THE MYTHOLOGICAL EPICS OF DRACONTIUS IN THEIR SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The poet Blossius Aemilius Dracontius was active at Carthage during the late 5th century AD, a period when that part of the Roman Empire had long since fallen to the Vandals. Given his position of being a Roman and Catholic *vir clarissimus* under Germanic and Arian overlords, as well as his imprisonment by the Vandal king Gunthamund (r. 484-496) for reasons related to his poetry, he was likely to have been involved, willingly or unwillingly, in the political world of Vandal Carthage.

Within his oeuvre are Latin poems of both secular and Christian inspiration. This thesis concentrates on four short epic poems on mythological subjects from the former category: *Hylas*, *De Raptu Helenae, Medea, Orestis tragoedia.* Each displays idiosyncratic treatment of their respective material, including significant changes to commonly-transmitted versions of the myths, interaction with figures of the Latin literary tradition, and thematic manipulation. This thesis takes the position that, as a learned and well-read writer, trained in the rhetorical skills needed for the law-courts, Dracontius was well aware of the propensity for Latin epic to mix contemporary socio-political comment into its narrative.

The thesis examines these four texts in the context of the poet's artistic technique, his relationship to the society in which he finds himself, his attitudes towards the nature of kingship and powerful, threatening female figures. It is then concluded that these texts exhibit features which can be interpreted as having socio-political and historical significance, relating both to the poet's immediate Vandal milieu, as well as more generally with questions of Roman continuity. In so doing, it reveals the poet's shifting loyalties and views on his and his fellow-Romans' situation under Vandal rule.

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L.A.B.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Blossius Aemilius Dracontius is one of the most important poets of Late Antiquity and merits study on a number of counts. Along with figures such as Flavius Cresconius Corippus and the epigrammatists of the *Anthologia Latina*, he is one of the poets of whom we possess the most material from North Africa in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, and is the most representative in terms of variety of genres, providing examples, *inter alia*, of biblical and didactic epic, rhetorical works, epithalamium, encomiastic and exculpatory verse, occasional poetry, and — the subject of this thesis — mythological epic. His writing, while often coy and unyielding of more contextual information, provides us with a different take on the political and social life of the Vandal kingdom which stands in contrast both to the gilded and carnivalesque world of the epigrammatists of the *Anthologia Latina* and the polemical religious historians such as Victor of Vita. He has also long been considered a liminal figure: one who straddles and is at ease in the worlds of both classical and Christian learning, and who is the last representative of the classical epic tradition.

It is this thesis' contention that it is viable to read the Late Latin epics of Dracontius as reflecting the cultural and political currents of the milieu in which they were composed. Latin epic poetry in particular has a long and distinguished tradition of being read politically, whether by virtue of the subject matter itself or other literary conceits. The former can be seen to varying degrees since the earliest exponents of Latin epic (e.g. Ennius' *Annales*) but Virgil's *Aeneid* is the first and foremost example

of politically aware epic. Williams (1990: 21-2) notes that despite its mythistorical setting, the aspects which are inextricable from his Roman context form the "central theme against which other aspects of human behaviour and aspiration can be explored". The poet achieves this in a number of ways. Through use of prophetic speech, Virgil points to a glorious future for the descendants of Aeneas, which explicitly include the emperor Augustus.[1] Virgil was part of a coterie of poets patronised by Maecenas, who was a close confidant of the emperor. While not universally acknowledged, it is difficult not to think of work produced in such circumstances to not have at least some propagandistic influence. Furthermore, he inserts overt references to relevant contemporary events through means of ekphrastic descriptions, such as the Battle of Actium depicted in the shield of Aeneas at *Aen.* 8.671-728,[2] or having Augustus and his adopted heirs as the destined future of Rome in the parade of heroes in Book 6. Late Antique commentators such as Servius recognised the *Aeneid*'s close connection with epideictic so as to say that the poem's function was chiefly the praise of Augustus and his descendants.[3]

Historical epic remained a popular sub-genre during the Republic and Empire (Lucan, *Bellum Civile*; Silius Italicus, *Punica*).[4] Indeed, even where the subject matter is drawn from myth, the presence of political aspects and the way in which

[1] Prophetic speeches: Vir. *Aen.* 1.278-96; 6.791-807. On the question of patronage and propaganda, see Stahl (1998: xxv).
[2] The abbreviations used of Latin authors and their texts follow those in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*.
[3] Serv. *pr.*: "*intentio Vergilii haec est, Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare a parentibus*, 'To imitate Homer and to praise Augustus from his relatives'".
[4] Equally worth noting as an example in this regard are the wide-ranging opinions of ancient commentators of whether Lucan's *Bellum Civile* should be considered a work of poetry (Tacitus, at *Dial.* 21.7, lists him, in terms of style, with Horace and Virgil, and opposes him to the tragedians Accius and Pacuvius) or of history (Serv. *ad Aen.* 382: *Lucanus namque ideo in numero poetarum esse non meruit, quia videntur historiam composuisse, non poema*) or of elaborate rhetoric (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.90: *Lucanus ardens et concitatus et sententiis clarissimus et, ut dicam quod sentio, magis oratoribus quam poetis imitandus*); see also notes on Lucan's reception during Antiquity and beyond in Conte (1999: 449-450).

they are emphasised is almost inescapable. By Late Antiquity, this fusion of myth and politics reached its most exalted point in the panegyric-epics of authors such as Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris. Most relevant for Late Antique North Africa are the eight book epic *Johannis* of Flavius Cresconius Corippus, dealing with the Byzantine reconquest of Africa, and to a lesser degree the *In laudem Justini Minoris* of the same author, which, though more explicitly a panegyric, has significant epic overtones. Looking further ahead, Quint's *Epic and Empire* (1993) examines epic poetry as a space for expressing opinions on political reality via not only the *Aeneid* but resonances of the Latin poem in Renaissance, vernacular epics such as Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Camões' *Os Lusíadas* and others.

Even where there are no such obvious parallels between myth and reality, there exist plausible grounds for metaphorical use of myth to discuss contemporary events within epic poetry. Most obvious of this latter group are recent interpretations of Statius' *Thebaid*. Scholars such as Ahl (1986), McNelis (2007), Bessone (2011), and Dominik (1994) all identify features of Statius' approach to his mythic sources which allow him to comment on and criticise ideas of power, kingship, and tyranny from afar. One can also place under this heading Stover's (2012) treatment of the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus.

The usage of Greek myth as a kind of Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*[5] *avant la lettre*, in order to comment obliquely and in relative safety on matters of contemporary

[5] Unwin (2005: 58) writes of the *Verfremdungseffekt* as being "… achieved when the audience is encouraged to re-examine its preconceptions and to look at the familiar in a new way, with an interest in how it can and should be changed" and that Brecht's primary aim was for the audience to be critical of the content with which they were presented. Brecht himself described this as "… attempts to act in such a manner that the spectator is prevented from feeling his way into the characters. Acceptance or rejection of the characters' words is thus placed in the conscious realm,

significance to the poet or his society is not an invention of modern-day scholars. There is ancient precedent for this in diverse sources. Quintilian, in the *Institutio Oratoria* describes at various points how ambiguity, whether intentional or not, can be dangerous and harmful to the orator, particularly when listeners read in meaning which was not always intended (see particularly *Inst.* 8.3.47, and 9.2.67ff). The kind of literary production in which this ambiguity could be found did not even need to be limited to works intended for public consumption. Indeed, as Dio Cassius reports, there were cases during the reign of Domitian of rhetors who were accused of treasonous speech in progymnasmatic material. Suetonius (*Dom.* 10.4) describes the execution of Helvidius Priscus as having come about due to perceived usage of Paris and Oenone as a mythic metaphor for Domitian's divorce.[6] Likewise, Tacitus in his *Dialogus de oratoribus* (3.4) describes the fear around the way in which certain readers who are in positions of power might interpret the tragedies of a certain Maternus so as to link the myths they portray with political reality.

Even though these refer to tragedy as the preferred genre for this kind of relationship, the interplay between epic and tragedy (and the choice of redoing subject matter in epic which was traditionally the sphere of tragedy) is certainly an interaction with which our author is necessarily familiar.[7] Most relevant for our purposes in Late Antiquity is the comment found in a declamation of Ennodius (*dict.* 24). The piece in question, though titled *adlocutio,* exhibits many characteristics of

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not, as hitherto, in the spectator's subconscious" (Brecht & Bentley 1961: 130). These are concepts which are very relevant to understanding Dracontius' treatments of myth, literary history, and commonly transmitted material.

[6] Suet. *Dom.* 10.4: *occidit et Helvidium filium, quasi scaenico exodio sub persona Paridis et Oenones divortium suum cum uxore taxasset,* 'He also executed the younger Helvidius, alleging that in a farce composed for the stage he had under the characters of Paris and Oenone censured Domitian's divorce from his wife' (trans. J.C. Rolfe).

[7] See here the programmatic prefaces to *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.*, which are in large part devoted to the recognition of interplay between dramatic and epic genres.

an *ethopoeia*. It represents the words of Diomedes, who had returned home to find his wife unfaithful. Here the future bishop of Pavia proclaims in the last lines of the prefatory epigram that "*causa querellarum simulato nomine vera est,* Ennod. *dict.* 24 *praef.* 5, 'Though the name is fictive, the cause of these complaints is true'". If it is the case that this obfuscation of the truth by metaphorical means is a product of an overtly rhetorical milieu as in Ennodius, it follows that the *Romulea,* as also having its roots in rhetorical practice, should be able to respond to the same treatment.

In this introductory chapter, I begin with an outline of the poet's life, as far as we are able to construct it, together with an overview of his works and short notes regarding the work which has been done on Dracontius in modern times. Thereafter, I shall set out a number of features of Vandal society and history which are of importance to my interpretation of the mythological epics of the *Romulea — Hylas, De Raptu Helenae, Medea —* and the *Orestis tragoedia*, which has been transmitted separately. These cover issues such as the historical context for the Vandal conquest of North Africa and the kingdom's subsequent relations with other Mediterranean powers, the status of education and rhetorical training in Carthage, the law and legal issues. Finally, there is a brief summary of the general direction and form which the chapters take.

DRACONTIUS: LIFE AND WORKS

Blossius Aemilius Dracontius was a Romano-African poet active at Carthage in the late 5th century AD.[8] Details of his life are scant, and must be reconstructed, as far as

[8] This is the *communis opinio,* and is based on the kinds of biases he admits in his poetry e.g. being a Catholic, references to Romans and barbarians, as well as, most obviously, his rather Roman name. There have also been suggestions that Dracontius was himself half-Vandal: see for example Kuijper (1958: 9), who notes "*nomen autem cum poeta prorsus non Vandalicum ferat,*

is possible, from autobiographical references in his extant poetry. It has become traditional to divide Dracontius' works into two categories based on their subject matter, which is either of a broadly Christian or secular nature. In the former category are the *Laudes Dei*, a multifarious poem in three books of hexameters,[9] and the *Satisfactio*, a poem of contrition in elegiac couplets addressed to king Gunthamund. The latter category is represented by the *Romulea*, an eclectic collection of poems in different genres, as well as the *Orestis tragoedia*, a short epic poem. There are also short works, the *De mensibus* and *De origine rosarum*, as well as some fragments, which were probably once part of the *Romulea*.[10]

The *Romulea* (*Romul.*) as we have it today consists of ten poems. These are:

1 – A preface to the *grammaticus* Felicianus.
2 – *Hylas* (short epic).
3 – A preface to the *grammaticus* Felicianus.
4 – *Verba Herculis*, an ethopoeia.
5 – A *controversia* about a rivalry between a rich and poor man.
6 – An *epithalamium* to two brothers.
7 – An *epithalamium* to Johannes and Vitula.
8 – *De Raptu Helenae* (short epic).
9 – A *suasoria* about Achilles selling Hector's body.
10 – *Medea* (short epic).

Vandali vero Romanorum linguam atque mores accipere solerent, nomen deponere avitum non solerent, Dracontii strips incerta latet; Vandalorum haeresin cum acriter condemnet, fortasse fuit e matre Vandala, ex patre Romano, ita ut annis puerilibus linguam quidem didicerit praecipue maternam patris vero fidem maturus aevo confessus sit haud Arrianum."). This can only be a matter of speculation, however.

[9] The *Laudes Dei* has most often been characterised as a biblical epic (cf. Roberts 1985; McClure 1981), but this is in practice a misleading attribution, given that what might be considered the 'epic' — the hexaëmeral material — is only represented for part of the first book. The rest of the poem deals with matters of theology, and is somewhat didactic in providing lists of moral exempla from Biblical and Classical sources, as well as giving, in the third book, an account of Dracontius' own experience of imprisonment combined with a prayer for his salvation.

[10] The edition of Dracontius' works which I have chosen to use over newer editions (e.g. Zwierlein 2017) in this thesis is the four-volume bilingual set of Les Belles Lettres. The first two volumes, both edited by Moussy (2002) contain the *Laudes Dei* and *Satisfactio*, while the third and fourth, edited by Bouquet & Wolff (2002) and Wolff (2002) respectively, contain the *Orestis Tragoedia, Romulea* and fragments.

All are composed in dactylic hexameters, except *Romul.* 1, which is a trochaic catalectic tetrameter. As can be seen from this overview, the collection shows a marked connection to the world of the rhetorician through the presence of actual rhetorical pieces as well as poems dedicated to a *grammaticus*. Furthermore, the collection is firmly within the contemporary context of Carthage, given the content of the two *epithalamia* and, once again, the *grammaticus*. Despite there being references to Dracontius' captivity in *Romul.* 6, there is no firmly dateable information present in this collection either. Based on the characterisation of Dracontius as *discipulus* in the superscription to *Romul.* 1, it has been thought at some point in the history of the collection's transmission that *Romul.* 2 is a work of Dracontius' youth, possibly even produced while still in training. The poem's short length also seems to suggest a more youthful or inexperienced hand, but there is no further indication in the collection as to the truth of this assumption. Moreover, the order of the poems is not chronological: *Romul.* 6, which references the addressees' family helping the poet to freedom, comes before *Romul.* 7, in which he is still imprisoned. Any attempt at chronology is therefore mostly speculative.[11]

There exists only one manuscript of the collection: the 15th century *Neapolitanus bibl. nat.* IV E 48 (*N*). Of the pieces found there *Medea* is copied twice, the second copy being found on the flyleaf of the manuscript. Fragments of other pieces have also been transmitted in the *Florilegium Veronense Bibl. cap.* CLXVIII (155) ann. 1329

[11] There have been a number of attempts (e.g. Bright 1999) to establish a relative chronology for Dracontius' works, but most scholars remain of the opinion that at least *Romul.* 1-4 are products of Dracontius' pre-imprisonment period. It is worth pointing out at this point that all attempts to date Dracontius' poetry have been based around tendentious arguments, and that, until other evidence can be used to indicate otherwise, the only dates which we are sure of are 484, Gunthamund's accession, and 523, Thrasamund's death: a span of forty years in which to place Dracontius' imprisonment.

(*V*), but these have generally only served to confirm authorship, as well as the title of the collection.[12]

Although broadly similar in approach and style to the poems of the *Romulea,* the *Orestis tragoedia* (*Orest.*) is transmitted separately from that collection, being found complete in two manuscripts, the *Bernensis Bongarsianus* 45 (*B)*, a 9th century collections, and *Ambrosianus* O 74 sup. (*A*). As its title suggests, *Orest.* deals with material from the Oresteia cycle. In both cases there is no authorial attribution, but on the basis of intertextual similarities (and that Dracontius is a keen self-quoter), they have since the 19th century been accepted as original pieces of his, and may well once have been part of the *Romulea*.[13]

Beyond his works, we know relatively little about Dracontius. The only vaguely datable event in his life is his imprisonment by king Gunthamund, which is related in the *Satisfactio*. Writing from prison, this poem serves as a lengthy apology for having composed another poem addressed to an elusive *dominus*. Dracontius is reticent as regards details, presumably because the reason for his imprisonment would have been all too well known by the king. The two passages which are of greatest importance to us for determining details of Dracontius' life are as follows:

> *ast ego peccando regi dominoque Deoque*
> *peior sum factus deteriorque cane.*

[12] They are generally accompanied by the ascription *Blosus in Romulea,* which has provided much discussion as to the grammatical case of *Romulea.* In this thesis, I take *Romulea* to be neuter plural.

[13] The editions of Mai (1871) and de Duhn (1873) were the first to popularise this connection: "*De anonymo autem auctore nobis cogitantibus veniebat in mentem vel potius in coniecturam Dracontius, cuius paris generis titulique poëmata comperta sunt Neapoli…*" (Mai 1871: 1 n.1); "*Tanta enim isti carmini dispositionis, verborum, dictionis, integrorum versuum similitudo cum nostris carminibus intercedit, ut eundem Dracontium Orestem scripsisse mihi quidem persuasissimum sit"* (de Duhn 1873: VIII).

vulnera vexati curat sua lingua molossi
heu mea quippe mihi vulnera lingua dedit.
Drac. *Satisf.* 41-44
But I, by sinning to my king and lord, and God too, am made worse than and inferior to a dog. The injured hound's tongue tends to his wounds – ah! my tongue has given me wounds instead!

culpa mihi fuerat dominos reticere modestos
ignotumque mihi scribere vel dominum
qualis et ingratos sequitur qui mente profana
cum Dominum norunt, idola vana colunt.
Drac. *Satisf.* 93-96
My crime had been to conceal these modest lords, and for me to write about my lord as an unknown, as one who follows those ungrateful people who with a profane mind worship vain idols though they know the Lord.

From this, it can be concluded that (1) Dracontius was convicted on the basis of his stock-in-trade: writing; (2) the piece of writing in concern has as subject the *ignotus dominus*; (3) the issue at hand is that the *ignotus dominus* was preferred when Dracontius was meant to be writing about the *domini modesti*; (4) this crime has further flavours of factionalism by comparisons of his allegiance to the *ignotus dominus* to religious idolatry; (5) Dracontius' own position at court is very clearly highlighted as one of subservience, given the metaphor of the dog.

There have been several suggestions as to whom the now-lost poem was addressed. Most recently, both Wolff (1998) and Merrills (2004) have proposed that Dracontius became embroiled in factionalism regarding Vandal dynastic issues, suggesting that our poet was writing about Huneric, the by-then deceased kinsman and predecessor of Gunthamund. The line of succession among the Vandals, instituted by Gaiseric, followed a more horizontal route, proceeding through all of his sons before any of their offspring.[14] Thus, Gunthamund succeeded his brother Huneric, and Thrasamund succeeded him in turn, before Hilderic, Huneric's son, could take the

[14] See further Wood (2006: 50-61)

throne. This could naturally result in many court intrigues, and Victor of Vita reports that Huneric attempted to remove any competition for his son through an almost systematic wave of proscriptions.[15] Others have suggested candidates such as Zeno, the emperor in the East (e.g. Papencordt 1837: 377 and latterly Fielding 2017: 91), or the Ostrogothic king Theodoric (Kuijper 1958: 15)[16].

As far as the texts indicate Dracontius' place in Carthaginian society, it is likely that he was a man of some standing, given the kinds of social connections which he mentions by name in some of his occasional poetry. Following the subscription to *Romul.* 5, the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* lists him as a *vir clarissimus*, and Bright (1999: 196) suggests that he was important enough to have been noticed, and yet not face harsher charges for his political missteps.[17] We have only one autobiographical indication within his poetry of any specific position held: a line in the third book of the *Laudes Dei,* where he bemoans the abjectness of his current situation in prison:

> *me miserum, quanto cecidi de culmine lapsus!*
> *ille <ego> qui quondam retinebam iura togatus,*
> *exemi de morte reos, patrimonia nudis*
> *divitias mea lingua dedit rapuitque tenenti*
> *ac servile iugum vel libertatis honorem;*
> *nam quod in accusando odi defensor amavi;*
>
> Drac. *laud. Dei* 3.653-658

[15] Vict. Vit. 2.12: *Ipse (Huniricus) autem qui sese iamdudum omnibus lenem ostenderat, desiderans post obitum suum filiis, quod non contigit, regnum statuere, Theodericum fratrem filios que eius Gentunis que fratris nihilominus filios crudeliter coepit insequi. Quorum nullum dimitteret, nisi ei mos desiderii sui voluntatem auferret.*

[16] Kuijper (1958: 14-15) interprets the *ducum…meorum* at *Satisf.* 21 as indicating a need to refer to the deeds of someone of his own people ("*deinde* facta *narravisse et* bella *cuiusdam non suae gentis* ducis"), a role which neither Zeno nor Gunthamund were able to fill due to an apparent lack of prowess in battle. Theodoric, on the basis of his more obvious military victories, is therefore the more suitable candidate.

[17] But cf. Rutledge's (2009: 30 n. 21) observations regarding Ovid's works "[continuing] to circulate despite exile" and the same poet's production of new material equally ambivalent about the *princeps* which went unpunished. Ovid's situation is a natural parallel for that of Dracontius, both from life events, as well as their poetic responses.

> Wretched me! From how high a summit have I slipped and fallen! I am he who once upheld the laws dressed in my toga, and rescued defendents from death; my tongue gave riches to those bereft of their patrimony or took them away, and likewise both the yoke of servitude and the honour of liberty from its possessor; for I have loved as a defender, what I hate in being an accuser.

From this, it is apparent that Dracontius held some kind of judicial position, again sufficiently high that he can lament his fall from grace (*quanto cecidi de culmine lapsus*). The reasons for this, as he goes on to say in the subsequent lines, are evidently ones of corruption. Wolff (2009: 137 n.17) points out that, although the third book of the *Laudes Dei* is also effectively an expression of contrition written from prison in much the same way as the *Satisfactio* is, it is more likely that these poems are referring to two separate periods of incarceration, given that the notorious poem to the *ignotus dominus* is conspicuously not mentioned at all in *laud. Dei* 3.

We may deduce a few other details regarding the circumstances surrounding the poet's imprisonment from *Romul.* 7. These are addressed to Romano-African couples of apparently high standing, with whom Dracontius evidently had personal connections, and which are directly associated with his period of incarceration. *Romul.* 7 is addressed to an otherwise unknown Johannes and Vitula, written during his captivity, while *Romul.* 6, addressed to two unnamed brothers, is in part written in thanksgiving for their aid in his being released. Nevertheless, it is *Romul.* 7 which provides the most in terms of further information regarding the circumstances regarding Dracontius' captivity. While generally covering much the same ground as the *Satisfactio,* such as the king's mercy being an imperative from God himself, Dracontius also declares that his crime was not that serious and that the king is not unjustified in his actions, but that it is rather public opinion which has made his

punishment worse ("*non male peccavi, nec rex iratus inique est, | sed mala mens hominis, quae detulit ore maligno | et male suggessit tunc et mea facta gravavit.*" *Romul.* 7.127-9).

As a final note, the third book of *Laudes Dei* also acts as a further document of Dracontius' personal confession. In this book, the poet describes the conditions of his imprisonment, lamenting the abject poverty to which he has been reduced as well how he has been abandoned socially by both family and professional connections. It would thus appear that this is the proverbial 'end of the line' for Dracontius, with all means of salvation closed off to him (*gravor undique pressus, | vincla ligant, tormenta domant, consumit egestas; | ludibrium generis, dolor omnibus atque inimicus | factus et exutus magna de parte bonorum, | crinibus intonsus, pannis squalentibus usus.*) Yet this is not the last wishes of an old man by any means. He begs God to have mercy on him in order that he can live out the rest of his days in peace, until he grows old:

> *sit vitae requies, sit nox cum munere noctis,*
> *sit fortuna redux, sit virtus usque senectam,*
> *sit venerandus honos et quicquid vota precantur*
> *aut amissa dolent, totum pietate reforma.*
>
> *laud. Dei* 3.722-726
>
> Let there be respite in my life, let the night come with the gift of night, let my fortune be restored, let me have virtue until my old age, let me have venerable honour, and whatever my vows pray for or whatever grieves me if not doen, reshape it all in holiness.

Whereas the *Satisfactio* envisaged both Gunthamund and God as addressees of the poet's contrition, Dracontius' testimony in the *Laudes Dei* is destined for God's ears alone. Given this fact, the language is typically metaphorical, and reveals practically nothing more concrete as to the reasons for his imprisonment. For example, his

descriptions of his crimes are vague and all-encompassing, with such poetic picturesque sections as:

> *ergo ego confiteor miseranda mente reatum*
> *plenum, grande malum, non uno crimine partum;*
> *nam scelus omne meum numeros superabit harenae*
> *litoris et pelagi vincent mala nostra liquores.*
> *laud. Dei* 3.582-585
> I confess, therefore, my full guilt with a pitiable mind, a great evil born from more than one crime; for all of my crimes will outnumber the grains of sand on the shore and my ills will be greater than all the water in the sea.

Whatever the exact cause for Gunthamund's actions, it was Thrasamund, his successor, who eventually released Dracontius from prison. Our poet celebrated this beneficent action with another poem, which is also no longer extant, though it was presumably a verse panegyric like those he promises to write for Gunthamund in the *Satisfactio*. The combination of these two events gives us a date range from which we can posit the remaining chronology: Gunthamund acceded to the throne in 484, and reigned until his death in 496; Thrasamund's reign ends in 523. Given this, Dracontius' period of imprisonment could extend theoretically for almost 39 years.

The two epithalamia also suggest the quality of Dracontius' social connections were high, but not particularly reliable. The recipients are from illustrious families, who likely had a great deal of money if one goes by the kinds of celebrations which are described in the poems, and with it probably influence at court. However, their assistance to Dracontius was slow in coming and not particularly willing, as he laments further:

quid prodest servasse hominem per tanta pericla |
et clausum liquisse diu sub clade salutis?
. . . . . .
poscere quem veniam decuit, male suscitat iras
et dominum regemque pium saevire coegit.
Drac. *Romul.* 7. 125-6; 130-1

What use is it to have saved a man in such dangers, and then to have left him enclosed for so long in the state of danger to his salvation? [...] He, whom it befitted to seek pardon, evilly arouses anger, and compels the pious lord and king to cruelty.

THE VANDAL CONQUEST OF ROMAN NORTH AFRICA

While this is not intended as a comprehensive study of the means of how Vandal Carthage came to be, it is necessary to understand the context in which Dracontius' works must be read, and particularly towards the way they are read in this thesis.[18]

Between 439 and 533, there were six Vandal rulers, all from the Hasding family: Gaiseric (r. 439-477), Huneric (r. 477-484), Gunthamund (r. 484-496), Thrasamund (r. 496-523), Hilderic (r. 523-530), and Gelimer (r. 530-534). Three major events can be seen as milestones in the trajectory of the Vandal Kingdom, two of which have direct significance for the interpretation of Dracontius' works in a socio-politically aware manner. The first is the conquest of Carthage in 439 by Gaiseric, who would become the first and longest ruling Vandal king. During this time the second most significant event was engineered: the sack of Rome in 455. The event was symbolic on many levels. While it may not have had the symbolic weight of the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410, given its secondary nature, it nevertheless by all accounts was much more destructive for the Romans. To the Vandals, this cemented their path to Romanisation, as it forcibly made good the betrothal of Huneric and Eudocia, and confirmed the Vandals as the true successors of the Theodosian house.

[18] For more detailed overviews, see Merrills & Miles (2010); Vössing (2015)

Lastly, the date of the Byzantine reconquest of North Africa in 533-4, almost a hundred years after it had first been captured from the Western Empire.

The Vandals, and specifically the Hasdings, the branch of the Vandal royal family in Carthage, had by the end of the 5th century installed and ingrained themselves in that city in such a way as to have seemingly obliterated their origins.[19] Despite coming from somewhere in Northern Europe, as their Germanic characteristics obviously suggest, there is no origin myth which is actively invoked in their self-presentation. This obscurity is to be found in other Graeco-Roman writers, too, given their lack of agreement over the origin of the Vandals: Jordanes writes of them coming from the island of Scandza along with the Goths, presumed to be somewhere in the Baltic ,[20] while Procopius places them in the Crimea.[21] Early instances of any name resembling our *Vandali*, as used of a barbarian tribe, are attested from at least the time of Pliny the Elder and Tacitus, respectively appearing in the *Naturalis Historia* and *Germania*. In both cases, the form presented there is *Vandili*.[22] Merrills & Miles (2010: 27-35) suggest that an early precedent might exist for the Hasdings in the people called *Astingi* by authors such as Dio Cassius, who are located around the river Danube.[23]

Archaeologists have in recent years attempted to link the so-called Przeworsk culture — an archaeological assemblage found between the Oder and Vistula rivers, which dates to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD — with the *Vandali*, whether those

[19] Cf. *Anth. Lat.* 376 (*In laudem regis* of Florentinus) where there is no mention of the Vandals' origins at all, in favour of their present connection to Carthage. See also treatment of this subject in relation to *Romul.* 10 in Chapter 3 (pp. 180-185).
[20] Jord. *Get.* 25-6
[21] Procop. *Vand.* 1.2.3-6
[22] Tac. *Germ.* 2; Pliny, *HN* 4.98
[23] D.C. 72.11-12

referred to by Pliny and Tacitus, or indeed those who would later fight their way across the continent before ending up in North Africa. In this, it would seem to reflect the assertions made by Jordanes in a Baltic origin for the Germanic tribes which made their way into the Empire. Modéran (2014: 39) proposes that the name of the Vandals, as we find it to refer to the 5th century, does not represent the same *Vandili* of Pliny and Tacitus, but was a name given to a mixed group of Germanic barbarians moving through Europe due to familiarity with the name from earlier texts.

