(De-)Constructing the Visigothic Poet:

Religious, Cultural, & Regional Identity in Eugenius II of Toledo

***

MARK LEWIS TIZZONI
ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

We tend to view Eugenius II of Toledo as the great Catholic Visigothic poet: born to an aristocratic family in Toledo, trained as a cleric there and in Zaragoza, recalled to the bishopric of his home city by the Visigothic king himself, and commissioned then as court poet. None of these aspects of Eugenius’s identity are wrong, but they are used to construct an identity for the poet which is exactly that: constructed. The goal of this essay is to deconstruct and examine this identity in an effort to better understand the poet and the world in which he operated.

In reality, Eugenius’s identity was not so straightforward. Despite the poet’s Toledan origins, the only region to appear directly in Eugenius’s verse is Zaragoza. How, then, does the regionalism of Visigothic Iberia play out in Eugenius’s poetry? As a poet, he employs Iberian sources but relies more heavily on works from North Africa and Gaul. How do these different regional identities fit together? Was Eugenius more a part of the pan-Roman – or rather the pan-post Roman – literary world of Latin letters, where his poems constructed a mental space much larger than his physical locale? Was his use of Iberian dialect a sign of cultural and linguistic constriction or did that matter?
Eugenius uses literature from across the Latin West but places it within a context that is regional within Visigothic Iberia itself. What does that tell us about his identity? What was Eugenius’s own perceived position within it? Where, and how, did Eugenius see himself and his artistic/cultural output? Eugenius’s religious identity is likewise complicated: he was both bishop and monastic, both pastoral leader and ascetic. How does this play out in his verse? These questions lie at the heart of Eugenius of Toledo’s verse, even if his penchant for the prosaic and the seemingly frivolous disguises the depth of this conflict. This article will address these layers of identity.

ESSAY

Eugenius II of Toledo was the foremost poet of Visigothic Iberia. Born to an aristocratic family in Toledo, he trained there as a cleric and then as a monastic in Zaragoza, was unwillingly recalled to the bishopric of his home city by the Visigothic king himself, and was finally commissioned by the king as a poet.¹ He worked in conjunction with King Chindaswinth and presided over several councils of Toledo, overseeing the de facto primacy of the Visigothic Church pass from Seville to the urbs regia.² It was likely during his later years as bishop of Toledo, during the reign of Recceswinth, that

---


² While de jure primacy lay in the future, it is under Eugenius that we see the beginning of the real ecclesiastical dominance of Toledo in Iberia, which will be strongly asserted by his successors Ildefonsus and Julian. Peter Linehan, History and the Historians of Medieval Spain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 54-56, and Roger Collins, Visigothic Spain: 409-711 (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 83.
Eugenius compiled and published his collection of poetry, which, in turn, cemented him as the most prominent poet of Visigothic Iberia. Eugenius’s poetry, albeit rooted in the classical tradition, was new and innovative, his *ars poetica* demonstrating the clear shift from the late antique to the medieval.

The historian, therefore, finds Eugenius located at the very center of the Visigothic world in its maturity, and so we have constructed an identity for him out of the evidence readily available. Logically then, he becomes the great Catholic Visigothic poet working at the heart of both Church and Kingdom. While not necessarily wrong, this identity that we construct for the poet is exactly that: constructed. We know precious little else about Eugenius, he certainly does not give us much apart from that he disliked the heat, and so scholars of Eugenius have essentially left the matter there. Besides, Eugenius has not been a well-known figure in the modern world, and so most scholarly attention has sought to establish our understanding of his verse itself.

---

3 Paulo Farmhouse Alberto places the compilation of the so-called *libellus diversi carminis metro* between 654 and 657, that is, between the last dateable poem and the poet’s death. We do not possess the complete text as published, but we have a serviceable accounting of its contents. Paulo Farmhouse Alberto, *Eugenii Toletani Opera Omnia*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina CXIV (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 16-17. The naming of the *libellus* as such comes from Ildefonsus of Toledo’s *De viris illustribus*, 13.


