January 395 (ii. 1 ff.) and ends with the lynching of Rufinus on 27 November 395.<sup>2</sup> Claudian thus omits any account of Rufinus' activities during the campaign of Theodosius against Eugenius in 394 and the emperor's last months in Italy. Claudian's careful chronological ordering of his material is deliberate, but since it has been obscured in recent discussions of the *In Rufinum*, it needs to be reinstated.

Claudian divides his treatment of Rufinus at the imperial court at Constantinople before 394 into two sections, divided by an invocation of Stilicho as the only man who can save the world from the villain's wickedness (i. 256 ff.). Significantly, the poem reflects the division, proper to panegyric and invective, into the subject's achievements or misdeeds in peace (i. 176 ff.) and his military enterprises, which Stilicho holds in check (i. 297 ff.). Within each section, Claudian cleverly mixes general accusations derived from a long literary tradition with precise allusions to the specific misdemeanours of Rufinus.<sup>3</sup> The section on Rufinus' political activities begins and ends with commonplaces: Rufinus was ambitious and venal (176 ff.), though his riches brought him no true happiness (196 ff.), and he was more savage than all the mythical and historical paradigms of cruelty (251 ff.). Sandwiched between the commonplaces, however, is a passage which illustrates Rufinus' insatiable greed, cruelty and total lack of scruple by means of four specific examples, each of which is described at some length. Unfortunately, the first example cannot be identified: although Claudian alludes to Rufinus' double-crossing of a friend in precise and pointed phrases (220–9), it seems impossible to supply the name of the individual whom the poet has in mind. The other three examples, however, can be both identified and dated.<sup>4</sup>

## I. THE FALL OF TATIANUS

230 non coniunx, non ipse simul, non pignora caesa<sup>5</sup>  
 sufficiunt odiis; non extinxisse propinquos,  
 non notos egisse sat est; excindere cives  
 funditus et nomen gentis delere laborat.

<sup>1</sup> On the genre and structure of the poem, see especially H. L. Levy, *TAPA* 77 (1946), 57 ff.; W. Barr, *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar, Second Volume* (ARCA 3, 1979), 179 ff.; on the dates of composition, A. Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 76ff.

<sup>2</sup> For these two dates, *Chr. min.* i. 245; Socrates, *HE* v. 26. 4; vi. 1. 1; vi. 1. 8.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed comments, H. L. Levy, *Claudian's In Rufinum. An Exegetical Commentary* (APA, Philological Monographs 30 [1971]), 52 ff.

<sup>4</sup> O. Seeck, *RE* iA (1920), 1190 f. The allusions detected by Levy in his commentary on lines 181/2 and 234–6 to the massacre at Thessalonica in 390 and to *CTh* ix. 40. 13 (18 August 390; cf. *PLRE* i. 348) are not convincing.

<sup>5</sup> T. Birt, *MGH*, Auct. Ant. 10 (1892), 27, prints *caesi*, which is attested by one manuscript.

The praetorian prefect of the East, Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus, who had been consul in 391, was dismissed and disgraced in September 392:<sup>6</sup> Claudian alludes to the imperial decree which excluded all the inhabitants of Tatianus' native province of Lycia from holding office (known from its repeal on 31 August 396: *CTh* ix. 38. 9). He hyperbolically represents this exclusion from office as an attempt to exterminate Lycians, an attempt more heinous than what Rufinus did to Tatianus and his wife, more heinous than the murder of his children, more heinous than killing Tatianus' relatives and exiling his friends.

## II. THE EXECUTION OF LUCIANUS

- nec celeri perimit leto; crudelibus ante  
 235 suppliciis fruitur; cruciatus, vincla, tenebras  
 dilato mucrone parat. pro saevior ense  
 parcendi rabies concessaque vita dolori!  
 mors adeone parum? causis fallacibus instat,  
 arguit attonitos se iudice. cetera segnis,  
 240 ad facinus velox, penitus regione remotas  
 impiger ire vias: non illum Sirius ardens  
 brumave Riphaeo stridens Aquilone retardat,  
 [effera torquebant avidae praecordia curae]<sup>7</sup>  
 effugeret ne quis gladios neu perderet ullum  
 245 Augusto miserante nefas.

The details of this passage correspond closely to various aspects of the trial and execution of the *comes Orientis* Lucianus, which Rufinus supervised in Antioch (Zosimus 5. 2. 1 ff.; *Suda*, s. v. Λουκιανός). Lucianus was seized at night and tortured slowly to death (*nec celeri...leto; crudelibus...suppliciis; cruciatus, vincla, tenebras*). Rufinus arrived in Antioch suddenly and unexpectedly (*arguit attonitos*), he conducted the trial (*causis fallacibus*) in person (*se iudice*), and he allowed the accused no opportunity to appeal to the emperor (*neu perderet ullum Augusto miserante nefas*), even though the next morning he pretended that the dead Lucianus was still alive and would receive an imperial pardon.