Archaeologically, however, there is little which survives from the Vandal Kingdom which is, in the first place, considered to be indubitably 'Vandal', and which can thus be linked to any pre-existing archaeological culture in Europe. Bockmann (2013: 45) raises the important point regarding the quality of the kinds of archaeological assemblages and attempting to draw connections between them: the Przeworsk culture is essentially that belonging to an agrarian society worlds away from the refined setting of a Roman provincial capital. It would thus appear that, just as in the literary record, the Vandals had ingrained and adopted the manners of their new homeland to the ostensible detriment of their own. And yet, there was still a distinction drawn between those who are Roman/Romano-African, and those who are Vandal. In the first instance this can be determined by name alone, and Francovich Onesti (2013: 181-193) gives indications as to the different kinds of Vandalic (or Gothic, given the *communis opinio* that the former is likely a dialect of the latter) morphemes which make up Vandal names. Secondly, there was an advantage to being Vandal in this new regime, regardless of how Romanised they had seemed to become. Gaiseric, the first Vandal king, instituted the *sortes*

Vandalorum, a phenomenon whereby land, which seemed to be concentrated in one part of Africa Proconsularis, was seized from Romans and redistributed among the Vandals. Procopius reports that these were not taxed[24], while those estates which were not part of the system remained obliged to contribute to the fiscus. Furthermore the Vandals who took ownership of estates in this system were able to draw rent from those living on them.[25]

Modéran (2002) discusses several competing theories as to how the *sortes Vandalorum* came to be, highlighting essentially two camps, one whereby the land redistribution was carried out chiefly according to the law, supported by the ever-present threat of military force, and that giving land to the Vandals was similar to Roman practices of giving land to soldiers after a campaign. The other argues, conversely, that this was actually a violent seizure from the outset. Modéran (2002) then further proposes that could have had a twofold role. In response to those that think it odd that land should be restricted to the province of Proconsularis, when the Vandal soldiers really ought to be protecting the frontier zones, Modéran (2002) notes that Gaiseric was effectively waging a naval operation since taking Carthage in 439, and that it was thus more necessary to be near the harbour. He suggests also that the redistribution should be seen as a kind of peace-offering, a sop to the by-now probably weary and fed-up support personnel (women, children, civilians attached to the army…) implying that the Vandal conquest was more like a migration than a military campaign, and that Africa had effectively always been the goal for this group.

[24] Procop. *Vand.* 1.5.14
[25] See Merrills & Miles (2010: 67-8; 164-6).

VANDAL RELATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The conquest of North Africa did not by any means leave that part of the world adrift from political activity in the rest of the Mediterranean. On the contrary, free movement evidently remained possible and trade with Carthage, as the main source of the *annona* for the Western Empire, continued apace.[26] The accord signed between Gaiseric and Valentinian III even allowed Huneric to be fostered in Rome. As is repeatedly pointed out in a number of secondary sources, and which it will be necessary to hold in mind when considering the place of Dracontius' poetry in Carthaginian society, the Vandals were obliged to behave in accordance with the prevailing political culture of the day, that is, behave as Romans.[27] Whether or not this was always the plan, it was a necessary by-product of having conquered a Roman province, particularly when they were in the minority. Gaiseric further seems to have purposefully engineered his family's enduring links to Rome by betrothing Huneric to Eudocia, Valentinian III's daughter. This in effect brought him into line with the reigning Theodosian house, a fact which can be seen in his backing of Flavius Anicius Olybrius in the succession conflict with Ricimer.[28]

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[26] Consider as one small example, Dracontius' own references to the young Johannes and Vitula being able to travel to Caralis on Sardinia at *Romul.* 7.137-9. While the territory was under Vandal control, where Catholic bishops were exiled, there are no indications that the Vandal Kingdom was being run as a prison state. Merills & Miles (2010: 136) note that "the material record also testifies to intensive mercantile contact between Siciliy, Sardinia, and North Africa, and if textual evidence occasionally hints at interruptions in shipping, these seem to be the exception rather, than the rule". Unimpeded movement of goods, even within the territory occupied from the Vandals, would presuppose unimpeded movement of people. Cf. also Leone's (2007: 133-4) discussion on the *annona* system ending after the Vandal conquest, leading to a more decentralised model for trade. The fact that this system was no longer active does not mean trade ceased to happen: produce from North Africa is found across the Mediterranean until at least the 7th century.

[27] See for example Hen (2007), Conant (2012).

[28] See further discussions in Henning (1999: 235), who sees in the uniting of the Hasdings to the Theodosian house Gaiseric's attempts to forge a stronger defence against the Eastern Empire, though elsewhere he questions whether the feeling was mutual; Merrills & Miles (2010: 120-1)

In almost all cases, the state of relations between the Vandal kingdom and the other powers of the Mediterranean were based on either treaties or the forging of dynastic ties, and as a result had the effect of not only safeguarding Vandal interests, but also further advancing the Romanisation of the barbarians and cultural appropriation. This is marked from the very beginning of Vandal activity in North Africa. Two treaties characterised early Vandal-West Roman relations: that of the settlement of 435, which permitted Vandal occupation of the countryside after the fall of Hippo Regius, and the subsequent settlement in 439 as Carthage fell. Although the latter forced the Western Empire to recognise the Vandals as a political entity, we can see the additional betrothal of Valentinian's daughter Eudocia to Huneric, Gaiseric's eldest son, as beneficial to both sides: the Vandals are legitimised by being part of the Theodosian house, and the Romans are vindicated by having at least a half-Roman ruler on the throne in Africa at some point in the future. By the middle of the century, this arrangement paid off, as it is surmised by contemporary writers that Licinia Eudoxia, Valentinian III's widow, was able to call upon Gaiseric for aid against the usurper Petronius Maximus. Given that the Vandals sacked Rome in response, the payoff may not have been desirable for the populace of Rome nor indeed the kind of result which the empress herself envisioned. Nevertheless, the event is emblematic of the kind of political value which the Vandals came to have in broader Mediterranean diplomacy, as we see again later in the century. Here Thrasamund, Gaiseric's nephew, marries Amalafrida, Theodoric's widowed sister. From letters collected in Cassiodorus' *Variae,* we can see that the tone of the relationship between Ostrogothic Italy and is again one of safeguarding

one's interests. In this instance, it is Theodoric who wished to protect against Vandal raids in the Western Mediterranean.[29]

Given that the Vandals were now a foreign power ruling over a Roman populace, it was essential that they present themselves as legitimate rulers. One of the ways in which this was achieved was to adopt Roman culture and traditions in large part. This was not only necessary for legitimacy at home, but also for the Vandal Kingdom to be recognised as a serious entity in the wider Mediterranean political sphere.[30] Specifically for Dracontius' case, this extended particularly into the world of literary culture.

EDUCATION AND LITERARY CULTURE IN VANDAL CARTHAGE

As discussed above, the *Romulea* is a diverse collection, and, given the presence there of versified progymnasmatic exercises (*Romul.* 5 and 9), it raises the question as to the status of classical education in Carthage at this time. Our first piece of information directly related to Dracontius is found in *Romul.* 1, the address to Felicianus the grammarian. That this poem is addressed to Dracontius' *grammaticus* already of itself indicates that there remained a strong grammatical-rhetorical tradition in North Africa under the Vandals. In particular, Dracontius notes the following:

> *sancte pater, o magister, taliter canendus es,*
> *qui fugatas Africanae reddis urbi litteras,*
> *barbaris qui Romulidas iungis auditorio,*
> *cuius ordines profecto semper obstupescimus,*
> *quos capit dulcedo vestri, doctor, oris maxima.*
>
> Drac. *Romul.* 1.12-16
>
> O master, holy father, you should be sung in this way, you, who returns to the African city the literature which has been put to flight, who joins

[29] Cass. *Var.* 5.43.1
[30] For this perspective, see further Conant (2012: 52-58) and Hen (2007: 59-93)

> grandsons of Romulus to barbarians in the auditorium, whose rows of benches we always truly marvel at, which the very great sweetness of your voice, learned one, enraptures.

Two main issues can once again be drawn from this amid the obvious *captatio benevolentiae*. Firstly, the poet underlines the so-called *fugatas litteras*. This, like the *ignotus dominus*, is a somewhat ambiguous collocation and raises a similar range of questions. While I shall deal with this issue in Chapter 2, it suffices to say at this point that *fugatas litteras* is used figuratively, and that it refers simply to literature which has perhaps been out of fashion in Carthage, whether due to matters of taste and style, or more pervasively through religious pressure.[31]

Secondly, Dracontius notes that both 'barbarians' and grandsons of Romulus (the usual term which our poet uses when referring to the Romans of his own time)[32] benefit from Felicianus' teaching. That the Vandals wished to partake in Latin literary culture is well established in the *Anthologia Latina* as well, and there are many examples of epigrammatic, occasional literature produced, evidently on commission, for Vandal aristocrats. A significant amount of this is high-end literature as well. For example, the *Epithalamium Fridi* is a Virgilian cento, a form which, for the composer at least — and for the recipient and audience at best — would have required a good working knowledge of Virgil's *Aeneid* in order to appreciate the nuances evoked in the original context.[33]

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[31] Kaster (1988: 44; 229) notes that school curricula were not at any point controlled centrally by the state, and as a result, *grammatici* were essentially free to present their own course of study. This is further compounded by the relative mobility of teachers of all ranks – *magistri, grammatci, rhetores*. Although the general lines of instruction might be similar, the content might vary considerably, and might not even have been restricted to classical texts, a further possibility for understanding the sense of *fugatas litteras* (Kaster 1988: 45).

[32] *Romanus* and the other usual terms (e.g. *Quiris/Quirites*) by contrast are rather rare, usually being reserved for exempla which involve figures from (distant) Roman history.

[33] Cf. for example such a multi-layered interpretation of another Late Antique centonic work (*Anth. Lat.* 13, on Narcissus) in Elsner (2017), where the choice of lines and half-lines evokes both the Virgilian original and reuse in Silius Italicus and Ovid.

Carthage had been from the outset the eternal rival to Rome. This opinion had hardly changed by Late Antiquity, nor indeed was it just a clichéd comparison based solely upon the now long-distant conflicts with Hannibal. Salvianus of Marseilles, for example, writing around the time of the Vandal Conquest of Carthage in 439, declares in his *De gubernatione Dei* (7.67-8) that Carthage was both rival to Rome and the Rome of her own sphere. As much as her military prowess and high political status within the empire, this reputation was merited on account of the high culture which the city engendered and enjoyed. In particular, Salvianus highlights the numerous and varied kinds of educational activity which had been taking place in the city: instruction in the liberal arts, philosophy, language, and morals.[34] The image which is thus presented persists into the later 5th century, seen for example in the numerous epigrams of the *Codex Salmasianus*, the part of the *Anthologia Latina* which was either collated or written by the end of Vandal rule in the early 6th century. Among the authors to be found there, Luxorius is one of the most prolific (that we still have extant). The subjects of his epigrams reveal a vibrant, if somewhat sordid cast of characters, ranging from tightrope walkers and pantomime dancers, to advocates and doctors. There is in many ways much in common between the subject matter of the epigrams in the *Anthologia* and the epics of Dracontius. Both identify the somewhat seedy underbelly of their subject matter and use that as their starting point. For example, in *Anth. Lat.* 148 Riese, the lawyer in question has bestial relations with his mare. As we shall see in Dracontius, this fixation on the darker side of human relations — adultery, *crimes passionels*, matricide — is a key theme and useful tool with which the poet can engage in veiled criticism.

[34] *Carthaginem dico, et urbi Romae maxime adversariam et in Africano orbe quasi Romam… illic enim omnia officiorum publicorum instrumenta, illic artium liberalium scholae, illic philosophorum officinae, cuncta denique vel linguarum gymnasia vel morum* (Salv. *gub. Dei* 7.67-68)

Judging by the information used to determine the details of Dracontius' life, it can be concluded that the poet operated in circles where there was a considerable number of literate members, or who at the very least appreciated the cultural value of Latin literary culture.[35] Thus we see him operating in assumedly noble circles of which people like the dedicatees of his two epithalamia, Johannes and Vitula and the two brothers, the latter of which were part of a network which was able to secure the poet's release from prison.[36]

Rhetorical training was chiefly adapted towards training for the law courts. As such, progymnasmatic exercises which would simulate the kinds of situations in which the lawyer might be forced to produce a speech were the order of the day. These exercises could be fairly realistic, taking points of law and applying them to moral situations, as in the *controversia*, or more fanciful, taking scenarios from myth and requiring the orator to convince a character to take a particular action or not. As has been pointed out above, Dracontius has two such exercises in the *Romulea* collection. Other exercises which are of relevance to our study include the paraphrase, which was chiefly an exercise aimed at training young students in Latin

[35] See Kaster (1988: 35-42, and particularly 39-40) on the general level of education in Late Antiquity. Cf. also Conant (2004: 203-210), discussing literacy in terms of the *Tablettes Albertini*, where even those who could write, chose instead to employ the services of a professional scribe.
[36] In the case of *Romul.* 6, Dracontius refers to the *honesta… domus* of Victor, the assumed *paterfamilias*, as well as the grand public celebration of the marriage and the fact that he lives by the grace of their protection and munificence (*publica magnifice per moenia vota geruntur: | quas dedit una domus, domus excipit una sorores, | quorum umbone tegor vel quorum munere vivo*). Already in the first lines of *Romul.* 7, the poet refers to the addressees' illustrious lineage: *carminis Idalii cuperem nunc ebrius esse | nobilium thalamis Fabiani sanguinis index, Romul.* 7.1-2, 'I wish now to be drunk with the songs of Idalium, representative of the blood of Fabianus at this wedding of nobles'.

composition and hence did not demand any interpretive skill.[37] Closely related is the *ethopoeia*, which is typically a speech imagined for a given mythological character at a moment of dramatic intensity. Sometimes this could be combined with paraphrase, when the subject was taken from a pre-existing literary work, most often a line of Virgil in our extant examples. These latter types are less the province of the schoolroom than the erudite circles of aristocratic society, as they frequently exhibit a surprisingly complex level of interpretive work in their execution. As such, value judgements on characters in their revised narratives and on the situation in general are frequent and often very strong.[38] As we shall come to see in the chapters, these ways of approaching material are found across Dracontius' epics.

Indications of audience can also be determined from the manuscript itself. The subscription to *Romul.* 5, a versified *controversia* on the somewhat parabolic story of a rich man and a poor man who are sworn enemies, declares that this piece was performed in the Gargilian baths, and furthermore, in the presence of the proconsul Pacideius.[39] During Late Antiquity, the bath house became increasingly a place for (very often high-ranking) people to meet and even hold court.[40] As a result,

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[37] Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 1.9.2, where he illustrates the procedure of paraphrasing Aesop's fables, for the purpose of better understanding literary style. Likewise Fortunatianus *rhet.* 3.3, where paraphrase is described as a means to grow one's vocabulary above all.

[38] Cf. Ennod. *dict.* 28, *Anth. Lat.* 255R (249SB), both on the same subject of Aeneas leaving Dido. Both texts pass judgement on the former's conduct not only within the context of the story but also as to Virgil's treatment of the situation as poet.

[39] The full subscription reads: *exp(licit) controversia statuae viri fortis quam dixit in Gargilianis thermis Blossus Emilius Draconius vir clarissimus et togatus fori proconsulis almae Karthaginis apud proconsulem Pacideium.*

[40] Thébert (2003: 445) gives the example of Julius Priscus, who held judicial assizes in the Baths of Hadrian at Antioch, as well as that of the emperor Valerius, whom the *Historia Augusta* describes as sitting in the baths on two separate occasions (*SHA Aurelianus* 10.3: *tunc cum Ulpius Crinitus* ***publice*** *apud Byzantium sedenti Valeriano in thermis egit gratias…; SHA Aurelianus* 13.1: *cum consedisset Valerianus Augustus in thermis apud Byzantium*. Leone (2013: 21-22) also quotes the latter, but in neither case do the authors explain what is meant by the verb *sedeo*. This could well be sitting as in presiding over court, or simply making use of the public baths as in their intended function. She further suggests that baths had in fact overtaken the forum and temples as centres of civic life during Late Antiquity, and that as a result, these spaces became key locations

archaeologists such as Thébert (2003) and Leone (2007) have considered that bath complexes even supersede the functions previously held by the forum. Thébert (2003: 446) further underlines that these spaces naturally lent themselves to vehicles for propaganda, both private (in the sense of commemorations made by donors) and public (though not necessarily by people directly connected to the imperial family, as in the case of a bath complex in the south of Thamugadi).[41] The usage in particular of the Gargilian baths as a place for meetings and lectures is known also from Augustine *breviculus collationis* 1.14, who informs us that this was the setting for a debate between Donatists and Catholics was convened in 411.[42] The reference in the subscription in *N* to Pacideius as *proconsul* would further emphasise both the nature of this space as a kind of makeshift court, and the continued presence of Romans/Romano-Africans in the Vandal political structure.[43] If we are then to assume that this kind of setting was a legal one, it once again stresses the importance of the rhetorical background of the works, given that myth, fable and the classical forms and genres with which they are associated are the province of the rhetorician in this period. The audience thus evoked by the subscription of *Romul.* 5 is necessarily one which is well-educated, perhaps even exclusively those who have had a similar level of education to the poet himself, and

for the exercise of propaganda and its attendant measures. This is reflected too in the comparative abundance of poetry relating to the baths and their attendant evergetic activities found in the *Anthologia Latina*.

[41] See Thébert (2003: 446-7). At the bath in question statues of the emperor Valerian, his wife Crispina, his son Gallienus, and the latter's wife Salonina moved into the complex apparently by members of the public, given the lack of any connection between the imperial family and the building of this bath complex.

[42] Aug. *adv. Don.* 33.58 further describes it as large, cool, and light (*in tam spatioso et lucido et refrigeranti loco nos fuisse recolimus.*)

[43] Schetter (1994: 370), following Courtois (1955: 258) and Overbeck (1973: 67) characterises the post of *proconsul* in the context of the Vandal kingdom as the highest judge of the law-courts. Although there is a slight possibility of the name Pacideius being a hybrid of Latin and Vandalic elements of the kind Francovitch Onesti (2013: 193) suggests with the example of *Iuliateus*, as it stands, the name is unlikely to be of Germanic origin (cf. the variations on Vandal names in Francovitch Onesti 2013: 188-193). Schetter (1994: 370 n.3) further mentions Victorianus, evidently another Roman, as the only other known and named *proconsul* of the time, active under Huneric.

that this platform is similar to a literary coterie where similar poets are engaging in the same way. The variety of poets yet similarity of poetry of the Codex Salmasianus would suggest that this kind of society existed in the realm of epigrammatic poets, and so one which specialised in larger forms may well have existed too.

Further inferences of the kind of audience which our poet has in mind can be taken from the very beginning of the *Laudes Dei*. Here Dracontius states in his intentions for the poem that it is written for whomever wishes to know God both as benevolent and vengeful (*qui cupit iratum placidumque scire Tonantem, laud. Dei* 1.1), but makes a point later, in book 2, of providing *exempla* from classical history and myth immediately after *exempla* from the Bible, ostensibly to cater for those not *au courant* with Biblical material and hence implying that there are two discrete readerships for this work. This is nothing but literary affectation, however, given that he had before this point already invoked Medea as an exemplum without drawing attention to this fact (and indeed without a comparative Biblical reference). Given, too, that the vehicle for Christianity in the West was necessarily the *lingua franca,* Latin, the domain of Classical learning was synonymous with that of Christian learning, and such a dichotomy is unnecessary and misleading.

Another facet of Carthaginian literary life which is of great importance to the interpretation of Dracontius' works is that of the theatre. Two of the texts studied in this thesis, *Medea* (*Romul.* 10) and *Orestis tragoedia* have overt references in one way or another to theatrical exploits, particularly tragedy and pantomime. We are told by Victor of Vita[44] that the theatre and odeon in Carthage were destroyed

[44] Vict. Vit. 1.8: *nam et hodie si qua [aedificia] supersunt, subinde desolantur, sicut ibi Carthagine odium, theatrum, aedem Memoriae et viam, quam Caelestis vocitabant, funditus deleverunt.*

during the conquest of the city, but archaeological evidence does not corroborate this exactly. Rather, it would appear that, in line with other changes to the fabric of the city[45] these public spaces were being taken over and closed up by private individuals as housing. Bockmann (2013: 61) posits the use of the odeon as a possible burial place, but questions whether the burials there are original or whether they were moved there from somewhere else. Conversely, by the end of the 5th century Procopius informs us that, much like the other ways in which barbarian nature is seen to be softened, the Vandals were appreciative of theatrical entertainment.[46] Leone (2007: 86) also notes that while this was the case with theatres, amphitheatres remained seemingly operational. This would appear to be in line with the kind of literary evidence we have for theatrical activity in Carthage. Several poems the *Anthologia* have charioteers, tightrope walkers, acrobats, and pantomime dancers as their subjects,[47] which likely are representative of the kind of public entertainment forms which were still notable enough to be immortalised in verse.[48] Such venues as the amphitheatres might well have been a more practical

[45] The general trend is towards the function of traditional public spaces such as the *forum* being superseded by other, perhaps more private, or small-scale, spaces such as bath complexes. While in the East the baths were seen by Christians as places of dubious spiritual quality (the association of darkness, heat, and steam bearing too many similarities to the entrance to Hell, see Leone 2007: 59 n.57), similar trends of private housing being constructed in public spaces such as the *agora,* for example, are observable in Eastern cities during Late Antiquity too.

[46] Procop. *Vand.* 2.6.7: ἐχρυσοφόρουν δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον, καὶ Μηδικὴν ἐσθῆτα, ἣν νῦν Σηρικὴν καλοῦσιν, ἀμπεχόμενοι, ἔν τε θεάτροις καὶ ἱπποδρομίοις καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ εὐπαθείᾳ, καὶ πάντων μάλιστα κυνηγεσίοις τὰς διατριβὰς ἐποιοῦντο, "And [the Vandals] wore gold very generally, and clothed themselves in the Medic garments, which now they call 'seric,' and passed their time, thus dressed, in theatres and hippodromes and in other pleasurable pursuits, and above all else in hunting (trans. H.B. Dewing)."

[47] E.g. *Anth. Lat.* 112 (tightrope walker), 281 (tightrope walker), 286 (tightrope walker), 293 (charioteer), 300 (tightrope walker), 310 (pantomime dancer), 327 (charioteer), 328 (charioteer), 336 (charioteer), 346 (the amphitheatre), 361 (musician), 362 (musician).

[48] See also Merrills & Miles (2010: 210), who note that it would be "dangerous to take these poems as an actual description of what was taking place at this time". The very nature of epigram, however, was its closeness to reality and consequently its topicality (cf. the discussion of the technique of Martial, who is undoubtedly the model upon which all subsequent epigrammatists would have modelled themselves, in Conte 1999: 506-8).

choice as a multi-purpose space which could accommodate various different types of entertainment.

Given the importance to Dracontius of both the theatrical, as indicated by the title of *Orestis tragoedia*, as well as the literary, such as the invocation of Homer in *Romul.* 8, both issues which will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters, the question as to our poet's command of Greek is raised. To this end, Moussy (2002: 14) would have it that he probably did know Greek. He compares here the storm episode in *Romul.* 8 with an analogue in Colluthus' *De Raptu Helenae*. Bouquet & Wolff (2002: 59), citing the example of *Romul.* 9, are certain that he has read Homer, but cannot be sure whether that is in the original or in translation (such as the *Ilias Latina*). Others, such as Pritivera (1996) argue for the more moderate view that he may have understood some Greek at a very basic level, but not enough to read Homer or tragedy. Stoehr-Monjou (2015: 237-8) has also recently characterised Dracontius as a reader as opposed to speaker of Greek. Being part of a rhetorical milieu, Dracontius' works only superficially correspond to any Greek texts in terms of subject matter and do not interact directly with their expression or actual content.[49] The latter is most likely, and more representative of the Late Antique West. For example, Sidonius Apollinaris, writing in Gaul around the same period speaks of reading Greek philosophy in Latin translation as well as owning copies in the original (Sid. *Ep.* 2.9.5 and *Ep.* 8.3.1). Thus it is entirely plausible that Dracontius, living in the cosmopolitan city of Carthage, would have certainly been exposed to Greek (and Berber, and whatever other regional languages may have been spoken by those travelling there) but may not have had the scholarly

[49] Stoehr-Monjou (2015: 238): "Il ne cite pas de grec, car il en a vraisemblablement une connaissance limitée — comme son public…".

background in which to read the canonical works in the original.[50] Regardless of ability, however, the trend more broadly across Latin literature of Late Antiquity is towards rejecting Greek models in favour of the Latin tradition. Moreover, it is the way in which Dracontius interacts with the latter tradition which frames a large proportion the socio-political content, and consequently which concerns us throughout this thesis.

From this brief overview it can be seen that Carthage under the Vandals remained a place of sophisticated literary pretensions, partly a continuation of previous Roman traditions, and partly explicitly encouraged by the new regime itself, ostensibly in a show of integration and legitimation. It was a city which, though under new management, maintained its ties with the wider political world, to the extent that the Vandal Kingdom might well be thought of as the legitimate successor state to the Rome of the Theodosians. Although there is some archaeological evidence which shows a certain degradation of the urban fabric in which this literary culture would traditionally have taken place, it is no more unusual than anywhere else in the Mediterranean at this time, and generally is as a result of private individuals repurposing space rather than as a result of a barbarian invasion. Additionally, while parts of the city were left to fall into disrepair we see that there was also a concerted effort by wealthy individuals (including the royal family) to build smaller, more private versions of buildings such as bath complexes and gardens, which had by Late Antiquity superseded more traditional spaces such as the forum as a nexus of public interaction. Coupled with a literary and public display of evergetism in the form of epigrammatic poetry such as we find in the works of Luxorius, it shows that

[50] Cf. Millar (1968); also Watson (1997: 34) on bilingualism being more common in the East versus the West.

Carthage was a place which still recognised the political power of poetry and rhetorical display. It is against this backdrop that Dracontius' four epic poems will be read in the next chapters.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The thesis will proceed in the following way. I begin in **Chapter 1** by outlining the ways in which Dracontius shows his expertise as an artist, such that his works are pieces worthy of criticism. This chapter also includes some basic frameworks for the rest of the thesis, particularly delineating concepts such as Dracontius' engagement with the mythological and literary tradition. I illustrate each of these with a case study taken from the four texts under consideration. **Chapter 2** moves from examining the techniques which Dracontius employs to an examination of our poet in relation to his social and cultural milieu, and how this is reflected in his treatment of the texts. In particular, I consider the influence of the aftermath of the events of 455 and how this stimulated the literary scene at Carthage. It is thus clear from these two chapters that our author is both adept at his craft and also invested in the society in which he participates and is concerned for its well-being. To this end, **Chapter 3** considers how Dracontius engages with the question of good kingship and examines the presentation of a negative masculine archetype across the texts, with case-studies as illustrations of how our poet applies and modifies it. I complement these issues in **Chapter 4** with a study of the negative female characters which, though not forming an archetype, are still integral to the treatment of the political issues at the heart of Dracontian epic.

PLOT SUMMARIES

DE RAPTU HELENAE (*ROMUL.* 8)

Dracontius begins with a short statement of the general plot: the story is to focus on Paris and his failings, and it will be the poet's job to display him in all the episodes which betray these qualities. He follows this with an invocation of a deified Homer and Virgil, portraying himself in turn as lowly and unworthy (lines 1-30).

The story begins in earnest with the Judgment of the Apple of Discord already having taking place (31-37). The narrator intervenes at this point, lamenting the bleak future of Troy, but also the horrors of the associated war which will come to pass as a result of this action (37-60). Paris, having ascertained the truth about his origins from his nursemaid, rejects his present lover Oenone, and decides to go to Troy to reclaim his birthright (61-77). The city is in the midst of a religious procession led by the royal family. Paris interrupts the procession, proclaiming that he is the Priam's long-lost son, presenting as proof a rattle which he had been given as a child (78-118). Here follow three speeches by prophetic characters: Helenus, Cassandra, and Apollo. The first two argue that to accept Paris is to permit wilfully the destruction of Troy, and that the people should act against this. Apollo counters that the Trojans will have a long a glorious future. At the end of this exchange, Priam chooses to believe Apollo, and Paris is welcomed back into the fold (119-212).

But Paris is unsatisfied with his position, and asks Priam to use the Trojan ships to sail to Greece.[51] The king agrees, and sends him to the court of King Telamon on Salamis with several other Trojan princes, in the hopes of securing his sister Hesione's release (213-245). The party sets sail and arrives in Salamis, where the

[51] Drac. *Romul.* 8.217-225.

matter is discussed through another set of speeches. At issue here is that Priam demands Hesione, who had been taken prisoner during the previous sack of Troy (a topic which is never mentioned elsewhere), be returned to Troy, as he feels a suitable amount of time has passed. Telamon counters that Hesione is legally married to him and that there was issue from the union (Ajax). The embassy leaves, apparently not having concluded anything. (246-384).