5 Articles on Eugenius typically continue to begin with a short biography, a good indication of this. He was not viewed very positively in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see, for example, his negative treatment by Raby in *A History of Christian Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 127. Subsequently defended and rehabilitated, principally by the work of Carmen Codoñer and Paulo Farmhouse Alberto, Eugenius has begun to receive more credit. These two scholars, alongside others including the present author, have worked on Eugenius from a more-or-less philological and literary perspective. For Eugenius’s famous dislike of heat, see his *carmen* 101 which features prominently in the scholarship (it is perhaps one of his best poems and it really showcases the author, so it is very useful). The scholarship on this poem is, in many ways, representative of Eugenian studies as a whole, see: Alberto, “Originality and Poetic Tradition in Visigothic Spain: the Summer according to Eugenius of Toledo,” *Euphrosyne: revista de filologia clásica* 31 (2003): 349-356; Codoñer, “The Poetry of Eugenius;” Andrew Fear, “Moaning to Some Purpose: The Laments of Eugenius II,” in *Early Medieval Spain: A Symposium*, ed. Alan Deyermond and Martin J. Ryan (London: University of London/Bidnall Press, 2010), 55-77, and Tizzoni, “Between Originality and Classical Tradition.”
constructed this identity essentially as a quick and easy shorthand, a way of introducing
the author more by his historical context than by anything else, so as to make our work
on his verse more accessible, so as to place him, our work, and ourselves in a familiar
space. It helps that this is how Ildefonsus, who knew Eugenius personally, essentially
presents him to us in his *De viris illustribus*. Yet our understanding of Visigothic Iberia
has greatly changed, and had to change, since the fall of Franco in Spain and the birth
of late-antique studies in the *anglophonie*.\(^6\) Just as we reassess Visigothic history as a
whole so too it is time to reassess, or perhaps properly assess, our understanding of
Eugenius and his identity. The goal of this essay, therefore, is to deconstruct this
convenient “shorthand” identity which we have built for Eugenius and to examine what
lurks in and between the lines of his poetry, to examine the multi-faceted identity that
the poet-bishop himself held. For in reality, Eugenius’s identity was complex, varied,
and at times conflicting.\(^7\)

This study centers upon two bodies of primary evidence: the writings of Eugenius and
the writings of his successors in Toledo, Ildefonsus and Julian. These later figures are
important for our understanding of Eugenius’s identity because they first constructed
it, in a historiographical sense. The principle text here is Ildefonsus’s *De viris
illustribus*, which presents the main biography we possess for Eugenius as the
culmination of a list celebrating ecclesiastical worthies from Iberia, the goal of which

---

\(^6\) In terms of Visigothic identity, one recent monograph particularly stands out: Erica Buchberger,
*Shifting Ethnic Identities in Spain and Gaul, 500-700: From Romans to Goths and Franks* (Amsterdam:
Amsterdam University Press, 2017). In general terms, the bibliography is very extensive, the
bibliographic work of Alberto Ferreiro is a good starting point, see also Linehan, *History and Historians*,
for an historiographical perspective.

\(^7\) As Carmen Codoñer wrote: “the development of Eugenius’ personality […] is as heterogeneous as the
Visigothic society of the time allowed.” “The Poetry of Eugenius,” 324. The same can be argued for
Eugenius’s identity.
was to advance the position of Toledo and its bishops.\(^8\) These texts permit an examination of how his successors – who were actively creating his legacy – remembered their predecessor. The writings of Eugenius himself present a certain level of difficulty. In essence, identity is integral to all of Eugenius’s poetry, but not in the obvious way we might wish it to be. We do not find discourses on “Visigothicness” or “Hispano-Romanitas,” nor indeed any real inkling of these things. Nor should we expect to: whatever his identity, Eugenius was operating at the center of the Visigothic kingdom and at its highest level when he published his *libellus*, and so it must necessarily reflect the official position on such things. As Erica Buchberger has recently demonstrated, Visigothic identity had by the time of Eugenius’s episcopate become a firmly established political identity, tied firmly both to loyalty to the state and conformity to the Catholic Church.\(^9\) Indeed, the culmination of this process occurred at the beginning of the reign of Recceswinth; in other words, in the final years of Eugenius’s episcopate and the years in which he published his *libellus*.\(^10\) Gothic identity had opened up to all from III Toledo in 589; to be a loyal Iberian was to be a Visigoth, and so any assertion of Gothic identity from a prominent member of the elite like Eugenius was unnecessary, as such identity was understood.\(^11\) Examined from the right angle, however, the poems have a great deal to communicate.

---


\(^{9}\) Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities*, 37-105 (full discussion; 78-79 in particular).

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 81. For Buchberger, the promulgation of the *Lex Visigothorum* by Recceswinth in 654 is the pivotal moment in the way in which Gothic identity appears in the discourse; the evidence from Eugenius supports this conclusion.

\(^{11}\) Eugenius does not speak of ethnicity. *Carmen* 39 and 40, *De inventoribus litterarum*, mention Ulfilas (or Gufila as Eugenius calls him) and his introduction of the Gothic alphabet and refer to the Goths both as *Gothi* (*carmen* 40) and with the classicizing *Getae* (*carmen* 39). Whether they actually denote ethnicity or not, we find both Gothic and Hispano-Roman names with no comment passed. The husband-and-wife patrons of the basilica of Saint Felix in *Tatenesio* praised in *carmen* 12, for example, are named *Aetherius* and *Teudesuintha*. Eugenius makes no comment on their cultural or ethnic identity, only that they had...
Eugenius’s religious identity serves as a good starting point in this examination, as the discussion of it begins with his successors Ildefonsus and Julian, and so forms part of his known biography. In his own words, Eugenius portrayed himself as a penitent sinner: so carmina 16-19, his epitaphs for himself. He alludes to his monastic identity in carmen 17, but gives away nothing more. Ildefonsus tells us that Eugenius indeed chose the monastic life in sagaci fuga, “wise flight,” from his life as a secular cleric in Toledo. Ildefonsus relates that, “although he was an eminent priest in the royal church, he was delighted in the life of a monk.” Eugenius established himself well in Zaragoza, if not so much actually as a monastic, becoming an archdeacon, and, in that position, he attracted the attention of King Chindaswinth who appointed him to the See of Toledo. Whatever Eugenius may have thought, his superior in Zaragoza saw it as a terrible loss to himself and his city, and petitioned the king to allow his chosen

