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EUNAPIUS IN ATHENS

THOMAS M. BANCHICH

EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS' *Vitae sophistarum* (Giangrande 1956; hereafter *VS*) and the fragments of his now-lost *History* are of no small importance to students of late antiquity. Besides their direct testimony, comparison of these texts to others—most notably to the *Res gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, the *Historia nova* of Zosimus, and the anonymous *Epitome de Caesaribus*—has prompted lively debate over questions of *Quellenforschung*, which themselves often turn on reconstructions of the chronology of Eunapius' life and the publication of his works.¹ To this debate Charles Fornara has contributed a series of articles concerned mostly with Ammianus but in one case focused on Eunapius and the reconciliation through emendation of what Fornara perceives as various anomalies apparent in Eunapius' account of the time he spent in Athens as a student of the sophist Proaeresius.²

Foremost among these anomalies and, indeed, the stimulus for his entire argument is what Fornara maintains (1989: 517-518) to be the absence from the *VS* of any but the most superficial treatment of events between 362 and 367, years accepted by most scholars as the termini of a five-year sojourn in Athens begun when Eunapius was fifteen and ending with his return to Sardis at the age of nineteen (Fornara thinks twenty necessarily follows from the commonly accepted dates).³ Fornara finds additional incongruities in Eunapius' departure from Athens at a time when Proaeresius, Eunapius' teacher throughout this supposed five-year period, was, if not on his deathbed, at least seriously ill (Fornara 1989: 518), and in Eunapius' characterization of himself as the student of the Sardinian neoplatonist Chrysanthius—who had taught Eunapius before the latter's departure to Athens and with whom Eunapius, upon his return, resumed study—ἐκ παιδός, wording which Fornara feels (1989: 519) implies a continuity at odds with an Athenian ἐπιδημία of five years.

These purported problems Fornara solves by reading at *VS* 10.8.3/493, p. 79, lines 16–18 μετάπεμπος for the transmitted μετὰ πέμπτον ἔτος to yield καὶ ἀγαπηθεὶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ (i.e., Proaeresius) καθάπερ παῖς γνήσιος, ἠπείγετο μὲν μετάπεμπος εἰς τὴν Αἴγυπτον, κτλ. This change allows an abbreviation of Eunapius' stay in Athens, which, Fornara maintains, not only eliminates difficulties

¹Blockley (1981: 1–10) and Banchich (1985: 1–23) describe the history and parameters of interpretation. Recent contributions to the controversy include Baldini 1984; Paschoud 1984 and 1985; Baker 1984 and 1988; and Ochoa 1988 and 1990. Blockley (1993: 485–489) provides references to the enumeration of the fragments of Eunapius in Müller, *FHG* IV.

²Fornara 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992.

³To Goulet (1980), Proaeresius' resignation from his teaching position during Julian's reign is irreconcilable with his tutelage of Eunapius during that same period, and he thus argues for 364 in the place of 362. *Contra* Goulet, Banchich (1987) argues that Proaeresius forfeited his public appointment but continued to teach privately. See also Penella 1990: 2–4.

inherent in the received text but also is reconcilable with several passages in the *VS* that initially appear to militate against it.

Indeed, *μετάπεμπτος*, so palaeographically simple, does restore harmony to dissonance—if dissonance there is. For it does not necessarily follow from the failure of the *VS* to provide a detailed account of Proaeresius during the time when Eunapius was his pupil that that period was brief. Proaeresius' Christianity, about which Eunapius is at least cautious, if not apologetic (see, for example, *VS* 10.8.1/493, p. 79, line 6, where Eunapius says of Proaeresius *ἔδōκει . . . εἶναι χριστιανός*), might have caused him to gloss over the activity of his mentor during the reign of Julian and its immediate aftermath. However, this assumes on Proaeresius' part some religiously motivated reaction to Julian's paganism other than the resignation from his official teaching position described in the *VS*.⁴