Suddenly, a storm arises, and separates Paris from the rest of the ambassadors (385-434). He ends up on Cyprus, where it is also a religious holiday. On the island, too, is Helen, who sends servants to fetch Paris to her (435-452). While wandering the island, Paris comes across an augur, who prophesies great things for him (453-480). Entering the temple of Venus, where Helen awaits him, Paris is questioned as to his origins and his reasons for being on the island. Helen subsequently decides that she must elope to Troy with him. As they are leaving the island, Menelaus arrives in pursuit with his army, but they manage to escape (481-585).

Meanwhile, back in Troy, the remaining ambassadors inform Priam that Paris is likely dead, and the king plunges the city into mourning. Leading a funeral procession through the city to the beach, Priam is on the point of drowning himself when Paris and Helen's ship is seen (586-614). They announce to Priam that they are to be married, after which the funeral celebrations are turned to those of marriage (615-647).

The poem closes amidst this festive scene with a brief statement on the troubled future which will follow, and that, more generally, bad things come from adultery (648-655).

MEDEA (*ROMUL.* 10)

Romul. 10 begins with Dracontius' customary programmatic preface, focusing almost entirely on the titular figure herself and the magnitude of her powers and evil (lines 1-16). The preface turns to the poem's genre next, with the poet categorising which parts of the Medea story are typically presented in pantomime, and which in tragedy. The muses of Pantomime and Tragedy then entreat their sister, the muse of Epic, to join them in the retelling of the story (16-31).

The main body of the poem begins with Jason sailing to Colchis to steal the Golden Fleece. Before he reaches land, he is seen by the locals, and a messenger is sent to the king, who sends a band of young men to capture the foreigner (32-49). At this point, the action cuts away to Juno, who, having been assisted by Jason in crossing an icy river before the poem begins, wishes to return the favour. She calls upon Venus to save Jason, who has been taken to the temple of Diana to be sacrificed by Medea. The goddess agrees, and summons Cupid (50-88). Here follows a brief ekphrasis in which Cupid is compared to the Phoenix rising from the sea, after which he is sent to make Medea fall in love with Jason (89-170).

Cupid arrives in Colchis, and at the moment when Medea is about to deal the final blow he shoots his arrow. Medea hesitates, overcome by the power of love, and in so doing distresses her nurse. She proclaims that Jason is an unfit sacrifice, and offers

to marry him on the altar (171-255). Cupid then leads the wedding procession triumphantly through Diana's temple (255-271). Meanwhile, Bacchus, who is on his way back from India, senses what has taken place and sends his servants to assist in the festivities, while he himself travels to Aeëtes' court (272-283). Diana, too, returns to her temple, which she now finds deserted and ransacked, reeking with the luxurious and exotic smells associated with Cupid and love. She curses Medea to be eternally unhappy (284-310). Aeëtes, meanwhile, is enraged that Medea has married without his consent, and especially to a foreigner. Bacchus takes it upon himself to convince the king that Jason is a worthwhile match, which he accomplishes successfully (311-339). With Jason now accepted by the king, four years pass, during which time Medea has produced two children. The fire in the marriage seems to have waned, and, one evening, Medea accuses Jason of plotting to betray her. He confesses that he would like to return to Greece, in particular to show how successful he has been in his travels. She agrees, and decides that, in order to do this, they must steal the Fleece. This done, and having killed her brother in the process, they sail for Greece (340-365).

They end up at the court of King Creon in Thebes, where Jason promptly abandons Medea and agrees to marry Creon's daughter Glauce. Medea discovers Jason's treachery and plots her revenge (366-384). In an extended scene detailing her spellcraft, she prays first to the Moon, and promises to offer up the five bodies of Creon, Glauce, Jason, and her two children as a sacrifice in return for her aid. Then she addresses Pluto, and finally the Furies to enlist their help. This done, she returns to town (385-469). The next day Medea fashions a crown, imbuing it with poison and sulphur. Under the pretext of it being a gift for Glauce's wedding, she

presents the crown to the princess. As Medea withdraws, the crown begins to spew flames, setting the palace alight and killing Medea's three adult victims (470-521). There is general chaos as the populace flees the palace. Among them are Medea's two children, whom she promptly stabs. She formally offers her victims to the gods with whom she had made a pact, and then, as is usual, summons her chariot to fly away (522-569).

The poem finishes with an epilogue in which the poet pleads with various personified abstractions (Furor, Nefas, Libido, and other such characters) to refrain from plaguing Thebes any longer. This is followed by a catalogue of all the myths which contribute to the reputation of Thebes being a place of misery. Finally, Dracontius echoes the ending of Seneca's *Medea* with a statement on the gods. Whereas the Neronian author claims that there are no gods, Dracontius begs that it be a crime to worship them, given the damage they cause to humanity (570-601).

ORESTIS TRAGOEDIA (*OREST.*)

Dracontius begins with a programmatic preface, first briefly outlining his plot (1-12), then calling upon Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy, to come down in her tragic buskins. Immediately signalling his awareness of genre, he then declares that the iamb should fall silent in favour of the dactylic metre of epic, as an aid to his ability to retell the details of the story (13-24). The main body begins with a description of the aftermath of the fall of Troy, with Agamemnon on the way back to Mycenae (25-40). His journey is interrupted by being blown off course to Tauris, where he is reunited with Iphigenia in her new role as priestess of Diana. Agamemnon seeks forgiveness from Diana for having sacrificed Iphigenia to gain favourable winds to

sail to Troy, but the goddess is enraged, and he promptly escapes and sails back to Mycenae (41-107). Meanwhile, back in Mycenae, the treasure fleet has arrived without Agamemnon. Clytemnestra, his queen, watches its arrival with her lover Aegisthus, tense at the possibility of her husband discovering their adultery (108-132). Among the spoils of war is the prophetess Cassandra, who addresses the queen with a vision of what is to come. Her words cause Clytemnestra some distress and she retreats within the palace to convince Aegisthus that it would be best to get rid of her husband lest he avenge himself in the same way as he did against the Trojans (133-231). Agamemnon then returns home, and the two adulterous lovers murder him (232-270). The poet digresses for several lines, decrying the possibility that someone who could conquer a country, is able to be felled by comparatively insignificant person of low birth (271-283). In the aftermath, Electra takes Orestes away to Athens, where we are told that he spends his youth in pursuit of sport and rhetorical training (284-304). A period of uneasy calm now reigns, with Aegisthus installing himself as ruler in Mycenae. Dorylas, a household slave and tutor to Orestes goes to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus with a fictitious story to protect the royal children, saying that Electra and Orestes have drowned (305-378). Clytemnestra then addresses the citizens of Mycenae, who leave in stunned disbelief that so great a ruler as Agamemnon could fall from grace to such an ignoble death (379-426).

Seven years and eight months pass. Dorylas and several other slaves go to Agamemnon's tomb and implore him to avenge his death (453-514). Agamemnon's ghost agrees, and flies to Athens, where, in a shared dream, he exhorts Orestes and his bosom-friend Pylades to cease their youthful pursuits and fulfil their duty to

vengeance (515-551). On awakening, Orestes is unconvinced, and Pylades sets about exhorting him to action (552-625). This done, the pair set out for Mycenae, where Pylades first murders Aegisthus, and Orestes, after some exchanges with his mother, murders Clytemnestra (626-797). The populace come to recognise Orestes as their ruler (798-802). In the meantime, a messenger arrives and announces that Hermione, Menelaus' daughter and Orestes' cousin, has been kidnapped by Pyrrhus, Achilles' son. Orestes goes to rescue her, murdering Pyrrhus in an unspecified temple (803-819). Back in Mycenae, Orestes is visited by the shade of Clytemnestra, now resembling a Fury, and subsequently driven to madness (820-861). Orestes is then taken by Pylades to Tauris, where, having been captured by the island's inhabitants, he is due to be sacrificed to Diana. Iphigenia, again in her guise as priestess, recognises him when he deliriously speaks Agamemnon's name. She keeps him there overnight, and heals him of his madness (862-886). The next day they all leave for Athens, where Orestes is being brought to trial by Molossus for the murder of his father Pyrrhus. After several speeches, the judges are deadlocked, and Minerva casts the deciding vote in favour of Orestes' acquittal. There is much celebration, and Orestes returns to Mycenae together with Pylades, Iphigenia, Electra (887-962). The poet closes the epic with a final entreaty to the gods to protect the Greeks from any further ills (963-974).

HYLAS (*ROMUL.* 2)

Romul. 2 begins with the poet giving a cursory statement of intent before posing a question: "What fate took away his companion from Hercules, the sweet solace for his ills?" (lines 1-3). Dracontius immediately breaks away to a lengthy exchange between Venus and Cupid in which the former indicates her desire to have revenge

on her enemy, the nymph Clymene. Cupid agrees to be the agent of this endeavour, and disguises himself as a nymph in order to infiltrate the group of nymphs (4-93). In the meantime, Hercules and Hylas are returning from an unspecified war and arrive near the nymphs' fountain in Thessaly. Hercules has been triumphant in battle and Hylas is described as partaking fully of Hercules' success, by imagining himself as having had a role in obtaining Hercules' trademark pelt, here taken from a boar rather than the usual lion. The nymphs spy the pair and are simultaneously enchanted by Hylas as much as they are disgusted by Hercules (94-108). Cupid now acts, and strikes them with his arrows, rendering the nymphs mad with the tell-tale signs of love. Clymene then makes known her desire for Hylas to be the nymphs' lover, justifying her passion by invoking exempla from other myths. They agree (109-122). Meanwhile Hylas has come to draw water from the fountain, and the nymphs seize him. Another nymph, Deiopeia, attempts to reassure the frightened Hylas that he joins the ranks of other young men who are all happy, though they were taken against their will (123-140). In the meantime, Hercules comes to look for Hylas, and is enraged when he cannot find him. Cupid, too, has departed while these events have taken place and returns to his mother to report on the success of his mission (141-150). The poem comes to an abrupt close with the musings of Hercules, highlighting not only the loss of his companion, but also his dilemma as to what he is to tell Hylas' mother, given his position as protector. The final lines point to Hylas' potential apotheosis (151-163).

I

THE LITERARY BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Dracontius is often presented as a "post-Ovidian" poet. This modern-day categorisation arises chiefly from stylistic similarities: his predilection for paradox, baroque style, as well as several linguistic turns, suggest the Augustan poet as an overarching model both metrically and in matters of poetic expression.[52] The comparison, however, extends well beyond this into Dracontius' self-presentation as a poet. As we only see Dracontius' life through the prism of his literary output, works such as the *Satisfactio* suggest a career with similar contours to that of Ovid, who was exiled to Pontus for the now infamous, though as yet unsolved *crimen et error,* where he spent much of his time there composing poetry designed to both placate Augustus and draw attention to his perceived injustice. Not only is the *Satisfactio* comparable in form and content to Ovid's *Tristia* as a work of "exile" and contrition,[53] but Dracontius' vagueness as to the real reason for his imprisonment, combined with his silence on the matter in other places where he describes his imprisonment, suggests that our author seeks to emulate Ovid in all details in this respect. Fielding (2017: 93-95) proposes that the self-conscious adoption of Ovidian rhetorical strategies is itself a rhetorical means of engaging with those embroiled in the power structures of the Mediterranean, both in Carthage and abroad. Further

[52] Cf. for example Bruzzone (2017: 58-67) for a compendium of the numerous parallels taken from *Romul.* 2 alone.
[53] Cf. Bouquet & Wolff (2002: 60); Bouquet (1982) and especially Fielding (2017: 89-127)

indications that Dracontius is casting himself in the mould of an Ovid for the 5th century can be found in *Romul.* 2. Specifically, Dracontius describes Hylas through the eyes of the Nymphs using exempla and language very similar to that describing Narcissus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. However, whereas Ovid's Narcissus is simply the equal of his exempla, Dracontius implies that his Hylas surpasses them, and indirectly that he as an author is surpassing his forebear.[54]

In comparison to what remains of other secular writers of Vandal Africa, Dracontius is by far the author of whom we have the most significant body of material. Luxorius might have plenty of epigrams in the *Anthologia Latina*, but Dracontius presents us with a rather more varied output which straddles both the Christian and secular worlds. Moreover, our author reveals himself to be not only capable of dealing with varied material, styles, genres and forms, but is also able to show an artistic flair derived from above-average knowledge of the tradition in which he operates. For this reason alone, his work is worth studying.

In this chapter, I will examine the features of Dracontian epic which show his sophistication as a literary artist. I begin by setting out the rhetorical background from which Dracontian epic emerges before showing how this informs the poet's treatment of myth. Here I look at the case of *Romul.* 8, and particularly its relationship to Dares Phrygius' prose *De excidio Troiae historia*. This naturally moves to the realm of literary history and an examination of Dracontius' treatment of intertextuality. The chapter also looks at the way in which genre and form plays a key role in framing Dracontius' intention for these short epics.

[54] I discuss this passage further in the context of Dracontian intertextuality later on in Chapter 2.

THE RHETORICAL BASIS OF DRACONTIAN EPIC

As we are told by Salvianus of Marseilles, Carthage at the beginning of the 5th century was a place rivalling Rome as a bastion of Roman culture. The crowning glory of this output was the strength of its rhetorical schools.[55] Dracontius, too, reinforces this view of 5th century Carthage later in the century with his *Romulea*, which clearly shows rhetorical schooling as its literary foundation: the first and third poems are prefaces lauding the *grammaticus* Felicianus and *Romul.* 4, 5, and 9 are rhetorical forms which have been versified to conform to the rest of the collection. Beyond this, the poems of the Codex Salmasianus give several examples of versified rhetorical forms in addition to other material, such as the numerous Virgilian centos and epigrams, which speaks to the vibrant literary and cultural life which endured in the Vandal kingdom. Moreover, this vibrancy continued in spite of the developing Christian culture, which often took issue with its impiety.[56] Dracontius partakes of this world too, effectively fusing a Christian world-view with the precepts of Classical learning in his *Laudes Dei* and *Satisfactio*. While an examination of the different purposes for which Christian and secular literature exist in 5th century Carthage would be the subject of a thesis of its own, it suffices for our purposes here to note that the worlds in which these two strains of literary

[55] *Carthaginem dico, et urbi Romae maxime adversariam et in Africano orbe quasi Romam… illic enim omnia officiorum publicorum instrumenta, illic artium liberalium scholae, illic philosophorum officinae, cuncta denique vel linguarum gymnasia vel morum* (Salv. *gub. Dei* 7.67-68)

[56] Cf. for example Aug. *Conf.* 9.1: *… ut in hoc saeculo florerem et excellerem linguosis artibus ad honorem hominum et falsas divitias famulantibus*. While not explicitly disparaging, and acknowledging their indebtedness to their forebears, Ennodius places Christian writers above Classical writers, as at *Dict.* 8.14: *Maro vester tantis institutores suos commendavit, quantis ipse notus est: et certe illos per merita sua fama non prodidit. Hieronymus noster, nisi praeceptorem suum Gregorium diceret, illo melior censeretur; sed illi adplicanda sunt bona nominati, a quo sumpsisse videntur originem.* Ennodius more clearly articulates the moral differences between pagan literary culture and the way of God at *Opusc.* 5.5-7. In particular, he associates the life of the rhetor with the sins of pride and greed (*nihil aliud cupiens nisi auris vanae laudationis adsurgere et orandi fastidium, dum perorandi tenebar cupiditate, mercari*), which draws the practitioner away from God's truth.

activity exist are very different socially, though, as Dracontius' own *Laudes Dei* indicates, the consumers of both may well have been the same. The world of secular literature is expressly that associated with the court and the city as an expression of Roman daily life.

The chief function of rhetoric was to prepare young men for the law courts, and, additionally during Late Antiquity, for mediating the hierarchies of power in general and specifically engaging with the emperor. Kaster (2001: 334) further characterises rhetoric as a means of exercising control over society through the control over words and particularly words as agents of opinion-formation. As such, secular literature, and its connection with the rhetorical schools, forms a key part of preserving Roman identity at this time. This is of course felt even more keenly when the ruling class is not Roman at all, but is still interested in portraying itself as such. Indeed, as modern scholars such as Kaster (2001: 325) and Bloomer (2011: 182, 185, 187 and especially 190-1) have noted, Latin rhetorical training had a significant role to play in the formation both of general morals as well as group identity.

This naturally raises the question as to what kind of audience the poet aims to reach with such a rhetorically-based poetics. Again, from indications both in Dracontius himself and the *Anthologia Latina*, we know that Vandals were educated alongside Romans.[57] Moreover, having migrated across Europe for a long time before Carthage fell in 439, Vandals would have had exposure to Latin not only by moving through Roman lands, but also in its status as a lingua franca.[58]

[57] See especially Drac. *Romul.* 1.14. The evidence of the *Anthologia* are chiefly those epigrams indicating Vandal aristocrats' patronage of Latin poetry.
[58] See now e.g. Leonhardt (2013: 87 ff) on the development of Latin as a utility language in Late Antiquity.

While we shall return to the issue of promoting Roman literature in the person of Felicianus and what this means for Dracontius in particular in chapter 2, in this chapter I look at the practical implications of rhetorical education on Dracontian epic. We can see traces of practical rhetoric in certain aspects of Dracontius' writing, specifically where the poet alludes to rhetorical forms in speeches. Prominent examples here include episodes such as the deliberative speeches from Helenus, Cassandra, and Apollo in response to Paris' unexpected return to Troy at *Romul.* 8.134-212. Taken together they offer perspectives on the given situation in the same manner as a *controversia* does by asking different *quaestiones*. Likewise, the embassy scene at *Romul.* 8. 258-348, also has elements of rhetorical debate in this manner, again presenting three viewpoints. Elsewhere, we may consider Paris' speech in the middle of the storm (*Romul.* 8. 402-424) an *ethopoeia*, fulfilling as it does, the criteria of "words a character says in a moment of dramatic intensity". This category also applies to speeches such as Hercules' lament at the end of *Romul.* 2, which has a formal counterpart in *Romul.* 4 (*Verba Herculis*). In *Orest.* the speeches which Cassandra and Pylades give respectively to Aegisthus and Orestes are essentially hortative, aiming to convince and manipulate at once, while the final episode in Athens (*Orest.* 887-962) reproduces the charge, defence, and judgement speeches of a Roman court.

More broadly, however, the rhetorical basis affects the way in which Dracontius treats his material as a whole. This manifests in two ways, both forming part of a broader engagement with the literary tradition: broadly through Dracontius' attitude towards myth, and more specifically in the Dracontian application of

intertextuality. In the former, I look at how Dracontius' treatment of his mythological sources is flexible and subservient to the higher demands of rhetorically motivated epic, as well as how and why this is appropriate for his audience in Vandal Carthage. In the latter, I consider again how Dracontius' use of literary texts is flexible and often serves to undermine the authority of the Roman past, particularly in the case of Virgil, but equally shows a sophisticated manipulation and understanding of other literary sources.

Another key part of grammatical education, which in more advanced forms is also a key part of rhetorical training, is the practice of paraphrase. Quintilian again informs us that through a rigorous process of first summarising, then simplifying, recasting, and finally amplifying a given model text, this was this is the primary method by which young students not only learned Latin vocabulary but also acquired an awareness of good style.[59] Taking these basic principles of paraphrase beyond the mere acquisition of vocabulary or improvement of style, and treating them more abstractly as tools with which to approach composition, we can notice comparable features in the way that Dracontius approaches myth, to which I now turn.

DRACONTIAN APPROACHES TO MYTH

The most immediately noticeable feature of Dracontian epic is the flexibility with which he treats his source myths. Typically this takes the form of either amplification or compression of episodes, creation of entirely new episodes, creation of new characters, rewriting characters' histories, and changing details

[59] Quint. *Inst.* 1.9.2

within the story. Of course, most literary versions of any given myth necessarily have to make such changes. This is more keenly observable the later one moves through Latin literary history, as epic poets have to engage not only with source material, but with their epic predecessors. Malamud & McGuire (1993: 195) give the example of the Flavian author Valerius Flaccus, who uses multiple changes to myths as a means of mediation with the past and present. Virgil, too, is not innocent of artistic licence: the love affair between Dido and Aeneas, one of the most iconic episodes of the whole epic, is an invention of the Augustan poet. And such changes are not even restricted to mythological epic alone. Lucan, who was considered by posterity to be a model historian, orator, and epicist in equal measure, was happy to alter historical fact for the sake of the story.[60] Dracontius, however, takes this practice to new heights. His changes are so conspicuous and have such a significant impact on the story that it appears to have been done with serious intent rather than for reasons of convenience. As regards the impact of these changes for interpretation, the additions immediately make the reader unsettled by their conspicuous presence, and thereby invite the reader to treat their existence and significance with an especially considered eye. As we shall see in the case studies below, the exact result of this is wide-ranging and very much context dependent. In all cases, however, we may read these as a mirror to the literary milieu in which Dracontius is operating. For example, some additions may reveal much about the kinds of sources which Dracontius had at his disposal and, more importantly, which he chose to promote as the sanctioned version; others have a more pointed purpose, whether to underline thematic content which a particular change embodies, or even to assist in providing a clearer structural framework to the poem in question.

[60] See Ahl (1993: 130-1) for Virgil and Lucan.

Dracontius therefore not only innovates and refreshes perhaps long-stale material, but also shows himself as an author who is not interested in only being a belated *rejéton* of the classical tradition.

For these changes to have any artistic effect, it must necessarily be that Dracontius' audience was conversant enough with the material. Consequently, any change must have been immediately noticeable and hence the interpretive implications of those changes would be apparent to the initiated. Moreover, Dracontius, too, must have had an above average knowledge of the most popular form of the myths for his changes to be meaningful. Conversely, a situation where Dracontius feels at liberty to make such sweeping changes due to the lack of understanding of these matters on the part of the audience seems unlikely given the level of erudition suggested by the prefaces in the *Romulea* and the breadth of knowledge expressed in epigrams of other poets in the *Anthologia Latina*. In both cases, however, the inspiration for this kind of artistic licence must lead back to Dracontius' relationship to Ovid. As noted above, there are significant overlaps between the events of the latter poet and Dracontius, not least of which is the production of a poem of contrition and exile.[61] Ovid's *magnum opus*, the *Metamorphoses*, features most prominently as a linguistic model for Dracontius,[62] and is above all a work on the one hand concerned with the theme of transformation and on the other, keen to subvert pre-existing versions of mythical stories. This perfectly embodies the spirit of the rhetorical background which we know informs Dracontius' approach to literature, for there, too, the principles of *amplificatio* and *variatio* are key tools with which the orator sets out to

[61] See Fielding's (2017) recent monograph on this topic.
[62] Cf. Bouquet & Wolff (2002: 60): "Globalement, on peut advancer que pour Dracontius, Ovide est avant tout le poète des *Métamorphoses*: la place tenue par celles-ci est surtout importante dans les *epyllia* où ells fournissent presque les trois quarts des imitations…"

convince his audience. Additionally, we should also not discount the purpose for which progymnasmata were taught: the promotion of moral values among the youth of the given society.[63]

Dracontius' treatments of myth and tradition are notable in the broader context of Latin literary history, particularly because they often depart radically from transmitted versions in ways that can only be seen as having greater import for the overall programme and intention of both the poem as a unit, and the collection of which it forms part. In most cases, these changes involve a shift in geographical setting, for reasons of either intertextual significance (invoking the literary associations of a particular place), or expanding on a likely pre-existing variant to highlight significant issues which draw on a reader's existing background knowledge, which might be read as being significant for a political allegory. I consider here some illustrative examples, showing how these changes to myth may have different applications.

For *Romul.* 8, two of the major departures from the existing poetic tradition are of interest to us here: relocating the setting of Paris' journey to Greece from Sparta to Salamis, and then to remove Helen and the attendant kidnapping to Cyprus.
In Dracontius' version, Paris and several other Trojan princes are sent to the court of Telamon, where Hesione, Priam's sister, is being kept prisoner according to the terms of the treaty signed between the two kingdoms after the previous destruction of Troy. Their mission is to entreat the king to return Hesione to her family. Upon arrival they are greeted by the king, and three speeches follow in which Antenor

[63] See here Kaster (2001: 325-6; 334). "Control… is what the schools of rhetoric were about. Through their lessons, the young elite males who frequented the schools learned to control their own speech so that they might one day control the opinions of others…".

sets out the Trojans' grievances, Telamon responds and Polydamas in turn asks for moderation on all sides. Paris is not given any responsibility for negotiation. The ambassadors then remain in Greece for some time, before departing for Troy, their mission apparently unfulfilled (we are never told the outcome).

The embassy to Salamis is mentioned chiefly in the prose tradition of the Trojan cycle, which for our purposes is represented by two Latin works of Late Antiquity: the 4th century *Ephemeris belli Troiani,* attributed to Dictys Cretensis, and the 5th century *De excidio Troiae historia* of Dares Phrygius, a near-contemporary version of the Trojan cycle which would become the primary source for transmission of the story during the Middle Ages (Schetter 1987; see also Wolff 2002). Of these two Dares Phrygius is more prominent. The embassy is presented at Dares 5, but its function there is rather cursory and is not directly related to Paris' meeting with Helen. Instead, this embassy is primarily a job given to Antenor and, unlike Dracontius' version, involves a diplomatic tour of Greece, requesting the return of Hesione from all the Greek kings (*Antenor dicit quae a Priamo mandata erant, ut Graios postularet, ut Hesiona redderetur*, Dares 5.2, 'Antenor said what was commanded by Priam, that he should demand of the Greeks to return Hesione'). Dares furthermore includes several other subsequent trips made to Greece by Paris with other princes before he meets and kidnaps Helen. Significantly too, in the prose works, Paris' role is much more active during the embassy episodes.

The episode on Cyprus follows that in Salamis. Paris, having been separated from the rest of the ambassadors by a storm, washes up on the island. Helen hears of his arrival and summons him to her court. Menelaus is conveniently not present, and,

after questioning Paris about his origins and how he came to be on the island, it is she who decides that fate has compelled her to elope with him. The move to Cyprus has been explained by Wolff (2002: 156 n. 253) as a way to underline the connection to Venus in the Judgement of the Apple. Or indeed, it could be an oblique reference to the title of the Epic Cycle: the *Cypria*.[64] However, the appearance of the island once again has its roots in the prose traditions, and we find Cyprus being associated with the kidnapping in Dares. At Dares 9.7-9, Paris is already on the island, and it is Helen who comes to him (*at Helena vero Menelai uxor, cum Alexander in insula Cytherea esset, placuit ei eo ire*, Dares 10.1, 'But when Alexander was on the Cytherea's island, it pleased Helen, who was indeed Menelaus' wife, to go to him'), though the meeting still takes place in Helen's court. Some details are common, but slightly changed: in Dracontius Paris happens upon the island during a festival celebrating Venus' birthday, while in Dares, it is a festival for Juno instead. Dictys, too, has a Cyprus episode, but here it is in its conventional place as a waystation after Paris has kidnapped Helen. Further parallels with Dictys are to be found in such features as the ascription of all the blame to the mother (though admittedly with a slightly different emphasis) as in Dict. 1.10, and the singling out of Memnon as a casualty of war (Dict. 4.4).

It should be noted here that the issue of the relationship between Dares and Dracontius has not yet been definitively settled: Beschorner (1992), following van den Kolf (1954), posits the existence of an early source which would already have been known to Virgil, and to which both 5th century authors could have had access. Schetter (1987) conversely believes that Dracontius is dependent on Dares' account.

[64] Though the details of its circulation is unknown in Late Antiquity, there did exist a Latin version of the *Cypria* by a certain Naevius (not the dramatist), entitled *Cypria Iliadis*, which may have passed into common knowledge (cf. West 2013: 60).

For the purposes of this thesis, the distinction does not hold quite as much importance as the debates surrounding it would lead us to believe. We are more concerned here with the fact that, even where it appears to come from a parallel tradition, Dracontius has still streamlined and highlighted features of these episodes which contribute to his overall programme rather than simply taking it over in its entirety, and it is precisely this decision to privilege some elements of the story over others which is significant in terms of reading Dracontian epic from a socio-political angle.

Romul. 8 accordingly shows that Dracontius has included aspects of the Trojan story which are to be found in the alternative prose tradition rather than that of established epic tradition. Even so, these are not taken over in entirety, but are likewise adapted to emphasise certain aspects. As we shall see later, these episodes are significant given their length[65] and detailed treatment. This emphasis is further reinforced by the structuring of the epic in a chiastic manner. The episodes which are introduced are contrasted with each other by being placed in the inner pair, and thus invite us to consider the issues raised within the two comparable sections, namely that of the kidnapped women Hesione and Helen, and the attendant destructions of Troy which respectively are the result and future of the two events.