been caring benefactors of the church (Eugenius, Carmen 12.9-10). Carmen 74 and 75, likewise, are addressed to a Chinda and a Sabana respectively. Eugenius does mention Romans once in Carmen 27.1-2, one of his epitaphs for Nicolaus, writing of him: “Quisquis Romulidum fasces clarumque senatum/ concelebrare cupis, quod venereris habes.” Translated: “whoever desires to celebrate the fasces of the descendants of Romulus and the bright senate, you have [in Nicolaus] he who should be honored.” This is an archaic poetic usage: it could imply Roman ancestry but, perhaps more likely, implies instead a link to the glories of Roman power in days long past (hence the old-fashioned imagery of fasces as well). Those who wished to celebrate triumphs like those held in the old days of Rome, in other words, need look no further than their own Visigothic aristocracy. Carmen 27, 28, and 29 are all epitaphs for the same Nicolaus, the latter two written from the voice of one Evantius. Nicolaus has been in the past identified as the father of Eugenius, see Fray Justo Perez de Urbel, “San Eugenio de Toledo,” in La Patrologia Toledano-Visigoda: XXVII Semana Española de Teología (Toledo, 25-29 Sept. 1967), ed. Joaquín Blázquez (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1970), 197, but this is no longer the general consensus; Eugenius’s family is unknown, except that it was Toledan. Alberto, Eugenii Toletani, 14.

12 Carmen 17.7-8: “ore, non corde, monachi retentans/ religionem.” Translation (as an epitaph, Eugenius is here speaking in the third person): “With his mouth, not his heart, he holds fast to the religious life of a monk.”

13 Ildefonsus, De viris illustribus, 13.

14 Idem: “Hic cum ecclesiae regiae clericius esset egregius, uitam monachi delectatus est.” One must remember when reading Ildefonsus that he himself was a monastic: naturally Eugenius’s flight to the monastery in Zaragoza was in sagaci fuga, Ildefonsus had made the same such move to Agali. Ildefonsus certainly heavily emphasizes Eugenius’s monasticism, especially when one considers that Eugenius seems always not to be in a monastic position but rather a secular clerical one. Nevertheless, Eugenius’s education indicates many years of advanced study and his texts do point to a decidedly monastic outlook. We should take Ildefonsus with a grain of salt here, but nor should we overly reduce Eugenius’s monasticism because of it. Likewise, while there have been debates as to the nature of Eugenius’s sagaci fuga, we really need see no more in this than a reflection of Ildefonsus’s own choice to become a monastic.
successor Eugenius to remain.\textsuperscript{15} The new bishop quickly found his elevated position to contain new and difficult problems and stresses. Letters 35 and 36 in Braulio’s collection both chronicle these issues and show us something about Eugenius himself. The issues discussed boil down to practical theology, demonstrating that the new bishop was very much concerned with and involved in the actual operations of the diocese under his care.\textsuperscript{16} Eugenius, then, was embracing his pastoral role. Eugenius marked his tenure as bishop by his knowledge and study. Ildefonsus relates that he revised the liturgy, composed a small Trinitarian treatise, now lost, wrote his \textit{libellus} alongside another lost prose work, and, a project emphasized by Ildefonsus, redacted and expanded the poems of the North African poet Dracontius.\textsuperscript{17} So Eugenius’s successors present him to posterity: as both monastic and pastoral, monk and bishop. Eugenius represents, in many ways, the culmination of the move towards the confessor church and its domination by pastoral and ascetic figures.