A less hypothetical explanation arises from a consideration of Eunapius' biographical technique. For the *βίοι* of the *VS* are, in Leo's typology, the Alexandrian offshoot of the peripatetic form: that is, they eschew chronological narrative but strive instead to portray character through description of words, deeds, and physiognomy. On this count, there is nothing unusual about Eunapius' treatment of Proaeresius. Rather it is our anachronistic expectations of the ancient biographic genre that lead us to expect from Eunapius what he never intended to give.⁵

But that is not to say Eunapius failed to anticipate in the minds of his readers the expectation of some record of Proaeresius' activity under Julian, an anticipation all the more reasonable if Eunapius had actually been Proaeresius' pupil during the Apostate's reign. In fact, two passages from the *VS* seem best understood as apologies for just such an omission. The *βίος* of Proaeresius opens with Eunapius' observations (*VS* 10.1.1) that, in contrast to the merely adequate treatment of Proaeresius earlier in the *VS* and in the *History*, he will now provide a more detailed account appropriate to one who possessed not only a firm knowledge of that sophist and who had been admitted to his conversation and company, but of one whose indescribable thanks could not hope to repay the *φιλία* of Proaeresius toward him.⁶ These are sentiments in tone and substance hard to square with

⁴ 10.8.1–2/493, p. 79, lines 5–13. For context and interpretation, see Banchich 1987 and 1993 and Penella 1990.

⁵ See Leo (1901: 259–261) together with Buck (1977: 58–104 and 1992), who rightly stresses the formal relationship between Eunapius' biographies and the diadochic organization of Sotion. Penella (1990: 32) comments: "Eunapius feels no obligation to give anything like a full narrative account of his subjects, and some of his sketches are little more than static portrayals or notes. Throughout, Eunapius tends to focus on select incidents in an anecdotal and somewhat undisciplined manner." Penella's subsequent examination of Eunapius' subjects (1990: 39–117) provides numerous examples.

⁶ *VS* 10.1.1/485, p. 63, lines 16–23: *Περὶ δὲ Προαιρεσίου καὶ προλαβοῦσιν ἰκανῶς εἰρηται, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἱστορικοῖς κατὰ τὴν ἐξήγησιν ὑπομνήμασιν. καὶ νῦν δὲ ἐπελθεῖν καιρὸς εἰς τὸ ἀκριβέστερον εἰδῶτι τε ἀσφαλῶς καὶ ἀξιοθῆντι τῆς ἐκείνου γλώττης καὶ ὁμιλίας· καὶ ταῦτά γε, εἰ καὶ πάντοτε μεγάλα καὶ οὐρανομήκη πρὸς χάριν, εἴ τις διδάσκαλος, ἀλλ' ὅμως πολλῶν τινι καὶ μακρῶ τῆς εἰς τὸν συγγραφέα φιλίας ἀφεστήκεσαν αἰ τοσαῦται καὶ ἀδιήγητοι χάριτες. An entry in the *Suda* assigned with good reason to Eunapius' *History* (fr. 26.2 Blockley 2.38) does indeed mention Proaeresius.*

Fornara's view. The same holds true for remarks that come near the end of Eunapius' subsequent account of his arrival in Athens:

καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἔσχεν οὕτως καὶ ἀκριβέστερον ἐν τοῖς κατ' ἐκείνους χρόνοις λελέξεται· ὁμῶς δὲ ὁ συγγραφεὺς, ὁμολογῶν τὰ ἐς αὐτὸν θεοῦ τινοῦς προνοίας τετυχηκέναι, ἐκ τῆς Προαιρεσίου σπουδῆς οὐδὲν εἰς τὸ καθόλου περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀποστήσεται τῆς ἀληθείας, εἴ γε πεπηγὼς ὁ Πλάτωνος λόγος, ὡς ἀλήθεια πάντων μὲν ἀγαθῶν θεοῖς, πάντων δὲ ἀνθρώπων ἡγείται. (*VS* 10.2.3/486, p. 66, lines 16–22)

The modern debate about the reference of ἐκείνους—Proaeresius or Eunapius?—and of ἐν τοῖς . . . χρόνοις—the *VS* or the *History*—is here unimportant.⁷ What matters in the context of a critique of Fornara's position is Eunapius' explicit declaration that he will somewhere treat in greater detail his student days with Proaeresius. For this, taken together with *VS* 10.1.1, seriously undermines the grounds for Fornara's emendation.