This habit can be seen in other texts too. In each of these cases, the reason for the mythographic change is context-specific. In *Orest.* the Greek fleet under Agamemnon is blown off course on the way home to Mycenae and washes up in Tauris. While there, Agamemnon is reconciled with Iphigenia. The scene clearly is

[65] As shown in the plot summaries, 170 lines are devoted to the embassy itself, compared with 150 lines for the Cyprus episode, which is not only limited to Paris' audience with Helen.

not by any means canonical. The geographical implausibility of it aside, the scene is nevertheless important for our understanding of Dracontian epic as a whole. On the one hand, it is a vehicle for the poet to show off his wide-ranging mythographic knowledge: basing his poem on the whole of the Orestes cycle, Dracontius aims at completeness in *Orest*. By inventing the Agamemnon in Tauris scene, our poet is able to link to the pre-Trojan War part of the myth while at the same time using it as an opportunity to establish Agamemnon's character as the good, repentant king who is nevertheless denied divine grace. Likewise, Dracontius changes details of Orestes' exile, which takes place in Athens in this version. This exile particularly highlights Orestes' education in the Roman manner, including rhetoric and athletics, which again establishes his character as diametrically opposite to the usurper Aegisthus. Mythographic change can thus be considered a characterising tool.

Having now seen that Dracontius is keen to include material from traditions parallel to the mainstream, but also that he is just as ready to manipulate these for his own ends, it is necessary now to turn to an examination of the way in which our poet interacts with other literature, the third aspect which contributes to the programme of subversion.

DRACONTIUS AND INTERTEXTUALITY

Allusion has always formed a core part of the Latin literary mode. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil alludes to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In time Ovid, Lucan, and Statius all allude in turn to the *Aeneid*, and so on as the corpus and, more importantly, canon of epic poetry grows. The Latin literature of Late Antiquity is no different. By virtue of the grammatical schools designed not only to preserve Roman values and culture as

we have seen in the beginning of this chapter, but also to promote correct language use, which was becoming increasingly necessary as the literary language moved further away from the vernacular,[66] it is inevitable that there will be some verbal correspondences between the Late Antique text and the prominent literary models of the past. This is largely due to the way in which the grammatical schools operated. As Quintilian informs us in the *Institutio Oratoria*, there is a hierarchy of writers, at the top of which sit the most perfect examples of each genre. Consequently they are to be aspired to and emulated in matters of literary style and taste.[67] The pervasiveness of these models is also evident in the grammatical textbooks of the time: the examples provided by in the works of Donatus, Priscian, and others are almost entirely founded upon Virgil, Ovid, Terence, and Plautus.

For Late Antiquity, the question is rather the degree to which these verbal correspondences are meaningful. Recently, Helen Kaufmann (2017) has outlined a framework for the varying ways in which intertextuality operates in Late Latin literature. This, she says, operates along a continuum of whether the allusion is used as the key to unlock meaning in a given passage or whether it operates merely as a "formal feature", where it gives stylistic colour to a passage without providing meaning not otherwise immediately understandable, or somewhere in between these extremes. Dracontius, too, responds to this characterisation. On the one hand, there are clear examples of knowledge of previous texts being key to understanding the motivation behind one of the mythological changes. A prime example of this is the Dracontian archetype, which will be explored further in Chapter 3. Here one of the key components is a negative judgement on Aeneas as presented in Virgil's

[66] See here Leonhardt (2013: 99-102).
[67] Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.20; 10.2.1

Aeneid, and while the characters it is applied to are negative in and of themselves, it is not without acknowledging the importance of the intertext that one can appreciate the full weight of the negative portrayal. On the other, there is a general sense of stylistic imitation created by certain apparent intertexts. For example, *Romul.* 10 opens with the phrase *fert animus vulgare…*, "My mind moves me to relate…", which no doubt reflects the opening of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.1-2): *in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas | corpora,* "My mind moves me to tell of bodies which have been transformed into shapes of a different kind" (trans. M. Innes, adapted). Though a nod to Ovid, the introductory phrase also falls into the same category of epic *cano*-formulas, reinforcing the fact that the text in question, on a subject which is chiefly tragic, is to be approached in epic fashion.

Under this rubric we may also consider allusions as Dracontius uses them in similes and exempla. Frequently these refer not only to other pieces of literature, pointing the reader in the direction of a general stylistic milieu, but also encyclopaedic works such as Valerius Maximus.[68] This is more revealing of the author's own erudition than anything else. In this way, intertextuality becomes another device in the rhetorician's toolbox, produced to embellish and further underline rather than hold the solution to the riddle. Lastly, we can identify a third kind of intertextuality present in Dracontius' work. This is not seen by the presence of familiar phrases, but by their conspicuous absence. Dracontius sets the reader up to expect something familiar, but stops short or deliberately apostrophises to drive home the point. The overall effect of this seems to be largely rhetorical again, essentially a kind of *variatio*.

[68] I refer here particularly to a contested passage at *Orest.* 427-452, where Agamemnon uses the exempla of several historical characters to justify Orestes killing his mother. That of Tamyris particularly reveals Valerius Maximus to be his source.

To illustrate the ways in which Dracontius uses intertextuality, I consider here again some case studies.

Dracontius interacts with Latin literary tradition in a number of different ways. While there are moments of conventional intertextual interaction[69], as we shall see presently in the section regarding the parallels between Paris and Virgil's Aeneas, there are a significant number of points where it would seem that the poet is explicitly avoiding this, or drawing attention to the fact that his text is different. For example, Dracontius explicitly underlines Hector's lack of speech: *Romul.* 8.211-12: *dixerat, et Phoebum Priamus summissus adorat | et grates securus agit, tacet optimus Hector*, '[Apollo] said this, and Priam humbly revered him, and, untroubled, gave thanks. Great Hector was silent'. This is likely referring to the general literary tradition of Trojan cycle texts in which Hector regularly has a number of speeches.[70] By deliberately denying Hector speech, Dracontius highlights his awareness of this fact. Through its absence, therefore, this becomes more significant, frustrating his audience's expectations and thereby sidelining Priam's legitimate heir in favour of the untested outsider.

Likewise, during Paris' audience on Cyprus, the questions as to Paris' origins are deliberately avoided by the prince in favour of praise of Helen, in what might be interpreted as another signposted deflection from the tradition. These latter

[69] That is to say, in the manner of e.g. Fowler (2000) and Hinds (1998), where lines, half-lines, and collocations in the same metrical *sedes* taken over from an earlier text into a later one either create meaning by invoking the interpretive implications of the original in the new context, or seek to undermine it by placing it in opposition to the new context.
[70] In particular, Hector typically (in the *Iliad,* and its Latin counterpart, the *Homerus latinus*) argues with Paris for having brought ruin on Troy.

examples feed into broader indications of a metaliterary framework within the poem, which is particularly articulated through episodes and descriptions relating to fated action. We may also count as part of this metaliterary awareness Dracontius' tendency to announce literary elements such as a work's genre or metre to his audience, as well as his acknowledgement at various points of the existence of a long literary tradition, and to subsequently inscribe himself therein. It is these two latter features which will be the focus of this following section, given their importance in terms of creating meaning in terms of a socio-political reading.

The most obvious instance of this acknowledgement of any kind of relationship with the literary tradition is produced at the very beginning of the epic. In place of the conventional invocation to one or more muses, as he does in *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.*, Dracontius looks to the towering literary figures of Homer and Virgil as his source of inspiration:

> *ergo nefas Paridis, quod raptor gessit adulter,*
> *ut monitus narrare queam, te grandis Homere,*
> *mollia blandifluo delimas verba palato;*
> *quisquis in Aonio descendit fonte poeta,*
> *te numen vult esse suum; nec dico Camenae*
> *te praesente "veni": sat erit mihi sensus Homeri,*
> . . . . . .
> *et qui Troianos invasit nocte poeta,*
> *armatos dum clausit equo, qui moenia Troiae*
> *perculit et Priamum Pyrrho feriente necavit:*
> *numina vestra vocans, quicquid contempsit uterque*
> *scribere Musagenes, hoc vilis colligo vates.*
> . . . . . .
> *Attica vox te, sancte, fovet, te lingua Latina*
> *commendat: vulgate, precor, quae causa nocentem*
> *fecit Alexandrum raptu spoliaret Amyclas.*
>
> *Romul.* 8. 11-16; 19-23; 28-30
>
> Therefore, so that I am able, being well-informed by you, great Homer, to recount Paris' evil deeds, which he committed as a kidnapper and an adulterer. You bring forth charming words from your smooth-flowing mouth:

> whichever poet descends into the the Aonian fountain wants you to be his god. I too, do not say 'Come' to the Muse, while you are present. The spirit of Homer will be enough for me… and [Virgil], the poet who by night led the invasion against the Trojans, when he enclosed armed men in the horse, [the poet] who struck down the walls of Troy, and killed Priam through Pyrrhus' blow. Calling upon your spirits, whatever each of you, born of the Muses, has refused to write about, this, I, as a worthless poet, shall collect… The Attic language favours you, holy one; and the Latin language commends you [Virgil]: make known, I beg you, what reason made Alexander evil, as to despoil Amyclae through this kidnapping.

Whereas the comparative invocations in *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.* are chiefly used to situate the work generically, the elevation of Homer and Virgil has more to do with an acknowledgement of style, and of providing the required *gravitas* of literary authority for Dracontius to produce his interpretation of the Trojan material. The invocation consists of three distinct facets: aspects of linguistic style (references specifically to *mollia…verba*, 13, and *sensus… Homeri*, 16), matters of what content may or may not be present (*quicquid contempsit uterque | scribere Musagenes, hoc vilis colligo vates,* 22-3), and finally an indication of them as possessors of some kind of hermetic knowledge (*vulgate*, 29). The pairing of Homer and Virgil is also representative of textbook-style learning, thereby betraying Dracontius' rhetorical background. Both appear in Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.85-86) as examples of the best authors in Greek and Latin epic poetry respectively.[71] Likewise, they also appear for

[71] *Idem nobis per Romanos quoque auctores ordo ducendus est. Itaque ut apud illos Homerus, sic apud nos Vergilius auspicatissimum dederit exordium, omnium eius generis poetarum Graecorum nostrorumque haud dubie proximus. Utar enim verbis isdem quae ex Afro Domitio iuvenis excepi, qui mihi interroganti quem Homero crederet maxime accedere "secundus" inquit "est Vergilius, propior tamen primo quam tertio". Et hercule ut illi naturae caelesti atque inmortali cesserimus, ita curae et diligentiae vel ideo in hoc plus est, quod ei fuit magis laborandum, et quantum eminentibus vincimur, fortasse aequalitate pensamus. Ceteri omnes longe sequentur* (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.85-86) 'We must follow the same order with the Roman authors too. And so, as Homer did among the Greeks, so here Vergil will afford us the most auspicious beginning. There is no doubt that, of all epic poets, Greek or Roman, he comes next after Homer. Let me quote the words I heard from Domitius Afer when I was a young man. I had asked who he thought came nearest to Homer; "Vergil is second," he replied, "but nearer to the first than to the third." Indeed, though we must yield to Homer's divine and immortal genius, there is more care and craftsmanship in Vergil, if only because he had to work harder at it; and maybe our poet's uniformly high level compensates for his inferiority to Homer's greatest passages. All the rest trail far behind' (trans. D.A. Russell).

the same reason in late antique grammar books, such as the 4th-century work of Diomedes Grammaticus.[72] This is particularly important for our understanding of his narrative strategy, given the information which *Romul.* 1 provides us. There, the *grammaticus* is presented as the guardian of letters, and it is he who stands in judgement of the work of the poet, who again presents himself as unworthy in the face of tradition (*nos licet nihil valemus*, *Romul.* 1, 'although we are worthless'). Dracontius' invocation of Virgil and Homer thus serves both to identify the genre of the poem as epic on account of the language used (*sensus Homeri*), just as if he were invoking the Muse of epic poetry, as well as to place him within a tradition of epic poets: by association with the foremost examples of epic craft, Dracontius forces his reader to take the work seriously, which is particularly important if he intends to use the poem as a means of discussing contemporary concerns.[73] As we see later on in *Romul.* 8 (Apollo's speech), the word of a god is naturally seen to carry more authority, regardless of the veracity or integrity of their pronouncements, and as a result, this invocation has much to do with establishing authority and legitimacy.

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[72] *Poematos genera sunt tria. aut enim activum est vel imitativum quod graeci dramaticon vel mimeticon, aut enarrativum vel enuntiativum, quod graeci exegeticon vel apangelticon dicunt, aut commune vel mixtum quod graeci* κοίνον *vel* μικτόν *appellant… κοίνον est vel commune in quo poeta ipse loquitur et personae loquentes introducuntur: ut est scripta Ilias et Odysea tota Homeri et Aeneis Vergilii et cetera his similia.* ("There are three kinds of poems. Either they are active, or imitative, which the Greeks call either dramatic or mimetic, or narrative or enunciative, which the Greeks call exegetic or reported, or they are shared or mixed, which the Greeks call *koinon* or *mikton*. *Koinon*, or shared, is the type in which the poet himself speaks and speaking characters are introduced, as all of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* and the *Aeneid* of Virgil, and others similar to these") Diom. *Gram.* 3 (Keil 1857: 482)

[73] Homer and Virgil appear as a pair again in Eugenius of Toledo's preface to the *Hexaëmeron*, his 7th-century recension of part of the first book of Dracontius' *Laudes Dei*, once again situating Dracontius within a lineage of epic poets, and, in so doing justifying Eugenius' actions in editing the text: *quod si Vergilius et vatum summus Homerus | censuram meruere novam post fata subire,| quam dat Aristarchus Tucca Variusque Probusque,| cur dedignetur, quod iussus principe magno | parvula praeparvi Draconti carmina libri | parvulus Eugenius nugarum mole piavi?* Eug. Tolet. *Hexaëm. praef.* 20-25, 'But if Virgil and Homer, the highest of poets, deserve to undergo a fresh edition after their deaths, which Aristarchus, Tucca, Varius, and Probus each give, why should [this work] be disdained, since I, insignificant Eugenius, was ordered by a great prince and have honoured the little poems of Dracontius' very small book with a sizable amount of nonsense'.

Despite this elaborate display of deference to these two figures, we have seen already that many of the digressions (especially those which are expanded into set pieces) do not belong to the elevated epic tradition of Homer nor Virgil, but rather to the prose traditions of Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia,* as well as the somewhat earlier *Ephemeris Belli Troiani* of Dictys Cretensis. In order to reconcile this apparent inconsistency, it is necessary to examine more closely another key part of the prologue.

Before invoking Homer and Virgil, Dracontius begins his programmatic preface by outlining the plot.[74] The poem, he tells us, will deal with Paris' journey (*iter),* the titular kidnapping (*raptus*) and the generally reckless deeds of his protagonist (*ausum*). All of this will be approached *meliore via*. The exact signification of this phrase has provided previous commentators with considerable trouble. Baehrens decided that it was necessary to emend the phrase to *meliore lyra* (which has since been rejected), apparently following the *iunctura* found in Nemesianus' *Cynegetica*.[75] Wolff (2002: 115) suggests that the phrase can be understood in two ways: as a metatextual reference to the conception of the poet's whole oeuvre (or perhaps just the *Romulea*), to indicate that this is his first short epic; or as a reference to the fact that the way he will tell the story will be better than the way in which Paris was able to carry Helen off to Troy, but has recently even dismissed this collocation as being overinterpreted (Wolff 2009). Others (e.g. Provana 1912: 43/65, 45/67; Romano 1959: 54) hold that the phrase refers, as many scholars like to believe, to Dracontius' strong moral message. But, as with the other poems under

[74] Cf. *Orest.* 13ff, *Romul.* 10. 16-28, *laud. dei* 1.1ff. Notably, *Hylas* does not have a fully-formed programmatic opening (though this function might be said to be taken up in part by *Romul.* 1).
[75] Nemes. *Cyn.* 63: *Mox vestros meliore lyra memorare triumphos | accingar…* (I shall soon prepare to recall your triumphs with a better lyre…)

consideration in this thesis, although the moral message does indeed play a part, its significance is subordinate to other, more pressing political and legal issues. In *Romul.* 8, there is some reflection on the (im)moral nature of Paris and Helen's relationship at the beginning, as well as a consideration of the supreme importance of the mother in influencing the nature of her offspring (*nihil <sine> matre pater*). This is not developed in any significant way later on in the poem, however. Likewise, although Dracontius does make reference to Paris and Helen's elopement specifically as adultery, this reference is given a more legalistic slant by referring to it as a crime (*Romul.* 8.655: *crimen adulterii talis vindicta sequatur*, 'such a retribution will follow the crime of adultery'), as opposed something more moralising like *peccatum.*[76] Dracontius uses *crimen, scelus,* and *peccatum* (and their related forms) in roughly equal measure across his work, but the use of the latter is by far more common in the Christian poetry, and occurs only 5 times between the *Romulea* and *Orest.* and in all cases are used in strongly legal/moral contexts. And though that this vice results in undesirable situations for more than just those involved, it is by no means the primary concern of the poem, even less so than in the *Orestis tragoedia*.

Rather, as a third option, we can interpret *meliore via* as indication of the poem's relation to the paraphrastic tradition. Similar expressions are found in poems such as the Virgilian *Cento* of Faltonia Betitia Proba, writing in the mid-5th century. While she acknowledges that she is writing a centonic piece, she also notes that she is transforming Virgil's words into something better, and specifically more worthy of or suited to her religious subject matter (*dignare Maronem* | *mutatum in melius*

[76] Cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v. *pecco* (10.1.892.74-10.1.893.2): [*peccatum est*] *id quod peccando fit vel efficitur. dicitur non modo de eis quae facta sunt (maxime in usu pagano….) sed etiam de eis quae consilio vel voluntate concepti sunt (saepe in usu christiano, rarius pagano).*

divino agnoscere sensu, *praef.* 3-4). The most obvious exponent of the paraphrastic tradition are the Biblical epics of Late Antiquity, and these might be a good parallel with what Dracontius is doing. In both cases, there is significant material which is derived from a prose text: in the former books of the Bible, and the latter, the prose treatments of Dictys and Dares. Taking into account the literary *gravitas* which Homer and Virgil provide our author, it could be understood that *meliore via* might be referring to a certain 'upgrading' of the seriousness of the prose texts, and that not only should Dracontius be taken seriously as an epic poet, but that the content which he chooses to include in his version should be taken equally seriously (or more seriously than the ostensibly romantic prose versions).[77] Indeed, the processes which we are told by the ancient rhetoricians are key to paraphrase – amplification, transposition, and abbreviation – are represented in Dracontius' text.[78] As we have seen, amplification and abbreviation are the two chief functions we are concerned with here, being represented by the mythographic changes already discussed. Transposition might also be said to be at play, if we take into account the structure which is adapted to the interplay of mirror scenes.

Having now looked at the ways in which Dracontius approaches his literary tradition overtly, I turn to more subtle references. The poet establishes a metaliterary framework for his epic in this way particularly through the operation of fate. Indeed, Dracontius' version of the story of the kidnapping of Helen is marked by an almost obsessive insistence upon the bleak future of destruction and war which awaits not only the Trojans (who Paris' actions affect most directly) but

[77] Beschorner (1992: 244-9) has characterised Dares' work as not so much a romance as potentially a parody of Homeric epic conventions. However the text may be read, both options still leave us with Dracontius taking the artistic high ground if we are to treat *Romul.* 8, at least in part, as a variety of verse paraphrase.
[78] Quint. *Inst.* 1.9.2. and 10.5.8. See further Roberts (1985: 108).

also the Greeks, who will still suffer unnecessary losses during the course of the war.[79] This is expressed in a number of ways, ranging from Dracontius' own interventions about the immutability of fate, to the melodramatic employment of various omens which accompanies Paris' return to Troy and arrival on Cyprus and, of course, prophetic speech.

A natural question which arises when considering the *De Raptu Helenae's* position within Dracontius' literary output as a whole, and particularly in relation to the interplay between our author's Christian and secular poetry, is whether fate as presented here corresponds in any way to a Christian view on predestination. At *civ. Dei* 5.1, Augustine defines the difference between fated and fortuitous events as lying in a fundamental concept of order.[80] Fated events follow a planned order beyond the remit of both God and man's will, that is, they are set in motion by other events, perhaps not unlike a story, in the narratological sense of the term (cf. for example Schmitz 2007: 43, and, in more detail, Bal 2009). Fortuitous events do not follow any order, arising spontaneously and for no justifiable reason. Further on in Book 5, Augustine elaborates on the idea of providence, and how this seems to be incompatible with the idea of either fate or fortune (see Evans 1982: 92).

While Dracontius does appear to subscribe to a view that fate is something far removed from the powers of either man or the gods, there appears to be no

[79] Besides the general populace (*damnatur gentes, damnatur Graecia sollers, Romul.* 8.45), Dracontius draws particular attention to Achilles (*Thessalus heros, Romul.* 8.47) and Ajax (*Telamone satus*, *Romul.* 8.48) who will die in the course of the war. But once again, these facts are situated outside of the narrative, and reflect the kind pool of knowledge which the poet expects his audience to draw upon when hearing the poem.

[80] Aug. *Civ. Dei* 5.1-2: *causa ergo magnitudinis imperii Romani nec fortuita est nec fatalis secundum eorum sententiam sive opinionem, qui ea dicunt esse fortuita, quae vel nullas causas habent vel non ex aliquo rationabili ordine venientes, et ea fatalia, quae praeter dei et hominum voluntatem cuiusdam ordinis necessitate contingunt. prorsus divina providentia regna constituuntur regna.*

acknowledgement of the existence of divine providence: the word *providentia* does not even occur in any of his works, and *prudentia* used in any sort of prophetic context is only represented in this extract from the *De Raptu Helenae*. In general, besides some instances of auto-citation, there tends to be very little interaction between Dracontius' Christian and secular poetry in the sense of the latter being viewed through a Christian lens. The latter seems to be approached very much on the principles of following the classical tradition, and it is this tradition which seems to spill over to the Christian poetry rather than the other way around: there is, for example, a section in the third book of the *Laudes Dei* (3.251ff) where he explicitly provides a list of an *exempla* drawn from Classical mythology and history to supplement the list of biblical *exempla* already given. Though he says that he does this is in order for supposed non-Christians to understand (*sed si forte legat haec carmina nostra profanus, laud. Dei* 3.251), it is clear that his intended audience is one and the same, and that any pretence of neatly divided categories of readership is merely a rhetorical device, particularly given the fact that there are biblical *exempla* quoted which are already interspersed with classical allusions, without the poet drawing attention to them in this way.[81]

Dracontius employs a definition of fate which implies a logical unfolding of events. So too, in line with the Augustinian definition, do we find the operation of fortuitous events in *Romul.* 8.The distinction between which parts of the story are fated and which are simply fortuitous can be determined through the vocabulary Dracontius employs. In the latter cases, *forte* or a related form, occurs in four places in Dracontius' poem. These are: the arrival of Paris in Troy for the first time (*forte dies*

[81] See, for example, the reference to the myth of Medea (…*humana tabe madescens | Taurica per Colchos crudelis virginis ara, laud. Dei* 3.220-221) amidst discussion of the virtues of the disciples.

sollemnis erat…, Romul. 8.78), Cassandra's plea for someone to take action against Paris (*si forte profanus | hunc feriet quicunque reum…, Romul.* 8.178-9), Paris' arrival on Cyprus (*Cypro forte dies natalis Dionae | illa luce fuit…, Romul.* 8.435-6), and the description of the augur (*…augur…| quem fors ad Cyprum dederat per festa dierum, Romul.* 8.459-460). These indications of fortuitous action fall into two broad groups: one in which there is description of setting, and the other pertaining to characters who either themselves attempt to change the future[82] or who are sought by others do so [83]

Conversely, the places in which we find fated action, indicated by references to *fata* or the like, are typically those crucial to the plot: for example, at the moment of the titular *raptus,* Helen decides that she is compelled to go with Paris by fate: *hoc nam fata iubent vel nos hoc Iuppiter urguet : | vivere me gemini iussit sub sorte mariti, Romul.* 8.535-6 'For fate orders this, and Jupiter pushes us to this: he orders me to live subject to the fate of two husbands'; likewise, Paris' return to Troy is also declared to be fated by Apollo (see below). From this it can once again be concluded that the concept of fate must be understood in terms of literary precedent: the poetic embellishment of setting is not key to the tradition, and thus considered to be superfluous in terms of the overarching concerns of the plot (i.e. Paris' return to Troy or arrival on Cyprus could have occurred at any other time, but are seemingly chosen for aesthetic reasons, such as, in the latter case, in order for the augur to be present, or to further emphasise the connection to Venus). This is thus made to reflect an act of fortune. The 'fixed' parts of the tradition are, on the other hand, necessary both to the overall plot, as well as for the kind of interaction with

[82] Cassandra entreats the populace to kill Paris.
[83] Paris asks the augur to prevent the evil which the birds predict.

contemporary events which Dracontius needs to engage in, and are thus seen as 'fated'. Fate, then, in *Romul.* 8 takes on a rather more metaliterary aspect, insofar as fate might be considered, as in Augustine's definition, as something completely outside the world of human or divine concern.[84]

In his book, *Narrative and Structure: Exploratory Essays,* Holloway (1979: 200) declares that "narrative is set in motion not by the mere representation of events, but on the basis of suppositions generated by those events". This is especially true of prophetic speech, and the outcome — the end — of a story, even if known, is subject to the characters within that story being adept (or not) at 'reading' and making sense of this information (see here also especially Jefferson 1983: 206). This ending is particularly important to the construction of epic poetry, which, as commentators such as David Quint (1993) have identified, is reliant upon such teleology as the very reason for the story's existence (e.g. Aeneas must end up in Italy against all costs). Any attempts thus to divert from the end goal, or prevent it from coming to pass, are to be seen as threatening to the integrity of the protagonists (Quint 1993: 45 and *passim*). With the preponderance of speeches in the *De Raptu Helenae*, we are well-placed to see how this operates.

Once Paris arrives in Troy, interrupting a religious festival, he states his case and presents a rattle which belonged to him as a child as proof of his parentage. Both Helenus and Cassandra are then given the opportunity by Dracontius to provide reasons why Paris should not be allowed to stay in Troy. Together with Apollo's

[84] This certainly is expressed in Dracontius' resignation to the unstoppable machine of fate: *compellunt audere virum fata, impia fata, | quae flecti quandoque negant, quibus obvia nunquam | res quaecunque venit, quis semita nulla tenetur | obvia dum veniunt, quibus omnia clausa patescunt*. (*Romul.* 8.57-60).

speech, this exchange is constructed along rhetorical lines such that it resembles – superficially – a *suasoria*.[85] Both the speeches of Helenus and Cassandra cover roughly the same ground: Paris will bring about the destruction of Troy, they merely vary in their degree of specificity. Helenus treats matters in a rather broad way, noting only the arrival of the Greeks in a thousand ships (*litora nostra petent Danai cum mille carinis*, *Romul.* 8.126), and the deaths of Hector and Troilus (*iam cernimus Hectora tractum,| Troile, iam per bella furis, iam sterneris audax | ante annos, animose puer, virtute protervus, Romul.* 8. 128-130). Perhaps ironically, given her own propensity not to be believed, Cassandra provides a much longer, and more detailed catalogue of evils, all of which are related to the Trojan royal family: the purchase of Hector's body, itself perhaps looking forward — or backward, given the uncertainty of chronology within the *Romulea*[86] — to *Romul.* 9, Dracontius' own *suasoria* on the subject, her own rape by Ajax, the death of Astyanax, and the death of Priam. In both cases, their attempts at convincing their audience are thwarted by their acknowledged powerlessness to change the course of things.

Of the three speeches made on Paris' return to Troy, Apollo's is the most revealing of Dracontius' own approach to his source material and its treatment in the production of his own version. Forming the third side of the rhetorical triangle,

[85] There is precedent for these three speeches at the end of the first book of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* (1.605-695) where three characters (Arruns, Figulus, and a Roman matron) each prophesy the future. However, the manners of their prediction are not the same (i.e. they are not all, *stricto sensu,* prophets). Arruns obtains his prediction through haruspicy, Figulus through astrology. Only the matron is inspired by Phoebus, and can be said to be truly prophetic in the same way as Helenus, Cassandra, and Apollo. Similarly, the predictions given in Lucan happen independently of each other, and do not participate in a cumulative rhetorical whole, as do the three speeches in *Romul.* 8.

[86] Particularly, the order of *Romul.* 6 and 7 are chronologically incorrect, the former being written after Dracontius had been released from prison, and the latter during imprisonment: see Bouquet & Wolff (2002: 46) and also Kaufmann (2006: 20-21). The disregard for chronology in *N* may well extend to the other poems too. There is equally the possibility that this was in fact the order they were placed in by the poet himself, in which case a comparable situation are the panegyrics of Sidonius Apollinaris, which were published in reverse order of their performance dates..

Apollo's speech serves to counter the objections of Cassandra and Helenus, in much the same way as a *suasoria* or *controversia* would offer an alternative perspective through an intervening *quaestio*. As this is a speech from the god of prophecy himself, Priam heeds Apollo's pronouncements without a second thought. Apollo's argumentation, however, is not wholly honest. He sooths the Trojan royal family by assuring them that Paris must remain in order that he can put an end to Achilles (*magnanimum Aeacidem solus prosternet Achillem, Romul.* 8.192), and appeals to Priam by assuring them that the Trojans themselves will go on to have a glorious future:

> *Troianis dabitur totus possessio mundus,*
> *tempore nec parvo Troum regnabit origo.*
> *fata manent, conscripta semel sunt verba Tonantis,*
> *'imperium sine fine' dabit. cohibete furorem.*
> *Romul.* 8.196-199
> All the world shall be given as a possession to the Trojans, nor for a short time shall the lineage of the Trojans rule. Fate remains, and the words of Jupiter have been written down once and for all, he shall give 'an empire without end'. Restrain your madness.