The date of this episode requires careful consideration. Zosimus places it after the death of Theodosius, and recent discussions of the *In Rufinum* accept the apparently implied date of 395.<sup>8</sup> But the episode occurs in a digression from Zosimus' main narrative devoted to a portrait of Rufinus. Since Zosimus describes Rufinus' treatment of Lucianus as an example of his general viciousness of character, the chronological

Since Tatianus was not killed, but exiled, that cannot be correct. The reading of most of the manuscripts should be retained: *pignora caesa* is a generalising plural referring to the killing of Proculus, which receives a separate development in lines 245–9.

<sup>6</sup> *PLRE* i. 876–878. Tatianus was still in office in early September 392 (*CJ* xi. 25. 2 Seeck), but Rufinus has replaced him by the 10th of the month (*CTh* viii. 6. 2; ix. 28. 1).

<sup>7</sup> 'Versus suspectus', according to Birt in his apparatus, since it interrupts the context and pointlessly echoes 225: *effera praetumido quatiebat corda furore*. The preface, however, asserts that the line is 'vix adulterinus' (cv). In favour of deletion, see C. Gnlika, *Studien zur Literatur der Spätantike* (*Antiquitas* 1. 23, 1975), 84. With line 243 removed, the passage recovers perfect sense and perfect point: neither the heat of the Dog-star nor the cold of Thrace held Rufinus back, lest anyone escape execution, lest he waste an evil deed through an imperial pardon. For this use of *ne*, in the sense of 'through fear that', see J. Svennung, *Untersuchungen zu Palladius und zur lateinischen Fach- und Volkssprache* (Uppsala, 1935), 515.

<sup>8</sup> H. L. Levy, *The Investive In Rufinum of Claudius Claudianus* (Geneva, N.Y., 1935), 21 n. 133; Cameron (n. 1), 64 ff.; Barr (n. 1), 181 f.; S. Döpp, *Zeitgeschichte in Dichtungen Claudians* (*Hermes*, Einzelschriften 43, 1980), 86 n. 3, 92.

### III. THE DEATH OF PROCULUS

Proculus, the son of Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus, was prefect of the city of Constantinople from 388 to 392: since he was appointed at the same time as his father (Zosimus 4. 45. 1), he was presumably dismissed with him.<sup>11</sup> Proculus thereupon fled, and Rufinus induced Tatianus to summon him back by letter, in the hope that both would receive light punishment for their crimes when in office (Zosimus 4. 52. 3). On his return, however, Proculus was beheaded before his father's eyes, while Tatianus departed into exile after being condemned to death and then reprieved (Eunapius, frag. 59; Asterius, *Homily* 4. 9. 3 [p. 43 Datema = *PL* xl. 224–5]). Again Claudian touches on the salient facts attested in other sources (*iuvenum...colla ante patrum vultus...cedidere; post trabeas exul*): Tatianus had been consul in 391. The date of Proculus' death is stated as 6 December 393 by the Paschal Chronicle, reproducing some sort of chronicle of the city of Constantinople (p. 565 Bonn = *Chr. min.* i. 245). That date is unfortunately misreported as 6 December 392 in an influential study of Claudian.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of the preceding discussion has not been to show how carelessness and misjudgment have prevented a correct appreciation of Claudian, nor merely to document the platitude that the interpretation of Claudian's political poems demands a knowledge of their historical background. It is designed rather to correct a serious misapprehension about Claudian's technique. The first book of the *In Rufinum* does not present the specific examples of Rufinus' malfeasance 'both out of order and out

<sup>12</sup> Cameron (n. 1), 80.

of context'.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, even in this poem Claudian both respects chronological sequence and treats it as a basic principle in arranging his material. He separates the fall of Tatianus and Proculus in September 392 from the subsequent execution of Proculus in the presence of his father on 6 December 393 precisely in order to insert the execution of Lucianus, which occurred in the interval between Tatianus' dismissal from office and his son's death. Claudian has thus deliberately chosen chronological order in preference to thematic arrangement for these three examples of the cruelty of Rufinus.

A general conclusion about Claudian's technique suggests itself. If the first book of the *In Rufinum* observes chronological sequence, at least within each of its sections,<sup>14</sup> even though it would lend itself so well to thematic rather than chronological arrangement, then chronological sequence must be one of the main principles which Claudian habitually employed in ordering his material. Exegetes of his other poems should not neglect this central fact about his method of composition.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cameron (n. 1), 84, followed by Döpp (n. 8), 92. Barr (n. 1), 182, denies that lines 239–42 can refer to Lucianus on the grounds that 'they would be the only reference in Book 1 to an event following the death of Theodosius', and he paradoxically asserts that the lines do not allude to any specific person or incident at all.

<sup>14</sup> The qualification is important, for the expedition of Stilicho against the Bastarnae, to which Claudian alludes in the section on Rufinus' deeds in war (310 ff.), appears to belong to 392: see, recently, C. J. Simpson, *Latomus* 34 (1975), 221 ff.

<sup>15</sup> I am much indebted to Michael Reeve, as both editor and colleague, for advice during the composition of the present article.