The primary reason for a revision of Eunapius' Athenian ἐπιδημία removed, the circumstances of his departure from Athens and the boast that he studied with Chrysantius ἐκ παιδός are not in themselves sufficient to sustain Fornara's argument. The collateral objection of Fornara (1989: 518) that the generally accepted chronology of Eunapius' life has him leave Proaeresius "on his deathbed merely because [Eunapius] wanted to travel to Egypt," is, on the basis of *VS* 10.8.3–4/493 (our sole authority), hyperbolic. All Eunapius says is that, while he was considering a visit to Egypt, "his parents [if that is the meaning of οἱ πατέρες], calling him, compelled him to go to Lydia. And there, a σοφιστικὴ was being offered and all were summoning him to this. Proaeresius died not many days after this."⁸

There is, then, no indication that Proaeresius was even ill, let alone on the point of death, when Eunapius took his leave. Furthermore, the inducement linked by Eunapius with his return to Sardis makes little sense if he were in the early stages of his sophistic training. Rather, it appears that the typical combination of family and professional connections⁹ had won for Eunapius a municipal teaching

⁷For details, see Banchich 1988 and Penella 1990: 16–17 and 19–23.

⁸P. 79, lines 16–21: καὶ ἀγαπηθεὶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καθάπερ παῖς γνήσιος, ἠλείγετο μὲν μετὰ πέμπτον ἔτος εἰς τὴν Αἴγυπτον, οἱ δὲ πατέρες καλοῦντες ἐπὶ Λυδίας ἐξεβιάσαντο· κάκειον μὲν σοφιστικὴ προῦκείτο, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο ἐξεκάλουν ἅπαντες. Προαιρέσιος δὲ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀνεχώρει μετ' οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας. The μὲν/δέ construction emphasizes the coincidence of Eunapius' recall with Proaeresius' death. For the usage, see Denniston 1966: 370, section i. Several passages in the *VS* and, if a restoration is accepted, a neglected inscription (*CIG* III, p. 1191, no. 4076c) hint that Eunapius eventually did reach Egypt. For evidence and analysis, see Banchich 1985: 116–117.

⁹Eunapius was related to and had begun his studies under Chrysanthius (*VS* 6.1.6/461, p. 18, lines 10–13; 7.4.5/477, p. 49, lines 8–11; 23.1.1/500, p. 90, lines 21–24; and below, 307) and, if the traditional chronology of Eunapius' life is correct, was fresh from a successful course of study in Athens with the famed Proaeresius. A namesake and perhaps the grandfather of Eunapius had been a rhetor (fr. 24 Blockley 2.35, with Eunapius 2, *PLRE* 1.295–296).

position.¹⁰ Elsewhere in the *VS* (23.3.15/502–503, p. 96, lines 8–17) Eunapius describes how, when he returned from Athens, he instructed his own pupils in rhetoric in the morning and then, in the afternoon, ἐπαιδεύετο, παρὰ τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἰὼν διδάσκαλον [Chrysanthius], τοὺς θειοτέρους καὶ φιλοσόφους τῶν λόγων—a routine irreconcilable with Fornara's thesis that it was just on his homecoming that Eunapius began the sophistic training of which Julian's school legislation and Proaeresius' death *ex hypothesi* had deprived him during an abbreviated stay in Athens.