As the audience well knows — for Dracontius has made this clear from the very beginning — the city of Troy is going to be destroyed. Apollo's prophecy is thus patently false for the immediate situation. The only way in which Apollo's statement is truthful is if the audience has full knowledge of the rest of the story, and particularly the aftermath of the Trojans themselves. Given the quote '*imperium sine fine*' at line 199, the aftermath the god thinks of is specifically that of Virgil's *Aeneid*. His function in the story, therefore, is to move the story along, and is hence of a rather more metaliterary nature.

The first overt instance of a metaliterary connection in this speech is made clear at *Romul.* 8. 190-1: *pellere pastorem patriis de sedibus* ***unquam*** | *fata vetant, quae*

magna parant… 'Fate, which prepares great things [for him], forbids that Paris should **ever** be rejected from his father's kingdom'. Apollo's speech exhibits features which effectively invert the tropes of the invocation: it is not just any prophetic character uttering these words, but the god Apollo, possessed of the future knowledge of the Trojan people as expressed through the prism of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Whereas in the invocation, Dracontius was elevating those with literary knowledge to the status of gods in order that he might be legitimated in his endeavours, here, the god within the story is provided with the certainties of the poet's literary reality, to sanction the story proceeding according to tradition. As such, Apollo's speech is not only exhibiting an intertextual moment through the quote from the *Aeneid* at *Romul.* 8.199, but is also more broadly metaliterary. This is made clear already at *Romul.* 8. 190-1 with the emphasis on *unquam*: there is no other way but for this to happen, with the context of implying that this is so because literary tradition dictates it. At *Romul.* 8.198 *conscripta* too takes on a metaliterary flavour, implying not only that once it has been uttered it cannot be changed, but the very act of writing down might be construed as consigning it to the literary canon, by means of Virgil's poem. The prophet thus doubles as a kind of 'reader', rather than simply transmitting the will of the gods, in the same way as Seneca's Medea is aware of her own literary context when she leaves Corinth for Athens at the end of the eponymous tragedy.[87] Fate has thus here become a shorthand for the literary tradition, something we see employed again much later in the poem at the moment of the actual kidnapping. For in Dracontius' version, it is Helen who decides that she is compelled by fate to leave, rather than Paris forcibly removing her.

[87] Sen. *Med.* 1022, 1025-27: ***sic fugere soleo****. patuit in caelum via:…|… ego inter auras aliti curru vehar.* | *per alta spatia sublime aetheris,* | *testare nullos esse, qua veheris, deos.* See also the discussion of Medea's acknowledgement of the significance of her own name (i.e. *Medea* | *fiam,* Sen. *Med.* 171 versus *Medea nunc sum,* Sen. *Med.* 910) and what that might mean in terms of understanding her literary history in Schiesaro (2003: 211-214).

Omens too, where present, are affected by this kind of reading/misreading as indicated by Jefferson (1983) . These are especially associated with Paris, and occur at two points: one at the beginning when Paris returns to Troy for the first time, and again when Paris is washed up on Cyprus. These two moments are treated differently: Paris' arrival in Troy is heralded by the kinds of omens which directly concern the city itself: towers collapse, statues fall, rivers run red as if with blood. The second instance is entirely of the natural world, being an extended scene of augury, interpreted by an augur who conveniently happens to be in Cyprus for Venus' birthday celebrations at the time. What is, however, significant about these omens is the way in which they play into Dracontius' overall programme regarding fate and how they may be reconciled with the aesthetics of Dracontian epic more general. In the first instance, these omens are not seen by any of the characters, and as a result, they cannot be acted upon, cannot be 'read' and be '(mis)interpreted' by any of the actors which are directly affected.[88] For example, nobody, least of all Paris, is around to take note of the litany of omens when Paris arrives in Troy. Likewise, the birds flying overhead are not seen by Paris nor indeed anyone else of consequence (at least not insofar as we are aware, given the presence of a lacuna between the arrival of the augur and the his speech of interpretation). And while Paris does acknowledge the augury in a prayer of thanks to Venus, it is only a reaction to the speech rather than any self-motivated understanding of visual cues.

This lack of response to the visual is quite marked in this poem - in fact visual descriptions are limited in Dracontius' secular epics in general. In earlier epic,

[88] Contrast, for example, Aeneas' recognition and discussion of omens at *Aen.* 3.22-68.

characters do interact with visual art or anything seen with the eyes and action follows from interpretation of these visual descriptions. For example, Aeneas examines the panel in the temple of Juno in Book 1 of the *Aeneid* and even Book 3 of Statius' *Thebaid,* where the augur Amphiaraüs takes note of the patterns of the birds, but refuses to make known the interpretation, later leading to angry citizens demanding he give them the information. Conversely, any actions which are fate-driven are instigated by *verbal* means alone. And these actions are typically those taken to attempt to avoid such fates. Thus, Priam takes action based on Apollo's assurance that all will be well, rather than Helenus, or Cassandra's speech. Paris acts on the information provided by the augur to ask him to intercede and overturn the omens of promised destruction announced by the birds of Mars and Pluto. And in all instances, this is to no avail, either immediately, or in light of the long-term destruction which awaits Troy.

We have thus seen how Dracontius articulates his relationship to the literary tradition both in an overt manner, by invoking Homer and Virgil as the 'gods' of epic poetry, and more subtly, by using fate as a metaphor for the literary tradition more broadly. By signposting these relationships clearly, it will be more significant when Dracontius chooses to subvert these relationships and read his literary tradition in a more critical way. Also, by referring to fate and the literary tradition as something which is unmoving, immutable, Dracontius is also setting up the aspect of inevitability in his own world if one were to read it as a political allegory. Finally, Dracontius establishes through these links his own authority as a commentator by including himself within the epic tradition of Homer and Virgil and thus assuming the poetic legitimacy which he sees them as providing.

While Dracontius' employment of mythographic changes and subsequently intertextual interactions show him to be adept at manipulating text and source material, part of the rhetor's training also involved being aware of genre and style. As we shall see in the next section, this is another level on which our poet is able to manipulate meaning and shape his audience's perception of his subject matter.

GENRE AND FORM

The rhetorical milieu also provided Dracontius with ample knowledge of literary genres and forms. Although the texts under consideration in this thesis are all epics, being written in hexameter and displaying many of the formal features of the genre — such as storm scenes, invocations, and omens — our poet on more than one occasion overtly makes reference to other genres having some bearing on his approach in the prefatory material. On the one hand, this is another display of Dracontius' wide-ranging erudition, an affirmation of his skills as an artist to combine disparate material into a coherent and effective new whole. On the other, we may read Dracontius' employment of genre and form within the epics as a means of encoding how he intends the pieces to be understood. In this section, therefore, I will again look at some case studies of how generic issues are highlighted in the poems, in order to show that such references serve to underline the axiom that Latin epic poetry, and particularly Dracontian short epic, is fundamentally a political genre. As I have noted in the introduction, social and political commentary in ancient literature was recognised, even in ancient times, as being more common in

certain literary forms.[89] Of these, it is chiefly the tragic and rhetorical genres which are most often referenced, likely due to the public nature of their performances.

Genre manifests in two distinct yet connected ways in Dracontius. The first is what might be termed 'source genre' and the second 'immediate genre'. The latter refers to the outward appearance of the text, in other words, its status as epic, which is chiefly achieved by means such as metre, introductory *cano*-formulae, and other epic machinery. The former, with which this section concerns itself, is apparent from references to other genres and how they impact the poem at hand. What occurs, then, is a form of generic enrichment[90] which allows the author to simultaneously acknowledge his sources, but also, given its location and prominence in proemial material, to suggest that this is a lens through which the content can be read. This is most clearly seen in the two poems with a theatrical heritage, *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.*

In the prologue of *Romul.* 10, Dracontius outlines his material while at the same time referring to the Muses of Pantomime, Tragedy, and Epic.

> *nos illa canemus*
> *quae solet in lepido Polyhymnia docta theatro*
> *muta loqui . . .*
> . . . . . .
> *vel quod grande boans longis sublata cothurnis*
> *pallida Melpomene, tragicis cum surgit iambis,*
> . . . . . .
> *te modo, Calliope, poscunt optantque sorores:*
> *dulcior ut venias (non te decet ire rogatam)*
> *ad sua castra petunt. . .*
>
> *Romul.* 10.16-18, 20-21, 26-28
>
> I shall sing of those things which learned Polyhymnia is accustomed to speak silently in her charming theatre… and pale-faced Melpomene, elevated with

[89] Cf. Introduction, page 3.
[90] For this term, see now Harrison (2007: 1).

> high buskins, booming grandly when she crescendos in tragic iambs… Your sisters now demand and wish for you, Calliope: they ask you, as the sweeter one, to come to their camp (not that it befits you to go having been summoned).

Calliope is to go to the camp of Melpomene and Polyhymnia (underlining pantomime as an equally important medium of transmitting mythological content) as opposed to Melpomene leaving her domain as in *Orest*.[91] The hierarchy and character of genres is nevertheless also respected: Polyhymnia's domain, while learned (*Polyhymnia docta*) is nevertheless also quaint, charming (*lepido… theatro*).[92] Melpomene's style is grand, elevated, and rousing (*quod grande… longis sublata cothurnis; tragicis cum surgit iambis*), but the two sisters are still evidently seen as somewhat inferior, given that it does not befit Calliope to go there when bidden (*non te decet ire rogatam*). By highlighting the two theatrical genres and thus signposting his source material, but at the same time noting that his version will be

[91] The trinity of Melpomene, Polyhymnia, and Calliope occurs also in Martial 4.31.7-8: *quod nec Melpomene, quod nec Polyhymnia possit | nec pia cum Phoebo dicere Calliope,* 'Which neither Melpomene, nor Polyhymnia, nor dutiful Calliope with Phoebus would be able to say'. Likewise, the opposition of Melpomene and Calliope recurs in the *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* of Martianus Capella: *nec melicum reticens modulatur tibia carmen | nec dulcis temptat psallere Melpomene . . . si erudita placent certe sponsalia divi | saltem docta ferat carmina Calliope; | nam simul oblectans vocis modulamine mentes | taedia dulcisonis auferet illa tonis*, 9.888.9-10; 19-22, 'The silent flute does not play a melodious song, nor does sweet Melpomene try to sing . . . if indeed an erudite wedding of a god should be pleasing, Calliope will certainly bring learned songs; for at the same time delighting minds with a melody, she takes away the tedium with sweet sounding tones'.

[92] The charm of pantomime is that it strives for verisimilitude and truth, a quality which for some ancient commentators elevated it above other genres. For example, in comparing its merits to those of tragedy, Lucian of Samosata declares that the 'grand' conventions of performing tragedy only add to its ridiculousness: Luc. *Salt.* 27: ὡς εἰδεχθὲς ἅμα καὶ φοβερὸν θέαμα εἰς μῆκος ἄρρυθμον ἠσκημένος ἄνθρωπος, ἐμβάταις ὑψηλοῖς ἐποχούμενος, πρόσωπον ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἀνατεινόμενον ἐπικείμενος καὶ στόμα κεχηνὸς πάμμεγα ὡς καταπιόμενος τοὺς θεατάς… εἶτ᾽ ἔνδοθεν αὐτὸς κεκραγώς, ἑαυτὸν ἀνακλῶν καὶ κατακλῶν, ἐνίοτε καὶ περιᾴδων τὰ ἰαμβεῖα καί, τὸ δὴ αἴσχιστον, μελῳδῶν τὰς συμφοράς…, "What a repulsive and at the same time frightful spectacle is a man tricked out to disproportionate stature, mounted upon high clogs, wearing a mask that reaches up above his head, with a mouth that is set in a vast yawn as if he meant to swallow up the spectators! […] Then too, inside all this, you have the man himself bawling out, bending forward and backward, sometimes actually singing his lines, and (what is surely the height of unseemliness) melodising his calamities…. (trans. A.M. Harmon)". The sentiment is shared in our period, too, as we see in the description of a *pantomimus* at *Anth. Lat.* 111.7-10R(100.7-10SB): *pugnat, ludit, amat, bacchatur, vertitur, adstat; | inlustrat verum, cuncta decore replet. | tot linguae quot membra viro. mirabile ars est | quae facit articulos ore silente loqui,* "He fights, he plays, he loves, he is inspired with madness, he turns, he stands still; he depicts the truth, and fills everything with dignity. This man [has] as many tongues as [he has] limbs. It is a marvellous art indeed which makes limbs speak while the mouth remains silent".

different by casting it in epic form, Dracontius constructs a space in which he has the freedom to tinker with the basic material for rhetorical ends. This in essence acts to reassure his readers: this material is familiar ground, and thus anything which deviates from it is to be taken seriously. From a rhetorical point of view, the combination of material from two different genres, both with differing literary qualities as expressed by the contrasting epithets, speaks to paraphrastic practices. Similarly, "upgrading" the material by turning it into an epic, not unlike the *meliore via* which our poet used in *Romul.* 8, also points to Dracontius' confidence in his artistic abilities and that the material has been put to a greater purpose.

In *Orest.* the link between genres is even more pronounced. Even though it is acknowledged throughout the secondary literature as an epyllion, a major concern of the secondary literature surrounding Dracontius' treatment of the Orestes story has been the (superficial) nature and 'quality' of its genre.[93] This stems from Dracontius' overt recognition of the importance of tragedy to his narrative within the text itself, and equally as much from the fact that the mediaeval and humanist copyists provide the poem with conflicting titles in their respective manuscripts. In other words, somebody at some point between the time when they were composed and the modern era must have conceived of these poems as a 'tragedy' of sorts. In *B* we find *Orestis tragoedia,* which is by and large the most commonly used title today,[94] while in *A*, the title is *Horestis fabula ab enoch asculano reperto*, a reference to the manuscript's compiler, Enoch d'Ascoli (c.1400-c. 1457) (cf. Bouquet & Wolff 2002: 71). In part, the copyist (of *B*) was reacting in the same way we might react

[93] See now particularly Wasyl (2011: 91-97); Stoehr-Monjou (2009); Bright (1987); Schetter (1985: 51); Aricò (1977-78: 411; 417-18); Hofmann (1988: 126 n. 82). All are more or less concerned with proving that the poem is definitively *not* a tragedy.
[94] Though some, such as Stoehr-Monjou (2009) and Hofmann (1988) have advocated eschewing *tragoedia* from the title.

upon a first reading of this text, for the subject matter invites us to think immediately of the Aeschylean *Oresteia* cycle. Indeed, the content of the poem itself, containing material which corresponds to the entirety of the Aeschylean trilogy, but within the space of under 1000 lines, makes this a tempting connection to make. Such a condensation, or even paraphrase, of more voluminous and 'popular' material could even lead the poem to be as a Late Antique interpretation of tragedy. While this is still possible in general terms, it is, however more likely that the *Oresteia* was a broad formal model, familiar from translations and summaries, rather than a textual model for Dracontius.[95] Indeed, whether Dracontius knew any Greek at all is another matter of contention, though perhaps more relevant is the possibility of him knowing Greek and yet deliberately not making use of Greek models.[96]

In many senses the invocation in the *Orestis tragoedia* is a reversal of what happens in *Romul.* 10. Again, Dracontius begins his poem using a typically epic *cano*-formula — *gaudia maesta canam detestandosque triumphos, Orest.* 1, 'I shall sing of gloomy joy, and a triumph which should be detested' — before continuing to summarise the plot, as is the habit of epic.[97] Contrary to what might be expected if the *Oresteia* was a model or a text from which our poet was paraphrasing, Dracontius never gives any indication throughout this summary of a tripartite structure which would point to that series of plays in particular as a narrative model.[98] No tragic poets mentioned in the same way as Homer and Virgil are in *Romul.* 8, nor indeed any reference to mode of performance. There is but one comment reserved until the end of the poem

[95] See now Aricò (1977-78: 468-9) and Stoehr-Monjou (2009: 4 n. 32).
[96] Cf. Introduction, page 26.
[97] Cf. Bal 2009: 102-103 on summary.
[98] I.e. their order is not the same as in the familiar dramatic treatments, apart from the second Tauris-episode taking place at the end of the list.

which references a visual representation.[99] Rather, Dracontius pointedly articulates a sense of generic 'hybridity' in at *Orest.* 13-16:

> *te rogo, Melpomene, tragicis descende cothurnis*
> *et pede dactylico resonante quiescat iambus :*
> *da valeam memorare nefas laudabile nati*
> *et purgare foro quem <damnavere sorores>*
> I ask you, Melpomene, come down off your tragic buskins and let the iamb be silent while the dactylic foot resounds: give me strength to call to memory the praiseworthy crime of the son, and to exculpate in court the man whom the sisters condemned.

These lines are of particular significance on a number of points. Firstly, the poet calls Melpomene by name. This is not the generic muse of Homer or other epic poetry, but specifically situates Dracontius' poem within the realm of the tragic.[100] Secondly, he gives her the order *descende cothurnis*.[101] The ablative plural here can be translated in two ways: 'come down *from* your buskins' or 'come down *in* your buskins'. [102] While both translations ultimately point in the same direction, insofar as the overall flavour of the poem is a mixture of tragedy and epic, it is their respective emphases which are important to note here. If we are to translate it in the first manner, then the emphasis is laid on the fact that she is being commanded

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[99] Drac. *Orest.* 972: *ecce Mycenaea triplex iam scaena…* ('Behold now the triple Mycenean tableau…')

[100] The domains of the Muses appear to have been crystallised by the time of Ovid (see Barchiesi 1992: 10-11). In earlier Latin literature, their specialism does not seem to have been much of an issue (cf. for example Virgil calling upon Erato to help with relating genealogy and history of the Latin people in *Aen.* 8). Certainly in Late Antiquity (and in Dracontius) this kind of information is representative of an encyclopaedic mode. The *Anthologia Latina*, for example, contains three mnemonic poems on the Muses, where we find Melpomene as linked only to tragic poetry: *Melpomene reboans tragicis fervescit iambis,* 'Melpomene booms and becomes fervent with tragic iambs', *Anth. Lat.* 76.4 Shackleton-Bailey/88.4 Riese. ; *Melpomene tragico proclamat maesta boatu*, 'Melpomene proclaims sad things with tragic declamation', *Anth. Lat.* 664.4; *Tertia Melpomene tragicos fert flendo boatus*, 'Thirdly, Melpomene brings forth tragic declamations while weeping'*, Anth. Lat.* 664a.

[101] The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (vol. IV, p. 1086, line 73-p. 1088 line 56) indicates that *cothurni* are commonly used to represent tragedy by metonymy. Also, quite frequently the word is found paired with *socci*, their comic counterpart, to represent shifts from low to high register (or *vice versa*). Cf. Mart. 8.3.13, Quint. *Inst.* 10.2.22, Apul. *Met.* 10.2, Ter. Maur. 2205. The description of Melpomene in relation to *cothurni* occurs only in Dracontius.

[102] The latter translation following the model of Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.1 '*descende caelo…*', which is also directed to a Muse (Calliope in this case).

to come *down*. While ostensibly an indication of the height of the buskins, and that it could be an instruction to metaphorically 'get off her high horse', there is also the added possible implication of the epic genre being less elevated a medium for the purposes of this story. Secondly, this implies the action of removing her from the stage now that she is no longer elevated on her iconic footwear, and thus into a more private sphere, which could give some insight as to the nature of the poem's performance situation and audience, possibly in the context of recitation and/or a version of closet 'drama' (see Kelly 1979: n. 22; 43).[103] The only evidence we have of any performance context for Dracontius' works is given in the subscription to *Romul.* 5, which describes a large room in the Gargilian Baths, [104] which would suggest that there was still a public audience for these kinds of works. The designation of 'public' (i.e. the world of the theatre and amphitheatre) and 'private' (e.g. a large meeting room in the baths) is merely one of degree and context.

As such, both could be said to be an epic in tragic *mode*, which is another way of saying that the base genre of epic has been enriched by features of tragedy (cf. Harrison 2007). Here enrichment is described as a way in which "generically identifiable texts gain literary depth and texture by confrontation with and inclusion

[103] The exact nature of theatrical productions in Late Antiquity is not entirely clear. There certainly does seem to have been a continuing tradition of pantomime, and though the details of their production can vary greatly, they generally seem to suggest a more private setting than a theatre (See particularly Hall (2010a: 3) on the scope and variation of pantomimic drama. Hall (2010b) also suggests the possibility of *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, an anonymous late-Antique work of similar proportions to Dracontius' *Romul.* 2, but also featuring long speeches in the style of drama, could be a pantomime libretto). The only surviving text of Late Antiquity which can be confidently called theatrical, the anonymous rhythmic prose comedy *Querolus,* also suggests through its prologue that theatrical activity in private, possibly courtly settings is not to be dismissed as a possibility. The work is dedicated to a certain Rutilius, who appears to have been some kind of aristocrat and the author mentions that the play was produced in a space especially provided by this patron. Furthermore, the purpose of the play is also (albeit cryptically) mentioned: *Quer.* 2: "*nos fabellis atque mensis hunc libellum scripsimus,* we have written this little work for idle tales and for banquets".

[104] See further Introduction, page 23.

of elements from texts which belong to other genres" (Harrison 2007: 1). However, unlike the example given there of Virgil's *Aeneid* being enriched by such diverse genres as tragedy, pastoral, and elegy at various points during the epic (and for limited duration), what seems to be happening here is something more long-term and sustained for the entire duration of the epic. Dracontius' application of this tragic mode is also different to how the idea of tragedy might have been employed in earlier epic poetry, in particular the visual aspect. For example, even in stories whose plots are not drawn from the theatrical world, Curley (2013: 49-51) sets out how Ovid is acutely concerned with representation (in its most literal sense) and with textualising the experience of watching tragedy, a concern most often signalled through the various applications of verbs such as *video* and its synonyms. By contrast, this preoccupation is lacking in Dracontius. In fact, Dracontius' usage of *video* in *Orest.* appears to be much more closely linked to recognition than representation.

Given this tragic mode invites us to recall certain features and functions thereof from that genre, we should also consider here the role of the chorus. Unlike the superficial features such as length and dialogue, the chorus, or parts which resemble the chorus, allow us to reflect upon the action of the poem from a standpoint removed from the action.[105] As such, sentiment expressed in these sections is fertile ground for an understanding of socio-political comment. *Orest.* is the only poem, perhaps apart from *Romul.* 8, where the populace and the effects of the action upon them are given any serious airing. *Orest.* is also notable for its use of interventions by the poet to comment on the action. To be sure, this is an ancient

[105] See for example Conte (1999: 34-35) and, specific to Seneca, Davies (1993).

practice which we find in Virgil, but is a rare occurrence in the Dracontian corpus. In both cases, these interventions can be considered to act as a kind of chorus, by which Dracontius reflects on the unjust nature of Agamemnon's death. The poet elaborates on this addition of chorus-like reflection by having, in a more traditionally tragic fashion, the people of Mycenae comment inwardly on the murder (*haec tacito sub corde premunt de principe cives; | murmure sollecito flentes haec dicta loquuntur,* Drac. *Orest.* 340-1, 'The citizens suppressed these things quietly in their hearts about the prince; though with an anxious murmur they were weeping, they spoke these things). In practice this is similar to the Senecan chorus, which does not interact directly with the action of the play, but rather reflects on the general thematic concerns brought up in the preceding act.

In keeping with the overall rhetorical flavour of the *Romulea* as a collection, it is also useful to think of the pieces contained therein as an exercise in style, particularly in relation to the way genre is applied to them. In the collection as a whole there are representatives of overtly rhetorical pieces (*suasoria, controversia, ethopoeia*) as well as epithalamium and laudatory verse in the form of the two prefaces. The four epic texts themselves show further diversity of treatment. In *Romul.* 8, for example, there is an explicit reference to the *sensus Homeri* (Drac. *Romul.* 8.16) within the poet's opening invocation. Although the material of the poem is connected to the *Iliad,* and the invocation is made to both Homer and Virgil, the material itself is largely taken from parallel traditions, as we have noted in the earlier parts of this chapter. Taken together with our poet's promise to approach his subject matter *meliore via* (Drac. *Romul.* 8.3), the insistence on the approbation of the two towering figures of Greek and Roman epic poetry respectively suggests that,

on a stylistic level in the first instance, *Romul.* 8 is to be taken as a Dracontian version of heroic epic. *Romul.* 2, on the contrary, aims more at rivalling Ovidian epic, with its intertextual agendas taking on this role. *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.* both open in typically epic fashion with *cano*-formulae, but the insistence on the tragic parentage of these works suggest that these two should be considered as epic recastings of these genres. Further, this is sustained throughout the pieces with features such as the allegorical figures in *Romul.* 10 suggesting pantomime, and extended dialogue with chorus-like interventions from the populace suggesting tragedy in *Orest.*

One might ask at this point why this should particularly be done through the medium of epic poetry. In answer to this, we should recall the context of the collection. I have already suggested on the basis of the subscription to *Romul.* 5 that these poems could well have formed part of a rhetorical and literary coterie which could have encompassed those in the legal profession, given that the skills needed by the latter were wholly based on the former. As has also been pointed out several times in the prooemial material of these epics, Dracontius clearly understands the hierarchy of genres. Epic, of course, sits at its apex. This is a display not only of his abilities to understand and navigate the requirements of disparate genres, but also that he can do so while at the same time displaying his prowess at the highest level of literary-rhetorical craft. Finally, particularly in the case of *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.,* the dramatic genres are naturally intended for more than one person to perform. Epic, then, serves as a convenient compromise by being performable by a single person, with all the dramatic capabilities of the former and the added attraction of the highest rhetorical form.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

Structural considerations have been an important part of the epic programme since the earliest exponents of the genre. It is well known, for example, that the first half of Virgil's twelve books of the *Aeneid* is considered to be "Odyssean" and the second half "Iliadic" and that there are corresponding, complementary, or inverted episodes in each half.[106] Later authors, such as Statius and Lucan, play with this concept by also having twelve books and similarly having recurring or complementary episodes. Moreover, this is not restricted to epic alone. This practice is common in Greek tragedy (cf. Taplin 2003: 91-103). In Senecan tragedy, while there is parallelism (see Schiesaro 2003: 178ff) the focus is more on circularity, and the unending cycle of evil.[107] As we have just seen, Dracontius is keenly aware of generic categories and what each comprises. It is thus logical that structural features should be taken into consideration too. In Dracontius' case, though these are short-format epics, it is nevertheless apparent that he has given the same consideration to structure through use of mirror scenes, parallelism and other referential devices. The effect of this arrangement is such that our poet is not only able to use it as an ordering device, highlighting key themes and concepts, but also reveals that these works show a clear sense of pre-planning and considered thought. Thus, in framing

[106] Cf. *inter alia* Gransden & Harrison (2004: 26-33, 43); Horsfall (1995: 135-7) acknowledges this is a feature, but is unsure as to its significance as a critical device. See also comments of Hardie (1993: 14-15) on repetition in epic.

[107] For example: Cassandra announces the (literary) continuation of the tragedy in *Ag.* 1012: "*CL. Furiosa, morere. CA. Veniet et vobis furor.*" ; Medea's acknowledgment of past and future in *Med.* 170 : « *NUT. Medea – ME. Fiam.*" to be completed at *Med.* 910: "*Medea nunc sum…*", and also her recognition of her own literary cycle at *Med.* 1022: "*sic fugere soleo*" (more generally see e.g. Schiesaro 2003: 18; 31; 115-117). A key feature of revenge tragedy is the idea of those who have been wronged outdoing in turn the evils of those who have wronged them (cf. in general terms Kerrigan 1997: 5). While Dracontius shares some formal features with Seneca, *Orest.* does not follow the same sense of a revenge tragedy. In fact, there is a concerted effort to put an end to the events, both in the judicial sense, where Orestes is absolved of his crimes and returns to a presumably brighter future in Mycenae with his friend and siblings, and in the poet's own request to the gods to put an end to the suffering of the Greeks.

the myth not only as a retelling, but also as a system of oppositions through the use of the mirror scenes, almost in the manner of the kinds of moral dilemmas favoured in the rhetorical exercises of the time, Dracontius himself passes judgement on the characters within the story. I consider now some case studies of how this phenomenon works in the epics under discussion.

It is worth looking at the way in which the material is organised. In this way, he organises the narrative in such a way as to highlight key themes and concerns which we can then follow in our examination of possible socio-political correspondences. More often than not, these differ from the thematic concerns which the poet announces in his prologues. The Dracontian retellings of standard myths typically rely heavily on a system of inversion and contrast operating both intratextually, within the poem itself, and intertextually, with pre-existing versions of this and other myths. The former is achieved largely by establishing a parallelistic structure, which doubles as a thematic organising principle, highlighting the major philosophical and political points under discussion.