We see this religious identity played out in his verse. Here, Eugenius combines the more solitary, contemplative, and discipline-centered life associated with the monastic into his pastoral and episcopal duties. It is here, in his \textit{libellus}, that Eugenius \textit{can} be both monk and bishop, both cloistered away and present for and with the people in his care. In his \textit{libellus}, the knowledge-based, contemplative life of the monastic meets with the pastoral emphasis of the episcopate. Much of this he accomplished through an emphasis on didactic poetry. Thus, we find various works which present moral lessons, teach proper Christian behavior, and impart various Christian morals or tenants. Such

\textsuperscript{15} Braulio, \textit{Epist.} 31-33 records the exchange.
\textsuperscript{16} The issues addressed by Eugenius in \textit{epist.} 35 involve the improper ordination of a priest by his predecessor and two separate issues involving the improper use of chrism. In other words, the mundane, if no less serious, theological issues of the pastoral/secular church.
\textsuperscript{17} Ildefonsus, \textit{De viris illustribus}, 13.
are *carmen* 6, *Contra ebrietatem*, and *carmen* 7, *Contra crapulam* (*crapulam* here meaning gluttony). Other poems, stemming from his time in Zaragoza, are occasional pieces likely for performance on the patron feast days of the city’s basilicas or for carving into their stonework. Such are *carmen* 9, *De basilica sanctorum decem et octo martyrum* (Braulio’s church), and *carmen* 10, *De basilica sancti Vincenti quae est Caesaraugustae, ubi cruor eius dicitur effluxisse* (an appropriately long name, considering that this likely represents the church in which Eugenius was archdeacon).\(^{18}\)

Here we see Eugenius using his abilities for pastoral work. Other poems, more than straight *moralia*, serve to bring forth Eugenius’s inner monastic. Such are *carmen* 2, *Commonitio mortalitatis humanae* and, especially, *carmen* 5, *De brevitate huius vitae*, a mournful lament not just on the shortness of life, but on the shortness of Eugenius’s life, and an admonition for his reader to live their short life not for the pleasure of the here and now, but in perpetual view of that which is to come. These are followed up by the mournful *carmen* 101, *De aestate*. Here again Eugenius joins the contemplative, the self-reflective, the deep emotion, and the dourness, of his monastic identity, with his pastoral identity, imparting a message that his reader should look always towards the stripping away of all things, towards the fires of Hell, and act accordingly. As Eugenius combines his monastic and pastoral identities he sets the stage for his successor, Ildefonsus, whose monastic episcopal pastoralism would produce a great many theological works.\(^ {19}\)

\(^{18}\) Braulio indicates Eugenius’s position at the Basilica of Saint Vincent in his correspondence with King Chindaswinth (*epist.* 33).

\(^{19}\) For a discussion of the perceived, or posited, division between the ‘clerical’ and the ‘monastic’ in the Visigothic Church see Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400-1000* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 75-76.
The strength of Eugenius’s monastic and pastoral identity manifests itself also in another facet of his identity: that of teacher. In some ways an extension of his religious identity, this occupational identity is a key facet of who Eugenius was, and this aspect of the poet represents a significant strand in his verse. Several of his poems quickly became, and remained, staples of the grammar-school textbook. *Carmen* 42, *De animantibus ambigenis* (Regarding hybrid animals) presents perhaps the best example among many. A curious little poem, it provides the student with a useful guide not only to what one calls the various different hybrid animals one might, or might not, find inhabiting the world around, but also the poetic words one might find for all the animals found within the world of letters.20 This poem rapidly took its place in the medieval grammar textbook and we find it independently preserved in a variety of Carolingian educational manuscripts.21 Eugenius’s *libellus* contains a great many other pieces appearing in educational manuscripts, such as *carmen* 3, *De mentis humanae mutabilitate*; *carmen* 37, *Heptametron de primordio mundi*; and, *carmen* 38, *Monosticha de decem plagis Aegypti*: the same is also true for *carmina* 6 and 7, mentioned above.22 As a corpus, Eugenius’s poems quickly come to travel alongside and in conjunction with the *Distichs Catonis*.23 More locally, his verse quickly took center stage in the educational materials produced in Visigothic Spain, most notably in the *Ars grammatica* attributed to Julian of Toledo.24 Alongside these highly successful

---

20 So, for example we see *sonipes* for horse (42.2) and *Arcadicus* for donkey (42.3).
21 For *carmen* 42’s independent manuscript tradition, Alberto, *Eugenii Toletani*, 195-96.
22 Alberto, in his critical edition, has masterfully laid out the manuscript traditions for Eugenius’s works. For *carmen* 3 (129-130), *carmina* 37 and 38 (150, with substantial biography, and 193-195), *carmina* 6 and 7 (136-140 and 179-189). *Carmina* 6 and 7 travelled in part during the central Middle Ages as one poem, with *carmen* 2 sandwiched in between (182-89).
23 The full discussion of the manuscripts of Eugenius is Alberto, pp. 54-156. Two of the major manuscripts which preserve Eugenius are Carolingian grammatical compilations in which Eugenius travels alongside, among other works, the *Distichs Catonis*, the foremost medieval educational text (Paris, BnF Lat. 8093 discussed by Alberto, *Eugenii Toletani*, 54-61 and Paris, BnF Lat. 7540 + lat. 2772 discussed by Alberto, *Eugenii Toletani*, 66-71). Eugenius’s poetry travelled both with other poetry and in grammatical/educational texts.
educational poems stands another cluster of educational poems that present pieces of information, often from the realm of natural science and often presented in the form of distichs. Eugenius draws many of these from Isidore’s *Etymologiae* and presents their morsels of encyclopedic knowledge in smaller, more easily digested bites. *Carmen* 48, *De pavone*, and *carmen* 62, *De adamante*, present two examples out of a great many. These poems allow the student to encounter grammar, vocabulary, and the rules of meter alongside interesting and engaging information about the world around them. In his *Prognosticon*, Julian referred to Eugenius as his *egregius praeceptor*, his distinguished teacher, and Eugenius’s verse features prominently in the *Ars grammatica* produced by Julian or his circle. It is in his role as teacher, that his successor, Julian of Toledo, most remembered Eugenius.