Neither does Eunapius' description of himself as Chrysanthius' student ἐκ παιδός necessarily rule out five years of instruction under Proaeresius. The phrase itself, though suggestive, by no means guarantees strict temporal continuity coincident with geographic proximity, and its function in the *VS* need be no more than to set Eunapius more securely in the intellectual lineage of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Aedesius, and Chrysanthius, the delineation of which was obviously a principal motive for the composition of the biographies.¹¹

More problematic is Eunapius' announcement (6.1.6/461, p. 18, lines 10–13) that, once back from Athens, as Chrysanthius' student μόλις εἰς εἰκοστὸν ἔτος [nineteen, whether just or nearly ready to turn twenty is uncertain] ἤξιωτό τῶν ἀληθεστέρων [i.e., of Iamblichian arcana]. If Eunapius arrived in Athens when fifteen, and after five years returned to Sardis, he should have been twenty, rather than nineteen. But there are solutions to this apparent difficulty other than to compress the time Eunapius spent in Athens. One possible explanation involves a confusion between Eunapius' age when he left Sardis as opposed to when he arrived in Athens, a distinction perhaps marked by Eunapius by the particle πῶν, which qualifies the latter. Eunapius may, then, have actually been fourteen at the time he left home. Another explanation may be the confusion of academic and calendar (i.e., consular or some other form of magisterial) years. For Eunapius' arrival in Athens in the autumn of 362 and his return to Sardis during the portion of the consular year 367 that fell before his twentieth birthday would yield the required five different consular years. Or, as it has sometimes been understood, εἰς εἰκοστὸν ἔτος may define not Eunapius' age upon return from Athens but the duration of the propaedeutic that preceded Chrysanthius' revelation to him of the

¹⁰ For Eunapius' use of σοφιστικὴ to mean a municipal teaching position, see *VS* 10.3.8/487, p. 67, line 28–p. 68, line 4.

¹¹ On philosophical pedigree in the *VS*, Penella 1990: 39–78, and Buck 1977: 94–104. In every case but one (fr. 50, line 14 [Blockley 2.78]) Eunapius' use of ἐκ παιδός (*VS* 6.1.6/461, p. 18, line 10; 21.1.1/498, p. 87, line 20; 23.1.1/500, p. 90, line 22; 23.5.1/504, p. 98, line 25; and fr. 35 of the *History*) admits either interpretation. However, other authors afford numerous examples of the less restricted sense here preferred. For an author contemporaneous with Eunapius, see Libanius *Epp.* 136 (Foerster 1921: 10.134, lines 16–17) and 741 (10.668, line 8), where Libanius refers respectively to Mocius and Patroinus as his ἐταῖροι ἐκ παιδός, though he spent the years 336–353 not in Antioch but in Athens, Constantinople, and Nicodemia. See *PLRE* 1.505–506, s.v. Libanius 1. For lexical matters, the author has employed the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* databank.

higher truths to which he refers. Whatever the explanation, *VS* 6.1.6 cannot in and of itself sustain any single interpretation, and certainly not Fornara's.¹²

The same holds true for *VS* 7.4.10–13/478, pp. 50, line 13–51, line 8, and 14.1/494, p. 81, lines 3–9. The first passage, the description of Priscus' exoneration in Antioch from charges leveled against him during the reign of Valens and of his subsequent departure from Asia Minor for Greece, concludes (p. 51, lines 7–8) with the aside: καὶ ὁ ταῦτα γράφων ἐπαιδεύετο κατ' ἐκείνους τοὺς χρόνους παῖς ὢν καὶ εἰς ἐφήβους ἄρτι τελῶν. Fornara (1989: 520) interprets this as a reflection of the importance attributed by Eunapius to a validation by his own recollection of Priscus' acquittal, testimony to which Fornara thinks Eunapius was attempting to give more weight by the declaration of his age. But it is hard to imagine why Eunapius would have thought a statement of his age could do this. In the case of the fall in 371 of Festus, the executioner of Maximus, Eunapius explicitly says: καὶ ταῦτα δὲ ἀκριβῶς ὁ γράφων παρὼν συνηπίστατο (7.6.9/481, p. 55, lines 25–26). For whatever reason, his point with regard to Priscus seems to be that he was at the time in his late teens and engaged in study. The second passage baldly notes that the sophist Himerius, who had journeyed to Julian's court, ἐνδιέτριψε τῇ ἀποδημίᾳ after the Apostate's demise in Persia, and decided to return to Athens, if not because of, at least after Proaeresius' death. Whether or not ἐνδιέτριψε is the best word to describe Himerius' situation (Fornara's "self-imposed exile" may be too strong), it is certainly acceptable.¹³