The main body of *Romul.* 8 can be divided into five parts, bookended by a prologue and epilogue. In terms of the major episodes which constitute these parts, we begin with Paris and his return to Troy after the Judgement of the Apple, proceed through the Embassy to Salamis, the storm at sea, Paris washing up on Cyprus, and finally have Paris returning to Troy again, as it was in the beginning. This circular construction can in fact be seen, as in the other epics, to operate in a rather more chiastic structure. A schematic representation of the poem with this in mind follows here:

A	**B**		**B'**	**A'**
[1-213] Prologue, Paris (believed dead) returns to Troy	[214-384] Embassy to Salamis	[385-434] Storm (pivot)	[435-585] Paris in Cyprus	[586-655] Paris (believed dead) returns to Troy, Epilogue

As we are told in the very first lines of the poem, *Troiani praedonis iter raptumque Lacaenae | et pastorale celerati pectoris ausum | aggrediar…* (*Romul.* 8.1-3), Paris forms the primary focus of this text, a feature which is expressed within the structure by having two comparative events involving Paris bookend the poem. We begin with Paris' arrival in Troy, and end with his return to Troy, both under condition which presume his death. In the first, he is still believed to be dead from his exposure as a child. In the second, he is believed to be drowned in the storm (so much so that Priam plunges the whole city into mourning and is about to kill himself when Paris returns).

The storm plays an important role in effecting the chisamus here. In the first instance, it drives the plot by separating Paris from the embassy. Dracontius needs to arrive at the point where Paris and Helen meet, and, given that he has already changed the commonly transmitted version of the story by relocating Paris' mission from Sparta to Salamis, he must be transported to where Helen is. It also acts as a thematic pivot: the speech on the relative merits of life as a shepherd and life as a prince shifts the focus back to Paris, and marks a change from his previous status (where he was considered as a shepherd by most) to a new status (being considered as a king and prince by Helen, who knows no better, especially as he conceals his origins from her, a status eventually reinforced with the comparison of Paris and Helen to Zeus and Europa).

Once the storm has separated Paris from his fellow envoys, he again finds himself in a foreign land, and again presents himself for audience with the ruler of that land. This episode might thus be considered as an embassy in all but name. The two episodes are also comparable because of the role which Paris plays in each. The Salamis episode was a platform for other characters (i.e. those who are not actively involved in the plot) to elaborate on a matter of thematic importance: the destruction of Troy and the kidnapping of a female royal figure. Paris does not partake in this exchange at all, even though this embassy was entrusted to him as a means through which he might combat the sense of *torpor iners* (Drac. *Romul.* 8.224) and add to the fame of his ancestors.[108] Conversely, by separating him from the envoys, Dracontius forces him into centre stage, and thus, once he has eloped with Helen, makes him a counterpoint to the role which Telamon plays in Salamis.

Furthermore, the ceremonial which is observed in this section complements the corresponding lack thereof in the actual embassy episode.[109] In Salamis, the envoys arrive and almost directly begin their requests. In reality, legates would have had to wait days, or even weeks, and deal with bureaucratic court officials before an

[108] Cf. Drac. *Romul.* 8.215-16.

[109] Much of what we know about ceremonial with specific relation to embassies in late Antiquity comes, again, from later sources. In particular, we have three texts: the *De Ceremoniis*, a Middle Byzantine work compiled by the emperor Constantine VIII Porphyrogenitus, of which a section (1.87) particularly deals with receiving an embassy from the western emperor Anthemius in the late 460s; an *indiculus* of Pope Hormisdas (*Collectio Avellana* 158), in which he lays out protocol for ambassadors visiting the eastern emperor Anastasius in the years 515 and 519. Finally, much description of the historical ramefications of various embassies of late Antiquity can be found in the *Excerpta de legationibus* (*Peri presbeon*), the provenance of which has been mentioned above. From these we learn much about the choice of who might be legates (it was not unusual for members of the royal family to act in this capacity), the duration of embassies (typically many months, unlike in *Romul.* 8, which only takes eight days), the implementation of the *ius gentium*, which forbade violence against envoys (much as *Romul.* 8.256-8 indicates, though there expressed in terms of the unspoken laws of hospitality), as well as the order of proceedings for the audience itself (see also Gillett 2003: 236-259).

audience with the emperor.[110] Conversely, there is evidence of this kind of preparation on Cyprus: Helen orders her servants to prepare him for audience,[111] which includes him being dressed in Tyrian garments, the clothes which mark him out (in terms of Dracontian auto-citation) as the inept ruler, and a chlamys of royal purple.[112] At the same time, there is a frustration of the requirements for such an audience. For example, instead of presenting his origins as Helen requests of him, and as would have been customary in an ordinary embassy situation (cf. the introduction of Antenor's speech, where he praises Priam), Paris deliberately ignores this request and instead begins by seducing the queen with his words (*reginam laudabat amans, culpare maritum | coeperat absentem…, Romul.* 8.512-13, 'In love, he praised the queen, he began to accuse her absent husband…).[113]

Other scenes are mirrored, too, with similar effect. Where Paris was silent in Salamis, he is now given centre stage in Cyprus. The envoys in Salamis have an audience with a king, while his queen is absent until the very end of the scene, apparently not taking part in the negotiations. Conversely, Paris has an audience with a queen whose husband is definitely absent, and does not appear until the end of the scene. As a result, by showing that these two episodes mirror each other, we are also invited to compare two situations in which one 'kidnapping' is justified and the other is not. Or rather, that they are both justified on different grounds. The first is justified by Telamon on the grounds that it was his legal right as part of the

[110] *De cerem.* 1.87
[111] *Romul.* 8.448-9.
[112] *Romul.* 8.481-3. But compare also the practice of envoys visiting the Eastern court being required to wear a red chlamys (Gillett 2003: 258)
[113] Though this too is an example of Dracontius' deliberate deflection of intertextual allusivity: both in comparative episodes in Virgil *Aen.* 1 (Aeneas meeting Dido), as well as the texts dealing with the kidnapping of Helen (e.g. Colluthus, should Dracontius have been aware of it) the protagonists detail their origins and the events which caused them to arrive in a foreign land. Dracontius here undermines that expectation by avoiding this exchange between Paris and Helen.

treaty with the Trojans to take Hesione back to Salamis and marry her. Conversely, Helen's justification for returning with Paris is that it is divinely ordained,[114] but, as Dracontius makes abundantly clear, this divinely ordained future will end only with destruction.

Contrary to a text such as the *Orestis tragoedia,* Dracontius does not aim to be all-encompassing in his treatment of the mythic material in *Romul.* 10. Rather, the poem chooses to focus on only two episodes of a much larger "horizontal tradition": the events in Colchis, and their direct conclusion in Corinth.[115] Arguably, these episodes are the most popular , and indeed the most iconic, in literary treatments and their ubiquity in various media shows that, rhetorically, their potential for being a tool with which to examine the political situation.

Several scholars have delineated structural outlines of the poem, taking into account the basic distinction between the two major episodes of Colchis and Thebes. For example, Kaufmann (2006: 53-54) along with Galli-Milić (2015: 324) identifies a five-part structure, isolating a link passage at *Romul.* 10.340-365 not unlike the storm scene in *Romul.* 8. Van Zyl Smit (2003: 152) adopts a similar scheme, placing more emphasis on the complementary aspects of the arrangement, as does Bright (1987). For the purposes of this thesis, I keep to a five-part scheme, but with slight changes to the apportioning of the lines, as follows:

[114] *Romul.* 8.535-6: *hoc nam fata iubent vel nos hoc Iuppiter urguet: | vivere me gemini iussit sub sorte mariti.* (For fate commands this, and Jupiter pushes me to this: he has ordered that I live subject to the destiny of two husbands).
[115] The term used by Graf (1997: 21) to describe the breadth of the Medea myth. Conversely, the treatment of one particular author is referred to as the "vertical" tradition.

(A) Prologue (1-31) **(E) Epilogue (570-601)**
(B) *Concilium deorum* (32-176) **(D) Thebes (366-569)**
(C) Colchis (177-365)

This arrangement places the Colchian episodes and the relationship of Jason and Medea at the heart of the story. By removing the interaction between Juno, Venus, and Cupid from the "Colchian" material, and treating this as a separate unit, we are better placed to see the whole trajectory of the effects of the battle of wills between the gods and Medea. Being thus neatly framed by the interactions between the gods and the Theban episodes, it also exhibits a clearer progression and trajectory of the key theme of sexual imperialism. The arrangement also demonstrates the parallelistic structure which we have established in the preceding chapter on *Romul.* 8 and have come to expect of Dracontius.

Although this is very clearly an epic which has Medea as the most prominent character (in the manner of the dramatic works), the creation of the *concilium deorum* section refocuses the material such that Juno's protection of Jason is shown to be more significant to the events of the story. This is particularly evident in the way that parallelism operates in this text. Rather than being a whimsical and rhetorical digression, the ekphrastic section and multiple entreaties of Juno to Venus, and Venus to Hymen and Cupid can be seen as having a 'shadow' counterpart in the lengthy invocations of Medea to the Moon and the powers of the Underworld. This has two functions. In the first instance, it highlights the major theme of the imperialistic tendencies of Venus and Cupid, a well-worn trope of Latin epic: they are, through parallelism, directly compared to Medea and the powers of the Underworld. Secondly, it raises the status of Jason significantly, given that his protection by Juno is the sole cause of the events of the story, which would also

better underline the motivation for making him the incarnation of the pretender king archetype in this text.

The "link passage" at *Romul.* 10.340-365 isolated by some scholars does not to my mind function in quite the same way as the link in *Romul.* 8. There its function was to separate the protagonist Paris from the other Trojans and allow him to meet Helen alone. In *Romul.* 10 Jason and Medea are a unit – their marriage and union being central to the whole plot — and thus they are not being separated by means beyond their control from one trajectory to another as is Paris. Rather the choice to leave is one which they make of their own accord. This short passage should thus be subsumed with the rest of the Colchian section, as it still technically occurs there. In so doing, this shifts the episode into the central concern of the epic. The chiastic nature of some episodes (which will be discussed in greater detail later) is also brought into greater relief following this division of material.

Parallelism in *Orest.* is represented by Dracontius' choice of geographical setting, which are formed of complementary pairs. More formally, there are also corresepondences between characters and scenes. In order to see the latter clearly, we can divide the poem into two, taking line 453, *Dum regnaret iners, Parcarum crimina, pastor* … as the beginning of a second section.[116] This then gives us a centre point about which the scenes can be mirrored.

Overall, the *Orestis tragoedia* focuses on three settings — Mycenae, Athens, and Tauris — which are repeated in a more or less parallelistic fashion. We might also

[116] This is close to the numerical middle of the poem, but also follows on from a temporal gap of seven years and eight months.

admit Troy as a fourth location here: not as a setting *per se*, but as a symbolic counterpoint to Mycenae, a fact which is made clear on several occasions.[117]

Mycenae and Troy are contrasted on account of the preceding war, and the potential for the cycle of revenge to be emphasised. By contrast, Tauris and Athens form the other axis of the system. Both are important to the unfolding of the story, but are in a sense removed from the core action of the triple murders. If Athens represents the place of justice, and specifically human justice, then Tauris might be said to be the place of divine or religious justice, where Agamemnon is made to atone for his sins and Iphigenia can cure Orestes of his madness through prayer. Likewise, these two places contrast in terms of their societal values as well: Tauris is the place where family is reunited, an action which is repeated in both scenes there; by contrast, Athens is the place of Society, where all the structures of (classical) Graeco-Roman culture are located: this is the place of rhetoric, the law, the gymnasium. The opposition of these two places also serves a structural function: the introduction of the Agamemnon/Iphigenia scene at the beginning of the poem parallels the Tauris scene between Orestes and Iphigenia, just as the removal of Orestes to Athens and the subsequent scene at Athens balances the later trial scenes. Such parallels are

[117] The spectre of Troy is raised explicitly at several points: Cassandra begins her speech by saying that Clytemnestra is "*ultio Dardanidum, captae solacia Troiae*", *Orest*. 139, 'vengeance for the Greeks, the solace of captured Troy'; after having submerged himself in the sea to give credence to his claims that Orestes and Electra had drowned, Dorylas declaims to the townsfolk: *"pro Iuppiter, hostis | sic placet ulcisci Troes et perdere Graios? | pro Phrygibus pelagus saevit, mare vindice Troiae. […] Iusta Clytemnestra mitis crudelis Egistus: | saevior unda maris, quae nec post bella pepercit | pignoribus Danaum! felix iam Troia vocanda!" Orest*. 367-9; 376-8, 'By Jupiter, is it pleasing as an enemy to avenge the Trojans and destroy the Greeks? The open sea rages for the Phrygians, the ocean for the avenger of Troy… May Clytemnestra be just and cruel Aegisthus be moderate: too cruel is the crashing wave of the sea, which did not bring forth the children of the Greeks after the war! Now it is Troy which must be called happy!'. Implicitly, Dracontius compares the two cities in one of his digressions as part of the greater, traditional theme of the unending cycle of revenge: "*credere qui non vult, Priameia fata revolvat | atque Agamemnoniam videat male credulus aulam," Orest*. 282-3, 'Whoever does not wish to believe it, let Priam's fate return and let the he who believes little see the hall of Agamemnon'.

thus useful in reinforcing the thematic content, which in turn contributes towards a socio-political reading of the text: the importance of the family unit, and the equally strong importance of the system which provides them legitimacy.

As such, while these two places are considered as opposites within the narrative and thematic scheme of the poem, there is a common theme which unites them as well. Both Tauris and Athens share a sense of salvation, sanctuary, and healing. Tauris serves as sanctuary to Iphigenia before the story begins, saving her from being sacrificed by Agamemnon. Later, it is the place of salvation to Orestes, where he is healed of his madness caused by Clytemnestra in her guise as a Fury. It is the place of divine justice, where Agamemnon seeks absolution from Diana (though it is refused). The symbolism of Athens, too, follows similar lines. While naturally part of the *Oresteia* tradition as the place where Orestes is absolved of the wrath of the Furies, Athens is a refuge and place of salvation: when Electra first takes Orestes away, Athens is the place of sanctuary away from the murderous Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. The sanctuary is inscribed within the world of learning and knowledge.[118] When we next go there, it serves as the setting to encourage Orestes and Pylades to save Mycenae from the usurper. Finally, in its last appearance, it is the place of legal salvation. However, whereas in Tauris the idea of justice was exclusively a province of the divine, further underlined by the religious setting, Athens is the backdrop for the triumph of human legal justice.

[118] Drac. *Orest.* 286-8: *faucibus eripiens germanum Electra parentis | imposuit puppi secumque adduxit Athenis | et bene sollicita studiis sapientibus addit,* 'Snatching him away from the jaws of their mother, Electra placed her brother on a boat and took him with her to Athens. And as she was induced well by their studies, she joined him to those wise men.'

Mycenae itself is tainted. Aside from its associations with murder, Dracontius magnifies this by linking the city metaphorically with Thebes:

> *ne dubitate: truces venient ad regna Thyestis,*
> *notum iter invenient, sua per vestigia current.*
> . . . . . .
> *spes mihi maior adest: Thebis vicina petuntur*
> *moenia tartareis quondam sacrata tenebris*
> *et claro privata die sub luce diurna.*
>
> *Orest.* 486-7; 491-3
>
> Do not doubt it: fierce men shall come to the kingdom of Thyestes, they will find the way that is already known, they will run in its footsteps. […] There is a greater hope in me: they find the walls near to Thebes, once made sacred with Tartarean darkness and deprived from the bright day, though daylight shone.

As we have seen in *Romul.* 10, Thebes and the symbolism associated with it as a place of evil and wrongdoing (as set out in Zeitlin 1990, and especially as it is employed by Statius) is pervasive in Dracontius' retellings, whether it takes centre stage, as in *Romul.* 10, or not, as in *Romul.* 2. It is instructive that in all cases, the protagonists have to leave the city in order to cured of madness, absolved of crime, or indeed saved from certain death. Thus, the dichotomy is not exclusively between Mycenae and Troy, but Mycenae and everywhere else mentioned in this version.

Despite its Greek setting, the world in which Dracontius' characters operates is intrinsically Roman. The judges in Orestes' court case, though from Athens, are referred to as *patres*, not unlike Roman senators. Orestes and Pylades' exile is also characteristic of a Roman experience, being sent to study at Athens, and taking part in the activities of the palaestra. Perhaps most convincing of all is seen in Agamemnon's return, where he devotes some of the spoils of war to the gods, and in particular singles out the Capitoline Triad:

> *divitias Asiae rex censens corde silenti*
> *maxima fulmineo dictabat dona Tonanti,*
> *optima Iunoni scribebat munera magnae*
> *atque Minervali dona addicebat Athenae,*
> *omnibus et superis, Danais quicunque favebant.*
>
> *Orest.* 30-34
>
> While judging the riches of Asia, the king decreed the greatest gifts to shining Jupiter, the best presents he wrote up to great Juno, and he consigned gifts to Minerva, and to all the gods, whoever favoured the Greeks

By linking Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, with a practice so typically Roman in culture (even though archaic by this point), it is possible to read the world of the Greeks as a metaphor for the world in which Dracontius finds himself. Even so, this does not necessarily suggest a Vandalic-Roman opposition. Given that Agamemnon is killed by his own compatriots, this could indicate something more along the lines of dynastic and factional politics: indeed, it has been suggested that the reason for Dracontius' imprisonment was a panegyric dedicated to the wrong part of the Hasding royal family rather than to a foreign ruler (cf. Wolff 1998; Merrills 2004).

The contrasting of the geographical locations which places Orestes and those allied to him as the legitmate heir against Aegisthus, is paralleled textually as well. Broadly speaking, the episodes in this first subsection (i.e. up to line 453) have either a reflection or completion in the second half. Perhaps most obvious of these are the two principle murder scenes (Agamemnon; Clytemnestra and Aegisthus), which, even though they are required by virtue of the myth, still possess some measure of reflectivity. At the beginning of the poem, Iphigenia is given a scene otherwise unrelated to the main plot, to mirror the canonical recognition-episode in Tauris at the end (Bouquet & Wolff 2002: 167 n. 43). The pairing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus can also be understood as reflected in the Orestes-Pylades pair. To begin on a superficial level, the pairs are both unequal in age. Clytemnestra and

Pylades are older than Orestes and Aegisthus, and both address their companions as *iuvenis*. Furthermore, both Clytemnestra and Pylades must convince their companion to take action by means of a lengthy speech. It is in matters like this that Dracontius differs from Seneca in terms of the highly rhetoricised nature of speeches. Whereas in Seneca characters frequently have to motivate *themselves* by promoting a Stoic mentality and detachment,[119] Dracontius' rhetoric is almost always directed outward towards an addressee, perhaps once again a distant echo reminiscent of the performative nature of recitation. These speeches are interesting in their construction. Clytemnestra begins her proposition with the question of what must be done (*iuvenis, dic, quid sit agendum*, 163), before launching into a description of the status quo: Agamemnon is returned, and he will kill both her and Aegisthus. Her solution to the predicament is simple: they must kill him first. She then manipulates Aegisthus by claiming that it is he who is effectively responsible for the situation and that their fates are intertwined – their allegiance to one another is thus firm:

> *per te casta negor, per te fero damna pudoris,*
> *nec volo tam multi sceleris reperdere fructum.*
> . . . . . .
> *est nobis commune bonum, commune periclum,*
> *sors pariter nos una manet. . .*
> *Orest.* 178-179, 181-182
> Because of you I am called impure, because of you I bear the loss of modesty, nor do I wish to lose the fruit of so manifold a crime. . . Our good fortune and our danger is shared, one fate awaits us in equal measure.

In Pylades and Orestes' analogous scene, Orestes sets off the exchange similarly with a question of what ought to be done: *"dic mihi, frater," ait, "dic iam modo quid sit agendum, Orest.* 557. He has reservations of a personal and moral nature, hesitating to kill Clytemnestra because she is his blood , and was both mother and

[119] Though motivation by other characters of course happens too, e.g. Aegisthus telling Clytemnestra to banish thoughts of hesitation at *Ag.* 226-309.

father to him while Agamemnon was away at war (*haec pater, haec mihi mater erat pugnante parente, Orest.* 571). He believes that killing Aegisthus is sufficient punishment. Pylades, on the other hand, once again makes use of fear as a strategy to win Orestes over. He highlights the fact that the Greeks may not see him as a legitimate ruler if he does not kill both adulterers (*quaeso cave… ne, iugulatricem patris dum vivere censes, | credaris non esse suus…, Orest.* 589-591). And where Clytemnestra insisted that the deed must be done now because it could be effected with impunity, Pylades stresses that Orestes must go through with it *because* there will be retribution, being pursued to the end of his days by the ghost of Agamemnon, and that he will otherwise be the usurpers' next victim (*Orest.* 591-601). Pylades also affirms his loyalty (*ibo libens comes ipse tuus…, Orest.* 609). This speech too has the elements of self-preservation, both in the sense of trying to avoid a future in which there is the possibility of death, as well as in the sense of being in favour politically. In Clytemnestra's speech we see how she does not care what the reaction of the Greeks will be, since she is linked now to the Thyestean line. By contrast, Pylades insists upon the fact that the Greeks may not see Orestes as being legitimately descended from the Atreids if he refuses an outright murder.

Neither of these episodes occurs *ex nihilo*. In each case the characters are obliged to consider the future and their course of action through the agency of some supernatural intervention. The supernatural here does not imply gods – given that the divine presence is very distant and detached indeed in this particular poem of Dracontius (unlike the poems of the *Romulea*). Rather we have the prophecy of Cassandra, announced while she is *sacro correpta furore,* which causes Clytemnestra to find Aegisthus and plot against Agamemnon (having previously thought him

drowned at sea, lines 124-131). Likewise, Orestes and Pylades only consider this course of action upon the orders of Agamemnon's ghost.

Indeed, these two preliminary speeches have similar structures too. Cassandra begins her short prophecy (14 lines) with a greeting to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, which reaches into the realm of *captatio benevolentiae*. She proceeds to question why the pair hesitate to put aside their fears (*quid dubitatis adhuc vestros relevare timores?*) and commands them (*perdite*) to enjoy their adulterous pursuits while they are still able, before they are both killed by Orestes and Pylades. Agamemnon's speech, conversely, is, if one discounts the list of exempla which may or may not be correctly placed, almost twice as long. Here the opening is inverted: he begins directly with a questioning reproach of Pylades and Orestes (*non pudet, o iuvenes?)* enjoying a leisurely existence while his kingdom is being ruled by a tyrannical shepherd, and then, again in a turn which reaches into *captatio benevolentiae*, compares them to Patroclus and Achilles, and Theseus and Pirithous. The string of imperatives follow in the same relative position, *ferte gladios*, and *abscindite nefas*. Aside from the addition of several exempla, the speech ends, once again, with slew of information relating to future events.

A cursory look at the division of *Romul.* 2 shows that there is still a clear sense of the parallelism which marks Dracontius' other epic texts, in spite of the poem's short length. Weber (1995: 138-9) divides the text into four parts: the prooemium (lines 1-3), a first part (4-93) which is further subdivided into two scenes based on the characters who speak: Cupid and Venus, and Cupid and the Nymphs respectively; then a second part (94-140) also further subdivided, dealing with

Hylas and the Nymphs, and Hercules respectively. The scheme is completed by a two-line Epilogue (162-163). Bright (1987: 28) also goes for a four-part division, but bases his on the action of the scenes rather than characters' speeches. The resultant division is slightly different, with his part A extending from lines 4-70, and part B, the transformation of Cupid, from lines 71-93. Mauerhofer (2004: 347) makes a tripartite division, but also has two scenes for each of his part B and C, broadly agreeing with Bright (1987: 28). Regardless of which division one follows (and here I tend towards Weber's (1995) delineation), this arrangement tends to oppose two items or scenes so that we are invited to compare the two, as in the other texts. In the case of *Romul.* 2, the oppositions created by the structure are evidently those between Cupid and Venus on the one hand, and Hercules and Hylas on the other, with the Nymph-scenes as the common ground which acts as a pivot.[120] While Bright (1987: 32-33) is correct in noting the opposition between Cupid and Hercules, his claim that "it would be fair to say that the poem is about Cupid rather than Hylas" perhaps does not do justice to the other equally interesting — and important — actors in the story. Rather, all the elements work together to create an interpretation which goes above and beyond a simplistic triumph of Love. In the next two sections I consider the way in which Dracontius treats the elements of this opposition, first Cupid and Venus' action against Clymene, then Hercules and Hylas. It will be seen that a common theme underpinning these sections is that of poetic and self-referential figures. This is particularly significant given Dracontius' association of *Romul.* 2 with the preface to Felicianus, and also more broadly given it is the opening work of an overtly rhetorical collection.

[120] See also Mauerhofer's (2004: 349-360) section on the various ways in which symmetry and parallelism operates in *Romul.* 2. Particularly relevant here are his subsections on mirrored groups (Mauerhofer 2004: 351) and mirrored phrases (Mauerhofer 2004: 358-360).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented Dracontius with regard to his literary qualities, and in particular examined the rhetorical tools which underpin his epic craft and inform his approach to his subject matter. I began by establishing the rhetorical basis for Dracontian epic, that he was a product of a particular style of training which informed both his approach to myth and his approach to intertextuality. The former focused on the way in which Dracontius makes drastic changes to his stories, expands on otherwise seemingly minor points, and how he often appropriates material from parallel traditions, showing that this reflects the rhetorical quality of the epics. Just as a rhetorician could use *amplificatio* and *variatio* to underline and emphasise particular aspects of an argument, so too does Dracontius use these rhetorical techniques to underline key themes within his poetry. The latter considered how intertextuality works in Dracontian epic. This was shown to be largely a function of each text, as there were a number of different intertextual modes in play. In *Romul.* 8, for example, the entire literary tradition was associated with fate. I also examined the way in which he uses genre and form. This again could be linked to a rhetorical motivation.

Finally, I considered the role that structure plays in Dracontian epic. On the one hand, this is a clear succession to the way in which larger epics such as the *Aeneid* and the *Thebaid* had organised their material, and on the other, it was also a means for organising thematic material. In sum, these features show that Dracontius is a considered and resourceful artist, well aware of the material at his disposal and judiciously applying it in order to reinforce his message.

II

THE POET, HIS MATERIALS, AND HIS SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter looked at Dracontius' works in terms of their artistic qualities, and thus showed that our poet was operating at a very sophisticated level. This would be an unlikely outcome, nor indeed valued, were there not a supportive milieu in which such art could be created, appreciated, and have greater significance. In this chapter, therefore, I will consider the poet within the broader context of his society. In the first part, I look at how, in the aftermath of the sack of Rome in 455, the arrival of the three imperial women enhanced the pre-existing literary scene in Carthage so vaunted by writers such as Salvianus of Marseilles. This leads on to a discussion of the enigmatic *fugatas litteras* in which the grammaticus Felicianus instructed our poet and others. This in turn allows a discussion of the implications and applications of the intertextual engagement as introduced in the previous chapter.[121] Here I particularly discuss how Dracontius intertextual agenda, where it is used in the Classical sense, shows a particularly ambivalent view towards Rome.

PUTTING THE POET IN HIS PLACE

Through the internal evidence of his poetry we are able to identify the numerous different strata and sectors of society. As presented in the introduction, we know from our minimal information regarding Dracontius' biography that at a given point

[121] See above pp. 51-70.

of his career he was involved in the law. The chief indication of this is the subscription to *Romul.* 5. The piece in question a versified *controversia* on the merits of whether a poor man who, following a dispute with a rich man, was justified in taking refuge behind a statue of an emperor and then accusing the rich man of *lèse-majesté* on account of the latter insulting him. The subscription states that it was performed before the proconsul Pacideius in the Gargilian Baths, a well-known public meeting space. From this we can conclude that not only was there a market for consumption of overtly rhetorical material outside of both the classroom and the dining room, but also that this was explicitly something to be performed, and hence judged critically and intellectually by the audience. Taken together with the epithalamia (*Romul.* 6 and 7) and the indications of the *Satisfactio,* whether it be real or fanciful, it likewise shows us that Dracontius audience extended both up and down the social scale. On the one hand he has recourse to the structures of government and the royal family, as shown by Gunthamund being the recipient of the *Satisfactio* and Pacideius the proconsul in the subscription to *Romul.* 5. On the other, he is also firmly ensconced in the leisurely world of the aristocracy, as the two epithalamia indicate with regard to his use of patronage.

It would be equally simplistic to assume a natural antipathy towards the Vandal rulers of North Africa just because Dracontius is associated with the Romano-African aristocracy. There are sufficient examples within the extant historical writings, as well as poems of the *Anthologia Latina*, of Romano-African aristocrats who co-operated with the Vandal regime, or who were beneficiaries of networks of patronage by Vandals, apparently unfazed by any repercussions of being seen as

collaborators or betraying any sense of loyalty to Rome.[122] Likewise, there are indications of Vandal adaptation to (and rapid adoption of) the Roman lifestyles of their newly-conquered subjects.[123] Moreover, Dracontius would have been born, if we assume that his works written while imprisoned are products of a relatively young man, at a point when Vandal rule had been established for a little over two decades already, probably in the middle of the 5th century, and hence during the last years of Gaiseric's reign (428-477).[124] In short, he would have no personal living memory of a Carthage governed by Romans, and Vandal rule would have been the status quo. As a result, the events of the 430s, when the Vandals first invaded Africa and took Carthage, would likely not have had as much of an impact any longer, in comparison with other political events between Carthage and Rome.