The question of Eugenius’s regional and cultural identity presents a more complex, more intricate, and more conflicting image. In a sense, these identities are two sides to a coin, or rather the various sides of a die. It is wise to begin with the smallest unit and work up. We witness first in the works of Eugenius two regional Iberian identities. By birth, Eugenius was Toledan. King Chindaswinth emphasizes this identity in his response to Braulio’s petition to keep him in Zaragoza: Ildefonsus also presents him as such in the *De viris illustribus*. He was a native son of the *urbs regia*, to which he returned as bishop. Yet he need not return to it, for he had made himself a new home in

---

25 *Carmina* 44-50 (covering birds), 59-62 (covering minerals), and poems such as *carmen* 66 (*In vase salario*) demonstrate this “natural science series.”
26 *Carmen* 48 links back to *Etymologiae* 12.7.48 (which quotes Martial, *Epigrammata* 13.70, elements of whose verse is incorporated into Eugenius’s version) and *carmen* 62 *Etymologiae* 16.13.2.
27 He does this twice, at 3.17 and 3.24. Felix of Toledo, in his *Vita Iuliani*, likewise refers to Eugenius as Julian’s teacher. Eugenius’s involvement in the cathedral school was outlined in a paper by the present author presented at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo in May 2017 entitled “Teachers, students, and schools in Visigothic Iberia.” For the *loci similes* between Eugenius and Ps.-Julian of Toledo, Alberto, *Eugenii Toletani*, 454.
Zaragoza. There, Ildefonsus tells us, “he haunted the tombs of the martyrs and there he properly inhabited the study of wisdom and the conduct of a monk.”

Zaragoza certainly features prominently in Eugenius’s verse: carmina 8-11 and 21-23 deal directly with the city. In contrast, Toledo does not appear, by name, in Eugenius’s poems. Nevertheless, people and events logically placed there do appear, so carmen 25, Carmen Chindasvintho regi conscriptum; carmen 26, Epitaphion in sepulchro Reccibergae reginae; and the somewhat curious carmen 69, In lecto regis. Regionally speaking, then, Eugenius’s libellus is far more Zaragozan in its orientation than Toledan.

How should we view this? On the one hand, this could be evidence that Eugenius came to associate and personally identify more with Zaragoza, the land of his education, of his intellectual and spiritual formation, than with his home city. This is an understandable and human response: the educated poet of the libellus was, in a way, the creation of his time in Zaragoza. It was in Zaragoza that Eugenius wrote a poem on the library in which he worked and an epitaph for the one who built it. Naturally, the city would become a key part of his identity, even if he still also identified with Toledo. On the other hand, Eugenius published his libellus in the final years of his episcopacy: it represents the collected verse of the de facto primate of the Visigothic Church. In a sense, anything Eugenius put forth was political. From this angle, the inclusion of poems clearly set in Zaragoza in a text itself physically located in, and from, Toledo, serves to bring these Zaragozan churches into the realm of Toledo. The Councils of

29 Ildefonsus, De viris illustribus, 13: “illic martyrum sepulchris inhaesit ibi que studium sapientiae et propositum monachi decenter incoluit.”
30 Carmen 8 outlines the content of the library in Zaragoza created by its bishop John, who preceded Braulio, mentioning both John and the city by name. Carmina 9-11, discussed above, are occasional pieces for the churches of the city. Carmen 21 is an epitaph for the aforesaid Bishop John, carmina 22 and 23 are epitaphs for Basilla, the brother of Bishops John & Braulio.
Toledo under Eugenius worked to focus the Visigothic Church on the *urbs regia.* The *libellus,* therefore, serves to bring Zaragoza under the *aegis* of Toledo. By merging the strength of Zaragoza and its prominent churchmen with Toledo, Eugenius could assert a stronger northeast-center axis against the might of Isidore’s legacy in Seville. Into this, then, plays the prominence of Isidore of Seville’s work in the *libellus.* Eugenius retooled Isidore, and with him the intellectual *cachê* of Seville, for use in Toledo and its schools. Eugenius and his successors, in this case, could then wield the regionalism of the *libellus* as a tool in the effort of centering the Visigothic Church on Toledo. A third option presents itself as well: They were something he had written in a different time and they celebrated saints and people he still held dear, they still meant something to him. Eugenius wrote these poems as a young man in Zaragoza, and, as an old man in Toledo, he simply wanted to put them into his little book of poetry. But perhaps these motivations are not mutually exclusive.