Finally, there is Eunapius' notorious account of a prophecy given him by the hierophant of the Eleusinian Mysteries (*VS* 7.3.1–5/475–476, pp. 45, line 6–46, line 11), which Fornara would date to "sometime around 380" (1989: 522).¹⁴ Here careful distinctions must be made between what the hierophant actually said and what Eunapius, writing the *VS* in 399,¹⁵ thought he referred to. Whatever

¹² A chronology of departure from Sardis at age 14 and arrival in Athens τελῶν εἰς ἕκτον καὶ δέκατον ἔτος in the autumn of 362 (*coess.* Mamertinus and Nevitta) = calendar year one, Eunapius 14/15; 363 (*coess.* Julian and Sallustius) = year two, Eunapius 15/16; 364 (*coess.* Jovian and Varronianus) = year three, Eunapius 16/17; 365 (*coess.* Valentinian and Valens) = year four, Eunapius 17/18; and 366 (*coess.* Gratian and Dagalaifus) = year five, Eunapius 18/19, with Eunapius' return to Sardis sometime after the cessation of classes for the following academic year of 366/7 (his fifth academic and biological year in Athens) but before his twentieth birthday in the autumn of 367, fits Eunapius' testimony. Wright's translation (1921: 379) of μόλις εἰς εἰκοστὸν ἔτος as "scarcely in the twentieth year [of pupilage]" offers another way out, though, in view of the chronology above, an unnecessary option. In contrast to the hostility toward chronological exactitude avowed in the *History* (fr. 1, lines 79–88 [Blockley 2.10]), the precise references of the *VS* reflect Eunapius' intense personal identification with various of his biographical subjects.

¹³ In fact, as Penella (1990: 99) notes: "we know nothing certain or substantial about Himerius' activities from June of 362 through his return to Athens after the death of Prohaeresius . . ."

¹⁴ On the passage in general, Penella 1990: 142–144.

¹⁵ Banchich 1984. Cameron's and Long's objections to this date (1993: 51, n. 175) rest partly on their mistaken notion of the necessity of some causal, rather than purely temporal, relationship between the revolt of Tribigild and the subordination to the praetorian prefect of the proconsul of Asia. As for their reservations as to why Eutropius would have increased the power of a praetorian prefect, see Banchich 1984: 190–191.

his precise wording, clearly the unnamed hierophant predicted the ruin of the temples of Greece, though whether in his own lifetime or that of his successor is uncertain. This disaster he linked to the person of that successor, a man deemed by Eunapius' Eumolpid source unfit to preside at Eleusis because he was not an Athenian, let alone a Eumolpid, and also because of his oaths and allegiances to other gods, especially to Mithras. He further predicted the cessation of the Eleusinian cult under that hierophant, who, despised for his φιλοτιμία, would be stripped of his priesthood and die before reaching old age. Since Eunapius' point is to show the prophetic power of the hierophant, it seems unlikely that he would have recounted these utterances unless, with the advantage of hindsight, he knew them to be true.

As Fornara rightly observes (1989: 522, n. 21): "The precision with which the hierophant describes his successor requires that he was privy, directly or indirectly, to deliberations concerning his replacement." But what does not follow is Fornara's inference that this must mean that the outgoing hierophant was advanced in years. The secrets to which an Eleusinian hierophant was privy had been transmitted by the Eumolpid chosen (by whom and how we are unsure) as hierophant to an heir-designate clansman. To make such precious knowledge the strict monopoly of one man until he judged himself or was judged by others at risk because of his age would place the mysteries in constant jeopardy. At least one other Eumolpid, then, probably was prepared to fulfill the sacred prerogatives of the clan. Unless the Eumolpids became extinct with the death of Eunapius' hierophant (and the agitation expressed in the *VS* at the prospect of a non-Eumolpid suggests otherwise), something besides age alone must have prompted the change in hierophant and contributed to the outgoing hierophant's grim predictions.¹⁶ There are, in fact, grounds to suspect that the role of Eunapius' hierophant in Julian's proclamation as Augustus, coupled with his possession of prophetic powers unrelated to his official position at Eleusis, would have made him—and by extension those closest to him, among them his fellow Eumolpids—suspect in the eyes of Valentinian.¹⁷