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[122] See for example in Vict. Vit. 2.3.8: *maxime quia ingens fuerat multitudo nostrorum catholicorum in habitu illorum [Vandalorum] incedentium, ob hoc quod domui regiae serviebant* ('This was especially so because a huge number of our Catholics who served in the royal household used to go in dressed like Vandals', trans. J. Moorhead). Several poets of the *Anthologia Latina* provide examples of ostensible patronage by Vandal aristocrats. For example, Luxorius, writes an epigram upon the death of the daughter of a certain Oageis (345R), as well as another (369R) describing the same Oageis' gardens. Felix praises Thrasamund's bath complex in the suburb of Alianae (210R), while Florentinus eulogises Thrasamund and Carthage in general (376R). Even if these poems were the product of once-disenfranchised Romano-Africans attempting to ingratiate themselves with the new aristocracy, it is nevertheless evidence that this was happening, and that Romano-Africans should not be thought of, *de facto,* as being hostile towards the Vandals.

[123] This, at least, is the impression which the new rulers gave outsiders. Procop. *Vand.*1.6.5-9 describes the Vandals as enjoying pastimes and ways of life which would be traditionally seen as Roman, even though the word 'Roman' is never explicitly used in this particular text. Similarly, some poems in the *Anthologia Latina* can also be taken as attempts by Vandals to immerse themselves in the cultural practices of their conquered subjects. A particularly prominent example of this can be seen in Luxorius' *Epithalamium Fridi,* a cento constructed by re-using verses from Virgil. After all, if the Vandals were to be taken seriously in the Mediterranean political scene, they had to play by the rules of the heretofore dominant power: those of Rome, both East and West. Furthermore, the Vandals were vastly outnumbered by their subjects (see the numbers proposed by Hen 2012: 64), and it was just as much out of this need to be seen as having a legitimate claim to power that they became so Romanised. There were, however, still benefits (of mostly pecuniary nature) to being Vandal. The *sortes Vandalorum* were one such method by which Vandals, and particularly those with military connections, were provided with land which had been seized from the now disenfranchised Romans (see Conant 2012; Merrills & Miles 2010; Bockmann 2013; Modéran 2002). But even this has at its root the old Roman practice of granting land to soldiers after they had left the army, or, even that which granted lands to barbarians as *foederati*. Likewise, there were significant reductions in taxes for the Vandals.

[124] Dracontius says in the *Laudes Dei* (3.724): *sit fortuna redux, sit virtus usque senectam* 'may my fortune be restored, may I have valour until my old age'.

ENHANCING THE LITERARY CIRCLE AT CARTHAGE

Another historical event, however, may have contributed significantly to both the extension and perpetuation of this high literary culture. The event in question is the Sack of Rome of 455, which would result in a concrete union between the Hasdings and the Theodosian house, previously something only promised in treaties. The magnitude of this event had wide-ranging effects both politically and culturally and, although he never mentions it specifically, there are sufficient indications in Dracontius' *Romul.* 8, which was likely written much later, that the event had long-lasting impact. Indeed, at the time that Dracontius might have been a young man, the sacking of Rome in 455 would have been much more present in the minds of the inhabitants of Carthage, both Vandal and Romano-African. This event cemented the Vandals' military dominance in the Western Mediterranean and was a clear message to the Romans of the West that their old enemy, Carthage, had finally triumphed after many centuries.

The sack of Rome was not only profitable for the Vandals in terms of monetary gain, but also in terms of political leverage. Among the captives which the Vandals took back to Carthage were the women of the imperial family: Valentinian III's widow, Licinia Eudoxia, and her daughters Eudocia and Placidia. Most of the extant historians and chroniclers of this period, both Eastern and Western, are agreed that the impetus for this sack was Eudoxia herself, who was due to be married against her will to the usurping senator Petronius Maximus, and Eudocia in turn to Maximus' son Palladius.[125] In order to remedy this situation, Eudoxia called upon

[125] Though this may have been Gaiseric's eventual goal anyway, and might have happened naturally had the campaigns of Majorian been more successful.

Gaiseric to attack Rome. During the sack, Gaiseric took her, Eudocia, and Placidia back to Carthage, where he reinstated Eudocia's marriage to Huneric. Placidia and her mother were sent to the East, though there is some disagreement as to whether this was on the command of the Emperor at the time (Marcian) or simply an attempt to placate the East on Gaiseric's part. Quite some time after Hilderic's birth, Eudocia simply leaves court (the marriage does not appear to have been annulled), and rejoins her family in Jerusalem, where she promptly dies a few days after her arrival. With regard to our concern with the current text, the story of the princess Eudocia has particular significance for the understanding of *Romul.* 8 as being, at least in part, a reflection on events which shaped Vandal dominance in the western Mediterranean. In particular, this historical episode has significant resonances with the way Dracontius deals with the embassy to Salamis. As such, if we are to show that Eudocia and Hesione's respective situations are related, it would be useful to examine their presentation in *Romul.* 8 and the extant sources for points of contact.

Eudocia's complete story, from Italy to her death in the East, is preserved almost exclusively in Eastern sources. The historians of the West tend to focus on the fact of the marriage itself, and even then confuse details (though it may equally be a matter of just how much survives in terms of Western historiography for the period).[126] Those sources which preserve her entire story, from her betrothal to

[126] In the *Chronicle* of Hydatius, for example, Eudocia is mentioned in connection with Petronius Maximus' plans to marry her to his son Palladius, and himself to her mother: Hyd. *Chron.* 167: *Gaisericus, sollicitatus a relicta Valentiniani, ut mala fama dispergit, priusquam Avitus Augustus fieret, Romam ingreditur direptisque opibus Romanorum Carthaginem redit, relictam Valentiniani et filias duas et Aetii filium Gaudentium nomine secum ducens* (Gaiseric, having been called by Valentinian's widow, as these evil rumours tell us, seeing as Avitus had not been made Augustus, entered Rome. And having pillaged the wealth of the Romans, he returned to Carthage, taking Valentinian's widow and her two daughters and a son of Aetius called Gaudentius with him). Hydatius' only other mention of Eudocia is her subsequent marriage in Carthage, but instead of marrying her to Huneric, the chronicler mistakenly links her with Gento (Tranoy 1974: 117; Martindale 1980: 407, s.v. Eudocia 1): Hyd. *Chron.* 216: *Gaisericus Valentiniani relictam*

Huneric to her death in Jerusalem are all works from a much later period (cf. the lists given in Martindale 1980: 407, s.v. Eudocia 1). Our earliest source is the contemporary account of Priscus of Panium, a rhetor and, it is assumed, civil servant active in the second quarter of the 5th century (Blockley 1981: 48). He also acted as an envoy during Maximinus' embassy to Attila in 449, and subsequently went to Rome in 450. Although his work has not been preserved in entirety, there are significant fragments transmitted in later works. Indeed, as Blockley (1981: 49, 113-123) shows, Priscus often is the chief source for this period for later historiography (e.g. Procopius and Evagrius Scholasticus). For the Vandal material, and in particular that detailing the sack of Rome in 455, and the associated kidnapping and betrothal of Eudocia, along with her mother Eudoxia and sister Placidia, the main text which preserves Priscus' account is the *Excerpta de Legationibus Romanorum*, a compendium prepared at Constantinople during the reign of Constantine VIII Porphyrogenitus in the 10th century (Carolla 2008: I; Blockley 1981: 113).

Given Priscus' itinerant career as part of the imperial bureaucracy, and apparent lack of other obvious sources, Blockley (1981: 68-69) has suggested that much of his account of Western matters had its origins in oral reports delivered by legates from Italy. Of course, a change in regime did not cut North Africa off from the rest of the

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Constantinopolim remittit. Filiae ipsius una Gentoni Gaiserici filio, alia Olybrio senatori urbis Romae iure matrimonii copulantur (Gaiseric sent Valentinian's widow back to Constantinople. One of her daughters was joined by the law of matrimony to Gento, Gaiseric's son, and the other to Olybrius, a senator of the city of Rome). Other Western historians (Victor of Vita, Victor of Tununna) are only interested in her being the mother of Hilderic. A similar concern for the succession (or at least the continuation of Valentinian III's family) has been suggested by Clover (1971) in *Carm.* 1 of Merobaudes.

Mediterranean[127]. Even though the extant literature of the period may present itself as being thoroughly unconcerned with events elsewhere (Hays 2004: 131), Carthage was still a cosmopolitan city which would have seen the confluence of political embassies from Italy and the East, in addition to trade from mainland Europe, the East, and the African interior. As a part of the fabric of the city, whether his legal work extended into the higher rungs of society or not, Dracontius would still have been exposed to such diverse society. And with this influx of foreign peoples, there would certainly have been news and views of others, the like of which could indeed have reached Priscus in the East and formed a basis for his commentary on the events post-455.

The events concerning Eudocia are most fully transmitted in the *Chronographia* of Theophanes Confessor, a work of the early 9th century dealing with matters from the reign of Diocletian to his own days. Theophanes' source material for the period of Vandal activity in the West is a mixture of Theodore Lector, John Malalas, and Procopius (see discussion of the sources in Mango & Scott 1997: lxxiv-xcv, esp. lxxv, lxxxi; xciv).[128] Besides relating the circumstances leading up to Eudocia being taken

[127] Conant's (2012: 67-129) discussion on this topic is especially useful in pointing out that, besides the expected comings and goings of ambassadors from the various powers of the Mediterranean, there was a significant number of non-diplomatic travellers, including foreigners travelling to Carthage and locals going abroad during this period. The majority of these travellers who can be named tend to be bishops, but is surely indicative of a situation that, if one did have the wherewithal to travel, movement of people (and thus of interaction with the outside world) was not greatly restricted, however much the literature of this part of the world appears hermetic. For example, Dracontius himself talks in his epithalamium to Johannes and Vitula (*Romul.* 7. 139-143) of his dedicatees' journey to Caralis in Sardinia (Wolff 2002: 12 n.81) presumes that the husband had family there or came from there originally). Though this was probably still part of the Vandal kingdom at the time of writing if they were able to travel to Sardinia, then others (such as the Catholic bishops described by Victor of Vita) must have been able to travel elsewhere freely too.

[128] Scott (1996: 28) notes that "[Theophanes'] basic approach, like all that of any other chronicler, is to plagiarise the material of his predecessors, with a certain amount of adaptation". Scott (1990: 115) elaborates further on the nature of Theophanes' adaptation through discussion of his inclusion of 'good stories' in an otherwise straightforward chronicle tradition. He notes particularly how, in Theophanes, these anecdotes are typically employed as a form of specifically

away from Rome with her mother Eudoxia and sister Placidia, Theophanes also discusses the aftermath of her marriage to Huneric. He tells us that she had stayed in Carthage for 16 years before managing to 'escape' to Jerusalem with the assistance of one of the Vandals, where she died after a few days.[129]

Taken together, the majority of these sources draw attention to two main attributes of the events surrounding the sack of Rome in 455: the justified nature of Gaiseric's actions, and the monetary gain resulting from the actual sacking. The legal basis revolves around the peace treaty between the Vandals and the Romans of the early 440s, in which the Vandals were granted control of the provinces of Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena, and relinquished their occupation of the two Mauretanias.[130] As part of this agreement, Huneric was betrothed to Eudocia (as her sister Placidia was already betrothed to Olybrius).[131] These matters too, especially in the case of legally contracted agreements, are of prime importance to the narrative of Dracontius' *Romul.* 8.[132]

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theological propaganda (Scott 2010: 122-127). The final chapter of Eudocia's story appears first in Theophanes, and does not appear to have been taken from any of the chronicler's usual sources. Though more likely than not based in some truth, it could well be whimsical addition on his part, designed to provide the same kinds of propagandistic effects as other anecdotal accounts in the chronicle, showing Eudocia's escape from the Arian Vandals and subsequent reception into the Church of the Holy Resurrection at Jerusalem to be a kind of victory over, and salvation from, heretical beliefs.

[129] Theophanes Confessor, *Chron.* AM 5964: ἐν τούτοις οὖν ἀσχολουμένηων περὶ Γιζέριχον, ἡ νήπιος Εὐδοξία καὶ Θεοδοσίου ἐγγόνη ἐκκαίδεκα χρόνους ἐν τῇ Ἀφρικῇ ποιήσασα μετὰ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς Ὀνερίχου, καὶ παῖδα ἔξ αὐτοῦ Ἱλδέριχον γεννήσασα, δυσφοροῦσα κατὰ τοῦ ἀνδρός, ὡς Ἀρειανοῦ ὄντος, ἄδειαν εὑροῦσα καὶ φυγῇ χρησαμένη ἦλθεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, καὶ προσκυνήσασα τοὺς σεβασμίους τόπους, καὶ ἀσπασαμένη τόν τάφον τῆς ἑαυτῆς μαμμῆς, ὀλίγας, ἡμέρας διατρίψασα ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ πόλει, ἐτελεύτησεν ἐν εἰρήνῃ, πάντα τὰ αυτῆς καταλείψασα ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ Ἀναστάσει παραθεμένη καὶ λοῦρκον σὺν τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτοῦ τῷ ἀρχιεπισκόπῳ Ἱεροσόλυμων, ὡς συνεργῷ αὐτῇ γενομένῳ καὶ πιστῷ εις τὸ ἐκφυγεῖν Ὀνώριχον Ἀρειανὸν τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς.

[130] For a discussion of the settlement and exact points of the treaty between Rome and the Vandals, see Schwarcz (2004: 53-54), Modéran (2002), who presents competing arguments regarding the processes of establishing the Vandal state and territory as being similar to a client kingdom; as well as Merrills & Miles (2010).

[131] Hence the apparent acknowledgement of this union by Merobaudes at *Carm.* 1.17-18.

[132] A similar suggestion of the Eudocia episode as inspiration has been made by Morales (2016: 84-5) for Colluthus' *Rape of Helen*.

A number of observations can be made at first glance when comparing the passages in Dracontius with the historical sources. To begin with, Antenor frames the Trojans' case for Hesione's return as follows:

> *Dardanides Priamus, gentis reparator et urbis,*
> *quam vestras populasse manus meminisse fatemur,*
> *iussit ab Iliaco delectos pergere regno*
> *ad tua regna, potens, germanam regis ut, heros,*
> *bellorum quam iure tenes, in pace refundas:*
> *posceris Hesionem. iacet ingens Troia favillis*
> *excidii compressa sui, nec Pergama ductor*
> *surrexisse putat, nisi iam, rex magne, sororem*
> *reddideris regi, quae nunc captiva tenetur.*
>
> *Romul.* 8. 265-273
>
> Priam, descendant of Dardanus, restorer of his people and his city, which your band of warriors ransacked (we admit we have not forgotten that) has ordered his chosen ones to go out from the kingdom of Ilium to your kingdom, powerful hero, so you can restore the king's sister in a time of peace, whom you hold by the law of war: Hesione is demanded from you. Mighty Troy lies restrained by the ashes of its destruction, and our leader does not think that Pergamon will rise again unless, great king, you return the sister, who is now held captive, to the king.

Most obvious, is that the whole embassy episode reflects how Priscus (fr. 29.3 Carolla) describes Eastern negotiation for the return of the imperial women:

> Γεζέριχος δὲ, πολλῶν πρὸς αὐτὸν πρεσβευτῶν κατὰ διαφόρους σταλέντων χρόνους, τὰς γυναίκας οὐ πρότερον διαφῆκεν πρὶν ἢ τὴν πρεσβυτέραν τῶν Βαλεντινιανοῦ θυγατέρων (Εὐδοκία δὲ ἦν ὄνομα αὐτῇ) Ὀνέριχῳ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ παιδὶ κατενεγύεσεν· τότε γὰρ καὶ τὴν Εὐδοξίαν, τὴν Θεοδοσίου θυγατέρα, ἀπέμπε, σὺν Πλακιδίᾳ τῇ ἑτέρᾳ αὐτῆς θυγατρί, ἥν ἐγεγαμήκει Ὀλύβριος.
>
> Although many embassies were sent to him at various times, Gaiseric did not free the women until he had betrothed Valentinian's elder daughter, whose name was Eudocia, to his son Huneric. Then he dismissed Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius, and Placidia, her other daughter, who was married to Olybrius (trans. R.C. Blockley).

In Dracontius, there is much reference to the previous war with Greece, and of the way in which Hesione and her subsequent marriage was the product of a treaty. Besides Antenor's emphasis on the Trojans' remembrance of this fact (*meminisse fatemur)*, the event is again recalled by Telamon (*Romul.* 8.311-15):

> *si Priami recidiva domus manet illa tyranni*
> *post ignes reparata meos, si pendit amorem*
> *germanae rex ipse suae, pro dote sorori*
> *vel regni pars iusta detur, ne vindicet Aiax*
> *quod matri donasset avus, si Troia maneret.*
> If the house of the tyrant Priam remains revived, repaired after my fires, if the king himself values his love for his sister, a just part of the kingdom should be given to his sister for her dowry, so that Ajax should not claim that which his grandfather had given his mother, if Troy were still standing.

And again by Polydamas:

> *captivam repetit, reginam frater honorat,*
> *nos et adoramus. non sic, si Troia maneret,*
> *nuberet Hesione: regnum captiva meretur,*
> *fit felix de sorte mala, fit praeda potestas,*
> *imperium de clade tenet, diadema tiaram*
> *qui tulit ipse dedit.*
>
> *Romul.* 8. 331-336
>
> A brother seeks your captive returned to him, but honours her as a queen. We revere her too. Hesione would not have married in this way, if Troy were still standing: your captive gains a kingdom, she becomes fortunate, changing from an evil fate, plunder becomes power, she holds authority rather than suffering catastrophe, and that very man who has taken away her diadem has given her a crown instead.

As elsewhere in *Romul.* 8, the poet seems to assume his audience's knowledge of the part of the myth which deals with the first destruction of Troy by Hercules and the Greeks, given his use of the *irrealis 'si Troia maneret'* in both speeches of the Trojan ambassadors. Indeed, despite their characterisation of the city as being ruined, there has been up until now no reference to either the city (i.e. with *Troia* being taken literally) or the family itself (*Troia* as representative of the Trojan royal house) as being in any way previously broken or destroyed during the first part of the story. As such, this previous omission and unexpected introduction highlights the importance of the concept of the previous destruction of the city. In conjunction with the somewhat open-ended reliance on the audience's background knowledge (i.e. knowledge of previous destructions of Troy) this allows space for further reflections on, and comparisons to, other destructions of cities, such as the sacking

of Rome in 455, a significant event in terms of establishing Vandal power, and one unlikely to have gone unnoticed by the inhabitants of North Africa.

Furthermore, the Trojans' main objection is that Hesione is being kept prisoner:[133] they do acknowledge that this was part of the original treaty (*germanam regis…| bellorum quam iure tenes…*), but they seem to argue that the terms of the treaty were a temporary measure, that Hesione was only legally taken away for the duration of the war, and that she ought to be returned as peace has been reached (*ut…|… in pace refundas*). They further argue that their city can only flourish again were she to be restored to the Trojan royal family. The idea of Hesione being a captive is one which is indeed reflected in the historical accounts. In Procopius (*Vand.*1.5.3) we find the following to be said of the royal women:

> Γιζέριχος δὲ τήν τε Εὐδοξίαν ἅμα Εὐδοκίᾳ τε καὶ Πλακιδίᾳ, ταῖς αὐτῆς τε καὶ Βαλεντινιανοῦ παισίν, αἰχμάλωτον εἶλε, χρυσοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βασιλέως κτημάτων πολύ τι χρῆμα ἐν ταῖς ναυσὶν ἐνθέμενος ἐς Καρχηδόνα ἔπλει…
>
> But Gizeric took Eudoxia captive, together with Eudocia and Placidia, the children of herself and Valentinian, and placing an exceedingly great amount of gold and other imperial treasure in his ships sailed to Carthage… (trans. H.B. Dewing)

The seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* expresses a similar sentiment regarding Eudoxia and her two daughters as captives in the entry for the year 455 (7th indiction of the 308th Olympiad), even though Eudocia is called Honoria in this account:

> καὶ εἰσῆλθεν Ζινζίριχος βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἄφρων εἰς Ῥώμην, καὶ παρέλαβεν Εὐδοξίαν τὴν γυναῖκα Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ καὶ τὰς δύο αὐτῆς θυγατέρας, Πλακιδίαν καὶ Ὀνωρίαν, ἃς μετ' ὀλίγον ἀγοράζει ἐκ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας Λέων ὁ βασιλεύς. τὴν δὲ Ὀνωρίαν νύμφην ἐκράησεν Ζινζίριχος εἰς Ὀνάριχον υἱὸν αὐτοῦ.

[133] This sentiment is widespread in the poem, e.g. Priam at *Romul.* 8. 226-228 (*captiva tenetur*); Antenor at *Romul.* 8. 270-273 (*captiva tenetur*); Polydamas at *Romul.* 8. 331-333 (*captivam repetit* and *regnum captiva meretur*).

> And Zinzerich, king of the Africans entered Rome and captured Eudoxia, the wife of Valentinian, and her two daughters Placidia and Honoria; after a short time Leo the emperor ransomed them from captivity. But Zinzerich retained Honoria as bride for Honarich his son (trans. Mi. Whitby & Ma. Whitby).

Telamon's anger at their request springs from two refutations: the nature of the previous treaty, in addition to the legal status of the marriage and the needs of his son Ajax which are attendant thereto. Dracontius' narration of Telamon's thoughts runs:

> *dixerat. at Telamon mentes armabat in iras;*
> *nam pietas affectus amor concordia proles*
> *accendunt motus in pectore fellis amari.*
> *conubium regni, thalami consortia casti*
> *scindere poscebant, et, quod mens nulla tulisset,*
> *Aiacis haec mater erat.*
>
> *Romul.* 8. 285-290
>
> So he spoke. But Telamon prepared his mind for anger. For duty, affection, love, harmony, and his offspring incited the movement of bitter gall in his breast. They were demanding that he cut off a marriage of kingdoms, the sharing of a guiltless wedding-chamber, and, what nobody would have endured, this was the mother of Ajax.

Here again, it is the sensibilities relating to protecting the family unit which are invoked by the poet. Especially of interest here is the idea of succession. Already the issue of privileging some members of the royal family over others is given prominence when Paris returns to Troy. Here Dracontius textually marginalises Hector by not giving him any speeches – and explicitly refers to this fact - thus allowing Paris to overshadow Hector even though the latter is heir-apparent.[134] If we are to understand Eudocia as being related metaphorically to Hesione, this

[134] Cf. *Romul.* 8. 211-12 as pointed out above. The issue of the succession is referenced more broadly in the way that Paris is compared to Hector (quite explicitly at *Romul.* 8.603-6) . The silencing of Hector, immediately contrasted with Priam's obsequious behaviour towards Apollo, underlines the fickleness of Priam's affections (which will later be displayed in the king's excessive and melodramatic reaction to Paris' absence when the envoys return from Salamis).

insistence on the welfare of Ajax, which is recalled from an earlier reference,[135] could well indicate Dracontius' favourable attitude towards Hilderic. Though it is unknown as to whether he followed the Catholic faith of his mother, the latter was apparently more sympathetic to the Catholics by the time he came to the throne, and may thus have been a natural ally of the Catholic population of Carthage.[136]

These features of the embassy scene, in addition to the fact that it is there at all (i.e. that the traditional setting of the kidnapping, Sparta, has been done away with entirely, and that the mission to Greece is for an entirely different reason, thereby privileging the implied concerns of restoration of stability and empire) indicate that there is some basis for an attribution of a real-world source as inspiration for it.[137] Furthermore, throughout the speeches, there is a definite sense of the threat of war, not only from the envoys demanding Hesione's return,[138] but also from Telamon, threatening renewed conflict should the Trojans fail to comprehend his legal rights.[139] Dracontius' narration also underlines this fact, by noting that instead of swords, the envoys carry with them words which could cause war.[140] Of course, the entire epic is also concerned with the eventual destruction of Troy as a result of Paris' actions. If we are to read the poem as having, even if only in part, some inspiration from the Carthaginian political climate, then this can certainly translate

[135] *Romul.* 8. 49-52: *pro matris thalamo poenas dependit Achilles | (unde haec causa fuit), forsan Telamonius Aiax | sternitur invictus, quod mater reddita non est | Hesione Priamo*, 'Achilles metes out punishment for his mother's marriage (from where the case [of the judgement of Paris] originated), perhaps Ajax the unconquered son of Telamon will be overthrown, because Hesione his mother was not returned to Priam'.
[136] A similar attitude might be read for Orestes, for example, who is also compared to Ajax at *Orest.* 845-8.
[137] As noted before, Dares, for example, has both an embassy to Salamis (Dares 5), and a separate trip to Greece for Paris (Dares 8).
[138] *Romul.* 8.276-278
[139] *Romul.* 8.294-297
[140] *Romul.* 8.254-255. Gillett (2003: 258-9) notes that while there was no particular item which regularly identified the envoy as such, staves were typically seen as a sign of peace.

to a projected fear for the renewed (given Dracontius' emphasis on terrible past wars between the Greeks and Trojans) destruction of a kingdom, such as might be experienced with any of the repeated attempts at reconquest of North Africa by the Eastern Romans (the most prominent being that of Basiliscus in the late 460s).

In the Greek historiographic tradition of the 5th century, those few imperial women who are mentioned frequently take a central role in the foreign relations crises arising between the Western Empire and barbarian kingdoms. Priscus relates how Valentinian's sister Honoria, in a similar way to Eudoxia in the middle of the century, summons Attila to attack the West.[141] Once again, this originates from a marital issue. Honoria is said to have had a secret affair, which, once discovered, caused her lover to be executed and the princess to be married off to someone who was politically harmless. In retaliation, she summoned the barbarian king to uphold her claims to power.[142] In the fragmentary history of Olympiodorus as preserved by Photius, the historian relates that Galla Placidia was likewise a prisoner of the barbarian Ataulf, then married him and bore him a child. From these indications, we may conclude that the imperial women are chiefly seen as the means towards power and legitimacy. Furthermore, particularly in authors like Priscus, they are also tools with which the historian can show up the Romans as unmoving, harsh, and ossified. Conversely, there is a touch of the noble savage in the way that the barbarian kings are promoted as apparent upholders of (Roman) law and order.[143]

[141] *Excerpta de insidiis* 84.1-21; John of Antioch fr. 199.2
[142] *Excerpta de legationibus* 7.1-12. Unlike the Eudoxia episode, Jordanes (*Get.* 42.24) sees Honoria's actions as an *indignum facinus* originating from base desires.
[143] Cf. Blockley (1981: 63): "Priscus, like most ancient historians, tended to couch his observations in moral terms… [He] makes it clear that he saw in the Hunnic king a strong and decisive leader of men. In sharp contrast stand those on the Roman side…".

As we have seen, the aftermath of 455 and the attendant vicissitudes of Princess Eudocia provide a plausible context in which to situate Dracontius works, and which seems to make itself most clear in *Romul.* 8. An examination of the historical sources (insofar as they might represent views broadly contemporary with our poet) shows that the characterisation of the Eudocia affair as being akin to imprisonment, regardless of the terms of the treaty between Valentinian III and Gaiseric, is not dissimilar to the way in which Dracontius has his Trojans refer to Hesione. This is not to say that that the poem was written as an immediate response to the sacking itself – the poet would likely have been too young at the time. Rather, the emphasis on previous destructions of Troy is a useful parallel to the sacking of Rome in the middle of the century. As a result, this poem could more plausibly be read as a reaction to events which are dependent on the political ties and events which were precipitated by them in 455. If we go by our only source which describes the full history of Eudocia, the Middle Byzantine chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, we can surmise that the question of Romanness might again arise with the later accession in 472 to the imperial throne of Olybrius, whom Gaiseric favoured to become emperor at various points before this came to pass (particularly in 461). Even though this former senator only lasted a few months, his supporters were not in a position to know this, particularly given his death by natural causes.

FELICIANUS AND THE LOST LETTERS

The presence of the three imperial women at court did not only have vast political ramifications in Carthage and abroad. Rather, their continued stay must have affected other aspects of courtly life, particularly socially and culturally. Indications that this was the case can be seen in the person of Felicianus, Dracontius'

grammaticus. In *Romul.* 1 Dracontius hails Felicianus as the restorer of the so-called *fugatas litteras*. The unusual collocation is not found anywhere else in poetry, nor does Dracontius seem to model it on any textual parallel. Furthermore, the portrayal of Felicianus is equally out of character for a person of his social standing.

In his seminal work, Kaster (1988) casts the *grammaticus* as the "guardian of language" through his efforts of perpetuating a standardised Latin education, which would contribute to the language's longevity and cultural import. His role is essentially passive, passing on received knowledge without too much interference. The way that Dracontius portrays Felicianus, however, seems to violate this rule: he is explicitly portrayed as an active character,[144] not only taking the initiative to promote otherwise maligned or lost literary material but also to be in a position to judge what is or is not good literature, as Dracontius requests of him in *Romul.* 3, as well as to provide approbation to his disciples, as at the end of *Romul.* 1.[145] The exempla and language used of Felicianus further suggests that his role was not merely to pass down texts as cultural capital, but also to provide training in their interpretation. In *Romul.* 1, he is compared to Orpheus, an ur-poet figure. He is thus the archetypal representative of his art from which all else flows. The second comparison drawn from this exemplum is that Felicianus, like Orpheus, brings disparate groups together in pursuit of literary knowledge. More importantly, the exemplum shows that in the event of shared literary pursuit all threat of violence and animosity is neutralised.