Eugenius’s use of sources presents us with another key avenue through which we can investigate both the poet’s regional and cultural identity. As noted above, the works of Isidore of Seville hold a central place in the verse of Eugenius. So too do other Iberian

---

32 The development of the Iberian branches of the *De viris illustribus* present an important parallel, even companion, to Eugenius’s *libellus* in this respect. Isidore’s version of the *De viris illustribus* coalesced around a desire to elevate the Iberian Church and to emphasize its unity (Wood, “Playing the Fame Game,” 620-628). Isidore’s text also served to tether Zaragoza, through the family of Braulio, to Seville, linking them as *“twin spiritual centres”* (Michael J. Kelly, “The Politics of History-Writing: Problematising the Historiographical Origins of Isidore of Seville in Early Medieval Hispania,” in *Isidore of Seville and his Reception in the Early Middle Ages: Transmitting and Transforming Knowledge,* ed. Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood [Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016], 97). In the same way that Isidore connected Zaragoza with Seville to enhance his portrayal of the Iberian Church, so Eugenius connected Zaragoza and Seville (themselves already connected via Isidore) to Toledo in an effort redirect this vision of Visigothic ecclesiastical unity onto his own city.
33 Isidore’s work appears more frequently in Eugenius’s verse than that of any other Iberian writer. This, of course, should be expected not only because of the prominence of Isidore in the intellectual world of Visigothic Spain, but because of the close association between Isidore and Braulio. The intellectual milieu in which Eugenius formed himself must have had a strong Isidoran streak, and Braulio was a key transmitter of this. In terms of Braulio’s role in Isidore’s legacy see, for example Kelly, “Politics of History Writing;” Mark Lewis Tizzoni, “Isidore’s early influence and dissemination (636-711),” in *A
sources. Eugenius possessed a familiarity, at the very least in the form of *florilegia* or extracts, with many of the authors of Iberian antiquity and late antiquity.\textsuperscript{34} Unsurprisingly, Prudentius, who operated in Tarraconensis two hundred or so years before Eugenius did, features prominently. Yet, despite a familiarity with Iberian source material, any perceived Iberian identity in no way dominates his intertextuality. While Eugenius’s physical contexts may well have determined the texts that came into his hands, his mind was in no way constrained. Authors from throughout the Latin West feature in his verse. Two regions in particular appear most prominently, dominating his source material: North Africa and Gaul. Eugenius drew from both of the major poets of late antique North Africa, Dracontius from the Vandal period and Corippus from the Byzantine.\textsuperscript{35} The link with Dracontius goes much deeper, as Eugenius redacted the major works of the poet into a new, and popular, edition at the request of King Chindaswinth.\textsuperscript{36} The strong influence of North Africa is in keeping with the intellectual world of seventh-century Iberia which possessed, from its beginning, a strong African element.\textsuperscript{37} Nonetheless, it points to an intellectual culture not only looking outside of its own contexts, but one that embraced and adopted (or adapted) the cultural product of a neighbor whose cultural development in late antiquity bore a certain relevance to Iberia. Eugenius’s link to Gaul is also very strong, and he presents a familiarity with

\textsuperscript{34} Juvenecus and Prudentius appear, as do Braulio and King Sisebut. For the full scope of Eugenius’s sources see Alberto’s *index fontium* in, *Eugenii Toletani*, 413-38.

\textsuperscript{35} Eugenius’s verse also possesses links to the *Anthologia Latina*, a collection/compilation of North African origin, alongside probable links to the work of Verecundus of Iunca and Luxorius. He also exhibits some familiarity with Augustine of Hippo. Again, see Alberto’s *index fontium*, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{36} Eugenius was the leading Dracontius scholar of his day. For a discussion of the redaction see Tizzoni, *The Poems of Dracontius*, 147-232.

\textsuperscript{37} North African materials held a central place in the intellectual milieu of seventh-century Visigothic Iberia. We should note that the request for a new edition of Dracontius came from King Chindaswinth, and was celebrated by Ildefonsus: this was a popular text. For the influence of North Africa see Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 147-61.
numerous late-antique authors working in the region.38 This, of course, is also not surprising given the links between the Frankish kingdoms of Gaul and the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo.39 Yet, there is a deeper link here, and a more profound intellectual debt, as it were, to one author in particular whose works arose in a Gallic context: Venantius Fortunatus. The influence of Venantius dwarfs that of all Eugenius’s other sources. While Eugenius certainly possesses his own style, approach, and poetic voice, the verse of Venantius really forms the cornerstone of the bishop’s own poetry. Eugenius’s poetic art and innovation exist in a cultural-rhetorical framework rooted in the poetic art and innovation of Venantius.40 While Eugenius holds fast to the quantitative constructs of classical metrics, his poetry is moving beyond the conservative world of expression which they represent and he does this by looking to the wider world of late-antique Latin letters. Eugenius’s orthography plays into this. His language situates itself solidly in the realm of Late Latin.41 He uses a great many classical models, but his definitions are not always the same, and his manner of expression, *et cetera*, are all of his age.42 Orthographically, Eugenius employed Visigothic spelling, insofar as we can know.43 While we need to treat this evidence