This hypothetical forced resignation, which, if the mysteries were to survive, would have entailed the revelation to an outsider of cult secrets, admirably fits the tone and content of the prophecy preserved by Eunapius with regard to the new hierophant. Likewise, it, together with what could easily have been perceived as anti-pagan policies on the part of Valentinian, are sufficient to account for the forebodings of the *VS*.¹⁸ Eunapius' hierophant—a true believer who was part of a process likened by Farnell (1907: 3.158) to apostolic succession—had helped

¹⁶ For the Eumolpids and Eleusis, see Clinton 1974: 8, 10, 116.

¹⁷ Eunapius relates (*VS* 7.3.7/476, p. 46, line 25–p. 47, line 2) that Julian consulted his hierophant in Gaul before ἐπὶ τὴν καθάρσιν ἠγγέρθη τῆς Κωνσταντίνου τυραννίδος. On Valentinian's assumption of control in Illyria, see Zos. 4.3.1 and Groag 1946: 48.

¹⁸ See especially Zos. 4.3.2, together with *Cod. Theod.* 9.16.7 of September 9, 364, and 5.13.1, of December 4, 364, and Geffcken 1978: 160–162 together with Paschoud 1979: 2².336 ff, n. 111. Valentinian's precise intent here is less important than pagan perceptions of his actions.

Julian to the throne, had seen the rejuvenation of temple worship through the patronage of that same emperor and the good offices of the proconsul of Achaëa and Eleusinian initiate Praetextatus,¹⁹ and, if this reconstruction is correct, had been forced under Valentinian to face the prospect of the surrender of his sacred position to one ritually unfit, along with the broader threat—whether real or imagined is here immaterial—of a renewed Christian offensive. As Fornara recognizes (1989: 522), he need not have been prescient nor have witnessed Alaric's depredations or reeled before the mandates of Theodosius to have had so fatal a vision of the future. For this, affairs as they are known to have existed in the mid-360s provide sufficient cause, and any connections between later events and the hierophant's prophecy must be attributed to Eunapius' himself.²⁰

Felix Jacoby (1949: 379, n. 139) once observed with respect to a reluctance to emend: "Cowardice in the treatment of a text never pays." Fornara, to whom has fallen the daunting task of bringing to completion a portion of the ethnographic section of Jacoby's *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, suffers no lack of courage. What he does lack in defense of objections against his emendation and its consequences for the chronology of Eunapius' life and related events is everything but a weak appeal to palaeographic possibility. The text of *VS* 10.8.3—μετὰ πέμπτον ἔτος—should stand as transmitted.

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¹⁹ On Julian's patronage of Eleusis, see Claudius Mamertius *Paneg. Lat.* 3(11)9.3 [Mynors], and on Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (*PLRE* 1.722–724), *Zos.* 4.3.3 with *ILS* 1259, which styles Praetextatus *sacratius Eleusi[ni]*s.

²⁰ See further Barnes 1976: 266 and 1978: 115–116, with Penella 1990: 112. All this renders impossible the often made (e.g., Paschoud 1979: 2².367, n. 138) identification of Nestorius 2, *PLRE* 1.626, as Eunapius' hierophant. The account of Nestorius at *Zos.* 4.18.2 requires separate investigation. However, it may be remarked here that Zosimus' ἱεροφαντεῖν τεταγμένως does not necessarily refer to any specific priesthood (although this is possible) let alone to the position of Eleusinian hierophant. Rather, it may indicate Nestorius' function as a sort of "designated dreamer" or his position within the circle of pagan intellectuals at Athens that would come to form the nucleus of the Neoplatonic Academy. On these see Saffrey and Westerink 1968: 1.xxvi–xxxiv.

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