---

38 Eugenius’s verse possesses links to Ausonius (a substantial source for the poet), Paulinus of Pella and Paulinus Petricordiae, Prosper of Aquitaine, and Sidonius Apollinaris.
39 The physical link of Septimania was likely a conduit of sorts, but there were active links between the intellectual milieus of the two regions. There was certainly an interest in Gallic affairs, thus the *Vita Desiderii* of King Sisebut, for which Jacques Fontaine, “King Sisebut’s *Vita Desiderii* and the Political Function of Visigothic Hagiography,” in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
40 Eugenius does, nevertheless, go well beyond his model, and his work is highly innovative. See Codoñer, “The Poetry of Eugenius,” 335-38 in particular.
41 There are several ways of viewing Late Latin, especially regarding its relationship with/the existence of Vulgar Latin. The present author follows the work of Roger Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1982) and *A Sociophilological Study of Late Latin* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002). Essentially, Late Latin should be viewed as one language with two different registers, not two languages, one Vulgar and one Classical. If there was a higher Classical Latin still being spoken, certainly Eugenius, writing Classically-leaning quantitative verse, would have used it instead of what he actually used.
42 Eugenius’s use of *crapula* for gluttony in *carmen* 7 represents a non-classical definition, to give just one example.
43 While there is a danger here in ascribing spellings to Eugenius which could be the result of later scribes copying his work, there is also a danger in ignoring this evidence. The earliest manuscripts of Eugenius, all of which date to some point in the ninth century, overwhelmingly exhibit Visigothic orthography.
carefully, it does assert a strong Visigothic/Iberian identity on behalf of the poet. Among all the other Visigothic characteristics, his consistent elisions of b and v project Eugenius’s Iberian voice into the future. Certainly, for those reading his works in the following centuries, the orthography of his manuscripts continued to assert his Iberian identity.

Eugenius’s regional identity, then, has several, sometimes conflicting, layers. Born in Toledo he is seen as Toledan, or at least he is portrayed as such by King Chindaswinth, yet, he appears to have adopted, and to have been adopted by, Zaragoza. Within Iberia, Eugenius’s regional identities, as seen in the physical placement of the poems and in his use of Iberian sources, match his biography. His Iberia is essentially defined by his experience of it: we do not see sources or material from the west, and the south of the peninsula appears solely in the form of the work of Isidore, whose intellectual tradition moved through Eugenius’s mentor, Braulio, within a Zaragozan context. Eugenius’s Hispania, although tethered to his own life experience, forms an important part of his identity. Yet he does not mention it: nowhere in Eugenius’s verse do we find any word for the peninsula. Rather, he expressed this identity through his voice, his sources, and his subject matter. Altogether, these sources paint us a picture in two parts: Eugenius is an Iberian, tied and tapped into his intellectual and cultural heritage, very much an heir

These manuscripts are in essentially two families. The first arose in and around Lyon in the context of a Hispanic community there. These manuscripts preserve the Visigothic features of the text. Those in this family that have more Gallo-Carolingian influences nonetheless preserve some Visigothic orthography, even if it exhibits later corrections to the Carolingian norm (such is the case with F, Paris BnF lat. 8093, part I, from the first quarter of the ninth century, discussed by Alberto, Eugenii Toletani, 54-61). The second group stems from or around Córdoba in the ninth century, and these do, as expected, present the text with solid Visigothic orthography. While scribal emendations always do appear, it would have had to have been a full redaction of some now lost original into Visigothic spelling. Occam’s razor guides us to accept at least a modicum of Eugenius’s Visigothic spelling, just as we accept his medieval language, expression, and heavy use of alliteration. For a full discussion of the manuscripts see Alberto, Eugenii Toletani, 54-165. In terms of what constitutes Visigothic orthography, see Wright, Late Latin, and, for a quick reference chart, Alberto, Eugenii Toletani, 459.
of Isidore and Braulio. His *Isidoriana*, to call his natural science pieces such, demonstrate the centrality of Eugenius’s Iberian context in his intellectual efforts. Yet, Eugenius is intentionally very much part of a larger non-regional, pan-Latin intellectual structure. At the center of this structure stood the works of the classical authors, alongside the Christian scriptures, encircled by the authors of late antiquity: but this was a structure in flux, and Eugenius enters it in a time of development.\(^4^4\) In this structure, regional identity folded itself into a much greater socio-cultural entity. The Frankish partisan could stand alongside the Byzantine, or the Vandal, or the Visigoth. In his poems, then, Eugenius constructs a much larger mental space, within which we can see a much more encompassing identity for the poet. By involving himself in this pan-Latin structure in a time of flux, Eugenius himself became one of its developers, and he, in turn would become a major source for the Carolingian poets and for the construction of a Mozarabic literary identity.\(^4^5\) In his verse, then, Eugenius shows himself to identify with the pan-Latin, or perhaps pan-post-Roman, world. Yet, he does so as an Iberian.

Framed in different terms, this evidence sheds light on Eugenius’s cultural identity. Eugenius and his text situate themselves in a “global” Latin cultural context. Eugenius certainly operated as part of the wider Christian world: thus his efforts to weigh in on theological conflicts regarding the Holy Trinity in Africa and the East as recorded by Ildefonsus.\(^4^6\) His sources show us that he is looking across the late-antique world for inspiration and that he is adapting himself into this wider world of letters. Yet, he does


\(^{4^5}\) For Eugenius’s *index testimoniorum et imitatorum*, see likewise Alberto, *Eugenii Toletani*, 449-58.

\(^{4^6}\) Efforts which, we are told by Ildefonsus, were unsuccessful due to bad weather at sea. *De viris illustribus*, 13.
so very much on his own terms. Despite the influence of Venantius and his style, Eugenius’s works, in terms of content, articulation, even of intent, represent a unique contribution to the world of Late Latin letters. Part of this rests on Eugenius’s individuality as an artist, as a person. Part of this also rests on the other facet of his cultural identity: Hispania. The thought-world of the *libellus* is grounded in the Visigothic world of letters. The influence of Isidore is paramount. Considerable portions of Eugenius’s *libellus* directly carry on his encyclopedic tradition. Eugenius processes and adapts the work and knowledge of Isidore into a new form, thus placing himself into the Hispanic tradition, and at the same time passing on his version of that tradition to the next generation of Hispanic scholars. In terms of space, both mental and physical, the *libellus*, and all the rest of Eugenius’s surviving works, are firmly located within Hispania. They use materials drawn from across the Latin-speaking world, but they contextualize these in an Iberian framework. So Zaragoza appears, and the royal bedroom (*carmen* 69); so we find Kings Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, and Bishop John of Zaragoza. Eugenius’s *libellus* positions itself at the center of the Visigothic world. It brings with it the culture of the wider Latin West, but it adapts this culture into the context of the kings, queens, and leaders of the Visigothic polity and into the Isidoran intellectual culture which helped to define that polity. Eugenius himself was located at the epicenter of this enterprise, as the bishop of Toledo, and, in his youth as a cleric at the *ecclesia regia*. Yet, he did reject the *ecclesia regia* in his move to Zaragoza. While the councils which he oversaw served to center the Visigothic Church more solidly upon Toledo, Eugenius’s Iberian identity had a much broader scope. It was not solely centered on Toledo. Rather, it embraced a much wider Hispania, the Hispania of Eugenius’s own experience. Eugenius’s cultural identity, then, was multifaceted. On one level he was a Visigoth: whatever his parentage, he found himself
at the center of the state and celebrated the Visigothic in his verse. Yet he also perceived himself, and expressed himself, as part of the wider culture of the pan-Latin world.

Taken as a whole, Eugenius’s verse demonstrates an identity lived, perceived, and presented on different levels. He is monastic, pastoral, and episcopal. He is Toledan on one level, Zaragozan on another. His Iberian voice comes through in his poetry, yet he remains always tapped into and very much a part of the wider world of Latin letters that stretched from Italy and Africa through Gaul and Spain. Eugenius’s *libellus* parallels his work in the Councils of Toledo. We see him here working to bring the intellectual center of the Visigothic Church into its political center. Eugenius presents the *libellus* as a multi-regional text, drawn from Sevillan sources with a Zaragozan geographical imprint, crafted for the schools of Toledo, and subsequently used there to create a Visigothic educational grammar by the circle of Julian of Toledo. Thus, Eugenius’s corpus is centralizing, bringing three core regions together in a single educational, literary text. In an effort to erode regional rivalry, it does so by celebrating the regions proudly in a text itself positioned on the center. It further situates this collective Iberian identity within the wider world of the Latin West. Resting on multi-regionalism and his own monastic-pastoral and episcopal identities, Eugenius is attempting consolidation, the construction of a unique *Hispania*, in contact with the wider Latin world but nonetheless independent and innovative in and of itself. Eugenius presents a Visigothic identity that is centralizing, but not centralized: his Visigothic identity celebrates the intellectual achievements of Baetica, the churches and churchmen of Tarraconensis, placing them together in the context of the *urbs regia*. His Visigothic identity looks beyond to and embraces a wider Latin literary identity. In his *libellus*, he passed this identity, with all its layers, on to the students who identified as his, the school of Toledo.
Bibliography

Primary


Secondary