[144] At Drac. *Romul.* 3.15 he is described specifically as *doctrina potens*, suggesting that he has the agency and ability to do things, rather than being a mere custodian.
[145] Drac. *Romul.* 1.17: "*nostra vota te precamur ut secundes, optime…*"; *Romul.* 1.21: "*ergo deprecantis, oro, cinge lauro tempora*".

The presence of Felicianus as a guiding figure, and by extension the importance of rhetorical culture and context for interpretation can be seen particularly in the relationship between *Romul.* 1 and *Romul.* 2. The latter begins with a very short introduction (3 lines) as opposed to the programmatic prefaces which we find in the other epic texts of the *Romulea*.[146] However, while it may not have such a prooemium, *Romul.* 1, a poem dedicated to Dracontius' old *grammaticus* Felicianus on the subject of Orpheus, could well be seen as the 'missing' prologue. The superscription to that poem in the *Neapolitanus* reads: *Praefatio Dracontii discipuli ad grammaticum Felicianum ubi dicta est metro trochaico cum fabula Ylae.* The insistence that this is a preface with its story suggests that they should be taken together as a continuous whole.[147] Although by virtue of proximity this seems a natural conclusion to draw, it should be remembered that we are not sure if the collection as we have it is the full extent of the *Romulea* in the first place. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the content, structure, and themes of *Romul.* 1 suggests that this arrangement is both viable, and probably intentional.

If we consider the prefatory material in the other texts under consideration in this dissertation, some recurring features can be deduced. These are: (1) an introduction of the poem's subject matter which often includes a short résumé of the content and general direction in which the poet wishes us to understand the poems; (2) a quasi-philosophical discourse as to the motivations of the characters in the story; and (3)

[146] In this section, I use the terms preface, programmatic preface, and prooemium interchangeably with no implication as to different functions, contrary to Pelttari (2014: 47), who argues for the poets he discusses (Claudian and Prudentius), that they do. With reference to *Romul.* 1 and 2, and the other poems under discussion in this thesis, there is not sufficient difference in content or trope usage to suggest that this should be case in Dracontius.
[147] Bouquet & Wolff (2002: 134) indicate in the *apparatus* that this superscription was written by a second hand (N^2), which Zwierlein (2017: 1) refers to in his *apparatus* as the *lemmatista* or *rubricator*. This is not corroborated by Vollmer (1905) in his description of the manuscript in preface to the *MGH* edition.

indications as to generic matters. A fourth item may also be observed, in which the poet presents himself as lowly and unworthy in the face of superior authors, often quite literally by casting the latter as gods. In *Romul.* 2, it is only the first which is present. Several of the remaining features are to be found in *Romul.* 1.[148]

Romul. 1 falls into three broad parts, of which the first two can be thought of as an exercise in *variatio*. The first part (lines 1-11) describes Orpheus singing to bring together both domesticated and wild beasts in varied settings: in the woods, by a stream, in the mountains. As the title of *Romulea* suggests, the concern is chiefly with the past, here seen as the *priorum litteras* (*Romul.* 1.1), the circularity or revisiting of which is underscored by the verb *renarrant*. Much emphasis is placed on several seemingly incompatible animals being affected by Orpheus' music. At the same time, these are still contrasted, as in *benignus grex* and *cruenta bestia*. This of course prefigures the same seemingly incompatible combination in the second part (lines 12-16) of Romans (presumably corresponding with the *benignus grex*) and barbarians (*cruenta bestia*).[149]

> *nostra vota te precamur, ut secundes, optime,*
> *ante cuncta non recusans illud ipse pendere*
> *nos licet nihil valemus, mos tamen gerendus est.*
> *ergo deprecantis, oro, cinge lauro tempora.*
> Drac. *Romul.* 1. 18-21
> We pray that you favour our vows, great one, while you yourself above all are not unwilling to value each one above all, although we are worthless, we must carry on the tradition. Therefore, I beg you, crown the brow of the one beseeching you with bay.

The third part is effectively about gaining Felicianus' approbation. The theme of the past is still clearly underlined here with the line *nos licet nihil valemus, mos tamen*

[148] Compared with the other texts: all four feature in *Romul.* 8; in *Romul.* 10 and *Orest.* chiefly (1) and (3).
[149] See further Stoehr-Monjou's (2005: 189-193) treatment of the animals mentioned in *Romul.* 1 and its relationship to Claudian's Orpheus preface in *De Raptu Proserpinae*.

gerendus est (Drac. *Romul.* 1.20). While the general intention of this section is similar to what we find in *Romul.* 8, in that the poet paints himself as inferior in relation to previous authors, the nuance here is more in the way of a universal statement of intent which could be read as applicable to the whole collection. This is particularly clear in the second half of the above line. While the phrase *mos gerere* is of course an idiom indicating an acquiescence to another's will,[150] in Dracontius it takes on a double meaning. Translating the phrase in its idiomatic form, we have 'although we are worthless, it should yet be respected'. However, if we translate the phrase with the basic meanings of the words, as is — 'although we are worthless, tradition must yet be continued' — this could provide an intriguing parallel linking *Romul.* 1 and 2 together as an intellectual unit.[151] In this case, we must turn to Hylas and Hercules' first appearance:

> *gestans fulminei pellem cum dentibus apri;*
> *et licet invalidus haec pondera ferre laborat*
> Drac. *Romul.* 2. 96-7
> [Hylas] carrying the shining boar's pelt [still] with its tusks ; and although being weak, he struggled to bear this weight…

There, the description of Hylas carrying the boar's pelt with difficulty is similarly expressed to the way in which Dracontius expresses his (and, given the plural, presumably other late poets') relationship as suppliant to Felicianus-as-Orpheus. If we take the Roman symbolism of Hercules as inherent in the passage, we can consider the weight of the boar's pelt as representative of the (literary) tradition

[150] Cf. *ThLL* s.v. *gero* (6.2.1942.40-83)
[151] Cf. for example Sen. *Contr.* 4.*praef.* 9, *ille in hoc scholasticis morem gerebat* — '(Haterius) bowed to the schoolmen…' in M. Winterbottom's Loeb translation — could just as convincingly be taken as 'he upheld the tradition for the schoolmen, thus taking *scholasticis* as ablative of respect rather than a dative as is usual; so too, Aug. *Serm. Dolbeau* 29.4: *itaque nec in homine qui perversos mores gerit…* ('and so not in the man who upholds perverse customs'). Oros. 2.6.22: *leges plurimas statuit per quas humanum genus libera reverentia disciplinae morem gereret,* 'He instituted several laws through which the human race should have upheld the tradition of the discipline with a willing reverence.'

which Dracontius as poet must bear. Returning to the lines in *Romul.* 1, with the choice of *mos* as well as *gero* and specifically the latter as a gerundive of obligation, the half-line emphasises the *constraint* of the tradition in general terms. This is *mos* as a broad and nebulous concept, rather than the specifics of the given story, as we are told in *Romul.* 8, implying the weight of the tradition in its entirety rather than a particular episode of the Epic Cycle in two chosen authors, or, more appropriately for *Romul.* 2, any previous versions of the Hylas myth.

As the superscription also indicates, *Romul.* 1 is written in trochaic metre[152] rather than hexameters like *Romul.* 2 or elegiac couplets, like other poetic prefaces, thereby departing from the typical programmatic preface we have become used to. A change in metre between prologue and main text is not unusual in Latin literature more broadly: Claudian, for example, has elegiac prefaces to two of the books of *De Raptu Proserpinae*, each of which deal with material unrelated to the plot of the book in question. Both are in some way concerned with abstract issues of poetry. The first describes the first man to sail the sea and how he overcomes his fear to break natural barriers and become master over the waves. Felgentreu (1999: 162) proposes how this can be taken as an allegory of the poet's own forays into writing mythological epic.[153] The second deals with Orpheus. Felgentreu (1999: 215-217) further discusses four possibilities as to the purpose of the prefaces in all of Claudian's work (beyond just *Rapt. Pros.*): to provide introduction; to provide a space wherein the musical qualities of the poet's verse can be presented; a literary

[152] Specifically, the trochaic catalectic tetrameter.
[153] This trope of sea-journeys and sailing being symbolic of both the writing and reading or interpretation of poetry is ancient and widespread in Latin literature and continued well into the Middle Ages: see e.g. *Anth. Lat.* 738R, where the act of reading Virgil is compared to a perilous sea-journey; *Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa* 1-12, where the narrator describes writing the panegyric-epic as though setting sail on an uncertain course.

function, whereby the poet augments his poetic persona serving to distance himself and the reader from parallels between the content of the poem and reality, thereby moving away from the traditional reading of the poet of the preface as the poet of real life; and lastly, to lead the poet's audience into the world-view of the poet and, something which is particular to the more political poems, that of his patron.

As for Dracontius' case, Annick Stoehr-Monjou (2005: 198-9; 199 n. 72) has recently pointed out that the trochaic metre of *Romul.* 1 is typically that used in Christian hymns. This is of course suitable in the broader Christian context, and would appear to correspond with the general manner in which Dracontius presents himself as a priest-disciple of Felicianus here and elsewhere.[154] Although Stoehr-Monjou's (2005) overall assessment of the poem is that Orpheus has been Christianised to some extent, showing shades of the Biblical figures of Christ and David, there is little to suggest any purposeful Christianisation in the rest of the *Romulea*, or indeed necessarily in this particular poem. Rather, the preface exhibits many of the same thematic concerns which we find in the prooemia to *Romul.* 8, 10 and *Orest.* All of these offer some kind of indication as to the poet's inferiority and call on a higher power not necessarily to help him with inspiration or composition, but chiefly as a means of validation, of providing him with poetic legitimacy given his radically different versions of the texts. But whereas in the other texts, this was effected through imprecations to Muses and the deified Virgil and Homer, *Romul.* 1 here

[154] The quasi-Christian element is evoked here chiefly through modes of address as in "*sancte pater, o magister, taliter canendus es,* 'oh master, holy father, you must be sung of in such a way'" (*Romul.* 1.12) and "*nostra vota te precamur ut secundes, optime,* 'We pray that you favour our prayers, best one'" (*Romul.* 1.17). In *Romul.* 3, a comparable preface introducing the *ethopoeia* of Hercules in *Romul.* 4, Dracontius characterises himself thus: '*antistesque tuus, de vestro fonte magister,| Romuleam laetus sumo pro flumine linguam | et pallens reddo pro frugibus ipse poema. | Tu mihi numen eris, si carmina nostra levaris*, 'Master, I as your priest happily take up the language of Romulus from your fountain in place of the river, and I give back this poem in place of offerings of fruit. You shall be a deity to me, if you raise up our poems.'

elevates a (presumably) still living person to the status of a divinity. And not only a living person, but the primary source of the continuation of Roman literary culture, the *grammaticus*. By invoking the favour of Felicianus and elevating him to a godly status, as with Virgil and Homer, Dracontius seeks some kind of approval for his endeavour, almost as if this were something unusual or not natural to him.[155]

In his study on the role of the reader in Late Latin poetry, Pelttari (2014: 45-72) analyses the aesthetics and significance of paratextual material, of which prefaces are naturally a part, for the interpretation of the given text. He contends that in Late Antiquity, prefatory pieces serve to locate the following text or collection in a specific contemporary time and place, and, in so doing, "set out for their readers [the poets'] own approach to the text" (Pelttari 2014: 56). He notes variously, with particular reference to the prefaces of Claudian, that in these texts the poet is specifically appealing to the reader to take what follows on the poet's own terms, and in so doing gives himself the literary authority through self-presentation as figures of myth.

The function of Dracontius' prefaces only follows Pelttari's (2014) scheme to a certain degree and even then, in more general terms. Like the prefaces to Claudian's panegyrics, Dracontius' *Romul.* 1 is invocatory, and therefore links the poet to a particular social context. However, there is little which would point to a temporal context with any certainty. While he refers particularly to Felicianus' lecture room, and to the kind of scholastic activity which takes place there, it is ambiguous whether this is a contemporary observation or a reminiscence of a distant youth. I

[155] Note his preference in *Romul.* 3 for *vestro fonte*, Felicianus' fountain of knowledge, as opposed to the river (presumably common to everyone else) and his reluctance to use the word *Romanus* as opposed to *Romuleus*, possibly indicating a certain distance and foreignness.

also question the degree to which this can be taken to represent Pelttari's (2014) characterisation of specific temporal location. Dracontius positions himself abstractly in time, insofar as he is a belated example of the literary tradition (*nos nihil valemus*), but given that the *Romulea* is not a collection of occasional poetry, there is no clear indication as to whether this is to be taken in the context of a particular event or occasion.[156]

In this, I am unsure whether we should be taking this prefatory material as an indication of "authorised reading" in the same way as Pelttari (2014) does the comparable prefaces in Claudian. Unlike the latter author, Dracontius transfers literary authority to someone who is as far as we can tell, and certainly as our author presents him, not a poet, but a receptacle and guardian of tradition and learning. He thus emphasises the historicity of the collection (picking up again on the title of *Romulea* as ancient, and somewhat mythical) by invoking the past not only through the use of the myth of Orpheus but also through the pervasive presence of the *priores*. Furthermore, in transferring this authority to the deified Felicianus, he also transfers the agency for judging (*pendere*) the worth of the pieces which are treated as offerings to him. By denying the reader the space to create meaning (i.e. for them to act as the "powerful reader" of Pelttari's (2014) theory) and instead placing the power of judgement with the dedicatee, Dracontius is effectively forcing the work to be taken on the terms predicated by the rhetorical milieu. This can be taken to apply immediately to *Romul.* 2 as well as to the rest of the collection. In the case of the former, the emphasis placed upon the past and Dracontius' reverence towards Felicianus as guardian of this past foreshadows the way in which he

[156] Of course, with the exception of the (perhaps apocryphal) subscription to *Romul.* 5, giving the performance context of the Gargilian baths.

interacts with Ovid in the Hylas poem (see below), while in the case of the latter, it points to the wider aesthetic that these poems should perhaps be read and taken in the same tradition as the great names among the *priores*. In this way, Dracontius almost gives the reader *carte blanche* to determine the significance of the texts, all the while reminding them that he is fully aware and in control of what he is doing as author.

Why should literature have been put to flight, and what might have caused it to be restored? Earlier authors give evidence of there being a thriving literary scene in Carthage long before Dracontius comes to write the *Romulea*. Salvianus of Marseilles' testimony as to the pre-eminence of the city has already been given on multiple occasions in the previous chapter, and Augustine's recounting of his rhetorical education does not show want of material.[157] So too the grammars by such authors as Donatus, whose works had become standard textbooks by the 5th century. The most plausible explanation for using the word *fugatas* is that this refers to literature which had fallen out of fashion. The Nicene Catholics such as Augustine and Victor of Vita presumably had a monopoly on the cultural scene in the time immediately preceding the capture of Carthage in the late 430s, and even if secular learning did continue unabated as it did elsewhere in both the West and the East, the curriculum was perhaps limited to the approved canon. By 455, when the Gaiseric had brought back the imperial women back to Carthage, the situation would have changed dramatically. Licinia Eudoxia had an illustrious literary background: her mother was the Eastern empress and poet Aelia Eudoxia, who, it is said, was once a pagan and daughter of a Neoplatonist philosopher. The Western Roman court

[157] E.g. Aug. *conf.* 1.13 explicitly refers to the *Aeneid* as well as Greek letters; *conf.* 1.14 to Homer and Virgil; *conf.* 1.16 to Terence.

into which she married already had a well-established literary character from the time of Honorius and his court poet Claudian in the late 4th/early 5th century. Different sources suggest different motivations for Eudoxia and her daughters to sail with the Vandals, but regardless of the impetus, it is unlikely that three women of the imperial household would travel without some retainers, even if they were political prisoners, and especially so if they all leave Carthage for the East without apparent hindrance at a later point.

Taking into account the personal power which Dracontius attributes to Felicianus, an increased exposure of previously 'unpopular' literature to both the general public as well as Felicianus' apparently broad range of students could allow our poet to make more use of a more diverse set of intertextual correspondences. That this new vogue was possibly influenced by the arrival of essentially a second imperial court to Carthage in the form of the three Theodosian women, suggests that the relationship with Rome is something which became topical, and that these texts allowed Dracontius a range of materials with which he could engage on this matter. To this end, I now consider some case studies where Dracontius articulates his relationship with Rome both ideologically and with reference to his literary inheritance.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND VIEWS ON ROME

One of Dracontius' major changes to the Medea myth in *Romul.* 10 is to move the events traditionally associated with Corinth to Thebes. Aside from the fact that geographical re-placements are of considerable significance to Dracontius' overall programme, as we have seen in *Romul.* 8 and *Orest.*, geography plays an important

role in the Medea myth in and of itself (cf. Graf 1997: 22; Moreau 1994: 157, 162) as well as in mythography more broadly (see discussions in Cameron 2004). In this section therefore I will examine the concept of Thebes as a literary device in the epic literature preceding Dracontius, chiefly Statius, before considering how this might be understood in the context of *Romul.* 10. It will be seen that by invoking Thebes, and particularly the Thebes of Statius, Dracontius invites us to consider his poem in the same manner as the Flavian author treats his material: as a proxy for a contemporary reading.

While such a change may be unique in what it sets out to achieve, as we shall see, it should first be noted that the move to Thebes does have precedents in earlier Latin literature. Particularly relevant here is Hyginus' version of the myth, which not only conflates the Creon of the Medea myth with the Creon of the Theban cycle (Hyg. *Fab.* 25.2), but also is the unique source in Latin literature up until this point for the name of Glauce referring to his daughter (Kaufmann 2006: 346 n. 369).[158] The change may also stem from some traits found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, particularly the repetition of sowing the teeth of the dragon, first by Cadmus in Book 3, and subsequently by Medea before stealing the fleece in Book 7. Both of these episodes receive the same subtitle in Pseudo-Lactantius' summary of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid *Her.* 12 also associates Jason metaphorically with Cadmus, which might have influenced Dracontius to change the location.

[158] Besides being the name used by Euripides in his *Medea*, the name Glauce for this character occurs in Latin again in the summary of the First Vatican Mythographer (25), an 8th or 9th century work which clearly also had Hyginus as a source (Pepin 2008: 5-6). Here Glauce is simply referred to as a 'mistress', transforming into a 'concubine' in the slightly later summary of the Second Vatican Mythographer (161).

The connection between Dracontius' changes to myth and his eccentric grasp of geography are nevertheless significant, given that the links between myth and geography is well established in mythographic traditions. Cameron (2004: 227) notes the popularity of geographies with mythic content during Late Antiquity, such as the voluminous *Ethnica* of Stephanus of Byzantium in the 6th century, which must have stemmed from an earlier tradition of mythological atlases. He further highlights how, in texts such as Lucian's *De saltatione*, myths are organised in terms of their geographic setting rather than by other methods (Cameron 2004: 228). Indeed, as I have noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Medea myth itself is closely tied up with its geography (cf. Graf 1997: 22) If we understand this kind of thinking as a rhetorical tool, that is, that reference works such as these are but one of the many resources available to orators and writers, it becomes apparent that Dracontius' treatment of any of his stories can very easily be seen as rhetorical exempla which had been expanded upon in a meaningful way. Cameron (2004: 269) neatly summarises this attitude with the example of the story of the Argonauts: "Apollonius' *Argonautica* at once became the canonical version for the story of the Argonauts, but for that very reason, any poet wishing to be thought learned would try to show knowledge of a few non-Apollonian traditions". Even so, such alternative traditions come with their own set of symbolic connotations, which could have formed just as much of a motivation for inclusion as erudition.

The city of Thebes in particular has been identified as a significant literary construct in the literature of classical Antiquity. Chiefly in Greek tragedy, as has been shown by Zeitlin (1990: 144-5), Thebes exists as a setting for the action of a story upon a continuum, being diametrically opposite to Athens, and with Argos existing as

something of a middle ground. As a result, Thebes often acts as an "anti-Athens", a place which is seen to be the epitome of everything immoral or undesirable, when compared on a moralistic level with the tragedians' own city of Athens. Typically, Thebes as a trope is characterised by the way in which it maintains its insularity, how it is the iconic *locus* of "imprisonment, exile, negation, and death" (Zeitlin 1990: 147) and, following on from this, how kings in particular are 'poisoned' such they lose sight of what is best for the city by privileging themselves over their people, in short engendering tyrannical rule. In this way, by removing the action to Thebes, the poet is able to discuss and be critical of ideas surrounding, *inter alia*, monarchy, kingship and power.

In terms of Latin literature, Thebes and the Theban myths have been seen as a possible means of expressing sentiments contrary to those heroic values of the *Aeneid*. For example, Hardie (1990) has shown how Ovid, in his retelling of the Theban myths at *Met.* 3.1-4.603, creates an 'anti-*Aeneid*', after a fashion, by paralleling the narrative techniques used by Virgil in this new context, specifically the obsession with origins, the tension between the rural and the urban, and the interventions of Juno in the activities of the hero. It is not simply the fact that these are imitations of scenes and characterisations from Virgil, but rather that they are repeatedly frustrated.

Statius too, as author of the *Thebaid,* is a significant contributor to the subversive tradition of epic poetry. Recent scholarship on the Flavian author, particularly those studies which are keen to draw parallels between the epic text and the author's contemporary milieu, has proposed some ways in which the city of Thebes might be

considered as a way of thinking about Rome itself. Again, as with the concept of reading myth as a metaphor for a political situation in general, there is an ancient precedent for considering the city of Thebes as having political subtext. In particular, Theban episodes which are used as parallels for current affairs are to be found in already in Cicero (*Att.* 2.25.1; 7.11.1; cf. Braund 2006: 266)[159], where quotations from Euripides are used to underline his displeasure with Caesar, and likewise appear in Lucan (see McNelis 2007: 4). McNelis (2007: 8) and Braund (2006: 271) both underline that one of the most important attributes of Thebes is how it represents not being able to "escape one's origins". Dominik's (1994) study points out the similarity between Thebes and Rome on the level of the characters. He is keen to associate the tyrant Domitian with Statius' Eteocles. Following on from Zeitlin's (1990) assessment of Thebes as the mirror image of Athens, Braund (2006) likewise characterises Thebes as a mirror image for Rome, not by ascribing to the story exact contemporary references to Domitian, but by capitalising on ancient obsession with Thebes as a trope. As she further notes, Thebes is inextricably linked with duality ('Two'), and the resolution of this tension into the victory of One: fratricide, and the civil war which accompanies it. Likewise, McNelis (2007: 5) points out in his study, also following Zeitlin's (1990) Athenian model, that whereas for the Greeks Thebes represented Otherness, for Romans it "has become the self".

By the time of Late Antiquity the grammarian Lactantius Placidus had produced exegetical commentaries on both the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid,* suggesting that Statius was a figure worthy of study and hence potentially influential in literary circles.

[159] Cic. *Att.* 2.25.1: *mirabiliter enim moratus est, sicut nosti,* 'ἐλικτὰ καὶ οὐδέν. . .'. *sed nos tenemus praeceptum illud,* 'τὰς τῶν κρατούντων. . .'. The latter quote is Polynices' speech at Eur. *Phoen.* 393.

Such treatment also places him in the same category of "wise ancients" as Virgil. His influence can otherwise be seen in both poetry and prose, in terms of both content and expression. For example, the occasional poetry of Sidonius Apollinaris can be seen as a spiritual successor to Statius' own collection of *Silvae* (Kaufmann 2015 indicates that the number of textual remembrances of Statius outnumbers Virgil and Ovid in this author), and likewise the unfinished *De Raptu Proserpinae* of Claudian has been compared to Statius' unfinished *Achilleid* in both characterisation of the titular characters, as well as structure (Kaufmann 2015: 487). In prose, Statius can be seen most prominently as exemplary material in the works of the grammarians, where the objective is to show felicitous or awkward usage of language and style.

It has recently been shown by Broganelli (2013) that symbolic references to Statius' *Thebaid* could also still be made with good effect in Late Antiquity. With regard to Claudian's invective *In Gildonem*, she argues that, in the first instance, this text is constructed as a mirror image to the overall structure of the first two books of Statius' epic. In so doing, it sets up the opposition of Athens (as the origin of the ultimate victor Theseus) and Thebes (as the place where it all goes wrong) to encompass Rome and Africa respectively, and hence show Rome's ultimate superiority (Broganelli 2013: 101, 111). The Theban cycle is of course a natural one to associate with civil and fraternal war, and thus the choice of Statius' text (given its prominent circulation as already discussed) on which to model the invective would probably not have gone unnoticed by a contemporary audience.

Although Dracontius occasionally mentions other poets by name, only Statius is described in terms which indicate our author explicitly reading him. This admission

to knowledge of the Flavian epicist comes in passing in the middle of the third book of the *Laudes Dei*:

> *Menoecea Creontis*
> *Statius ostendit quia fuso sponte cruore,*
> *ut pater orbatus furiarum regna teneret,*
> *Thebanos proprio perfudit sanguine muros.*
> Drac. *laud. Dei* 3.261-4
> Statius shows Menoeceus son of Creon, and that, once his gore was spilled, willingly he soaked the Theban walls with his own blood, so that his father, bereft of his children, might preserve the kingdom of the Furies.

Aside from referencing him as an *exemplum*, evidence of Dracontius' interaction with the work of Statius can be seen in a considerable number of *loci similes*. Moussy (1989: 426) counts 124 instances of such remembrances across the entirety of Dracontius' poetic output. The majority are to be found in the *Romulea* and *Orestis tragoedia*, and of these two, it is the latter which has the highest proportion, at 49 instances. These *loci similes* exhibit a full range from two word *iuncturae* to longer lines, which may be either quoted in full, or lightly adapted to fit the context. Moussy (1989: 431) further points out that Dracontius does not always feel the need to restrict his borrowing to one particular work, but also occasionally conflates from diverse Statian sources.

In a recent article, Lavinia Galli-Milić (2015) further examined how Statius' *Thebaid* is employed in our text. She begins by noting that the *Thebaid* is practically omnipresent in the poem. In terms of structure, she identifies five parts which work in much the same way as the five-part structure I have identified for *Romul.* 8 (Galli- Milić 2015: 324): prologue (*Romul.* 10.1-31) complemented by epilogue (570-601), *Medea amans* (32-340) contrasted with *Medea furens* (366-569) and a short linking passage in the middle (340-365). Each of these sections are introduced by a

Statian intertext. Thus, outside of the "*ventum erat ad Thebas*" which introduces the second half of the poem, we have several other lines which point to an underlying familiarity with the *Thebaid*. Her conclusions are threefold: in the first instance she claims that Dracontius uses intertextuality as a system of analogies to remind audiences of similarities between the two texts (Galli-Milić 2015: 328); she then further states that it is also seen as a means of creating style: claiming that "l'intertextualité et l'allusion à Stace interviennent pour noircir la légèreté pantomimique de la première partie du *Romul.* 10…" (Galli-Milić 2015 : 338). Finally, she identifies in Dracontius a "conscience de secondarité par rapport aux prédecésseurs ainsi qu'une tension entre le respect d'une tradition et la tentation de s'en écarter" (Galli-Milić 2015 : 339). While I generally agree with her first proposition, she underplays the significance of this invocation of earlier literature, and most of her observations tend to fall into the second category of rhetorical colouring, with the result that the original Statian scene may just as well have been considered as a stylistic model to be imitated rather than an intertextual reference to be exploited. As an example, of this, she notes that Medea putting the dragon to sleep at *Romul.* 10. 361-366 is effectively the same as Mercury enchanting Cerberus at *Theb.* 2.28.31. So too, is the description of the poisoned crown, which takes as its basic design Val. Fl. 5.455, with Statian overtones from *Theb.* 1.91.

Martha Malamud (2012) has also made some useful remarks about the relationship between Dracontius and Statius, again with regard to the prologue. Although it would appear that Thebes appears rather abruptly, given that the first mention of it is with the Statian intertext "*ventum erat ad Thebas*" at *Romul.* 10.366. Malamud (2012: 185) proposes that Thebes is in fact present from the very beginning of the

poem, and that, read intertextually, the invocation of Calliope in the Dracontian prologue is an invocation of the Calliope we find in *Theb.* 4 specifically. Indeed, though she does not say this explicitly, certain parts of *Thebaid* 4 do seem to have been adapted for use in *Romul.* 10, such as Manto's ritual when assisting Tiresias, which resemble Medea's preparations before the three invocations. Her interpretation of this phenomenon is that the *Thebaid*, as source material which deals with a repetitive dynastic problem, is attractive to our author given his socio-political situation, but still places Dracontius in the position of persecuted Roman under barbarian Vandal rule. Indeed, there is little in the historical record to suggest an all-out war between members of the Hasding family.[160] The effect of this, however, she appears to understate. She says "it is axiomatic in classic poetry: if Thebes, then troubling doubling" (Malamud 2012: 183) and this doubling she relates specifically to the abundance of parallelistic material in the poem, rather than any symbolic use of Thebes. Indeed, she seems to vacillate between whether the poem should be considered comic and playful or whether these references carry more serious import.

Both Galli-Milić (2015) and Malamud's (2012) interpretations of Statian involvement in *Romul.* 10 point to the intertexts being used to create an overall style and tone similar to the earlier poem. On the one hand, this is a plausible conclusion to draw. If *Romul.* 10 is to be seen as the 'Statian' epic, then *Romul.* 8 might be considered the 'Virgilian/Homeric' epic, and *Orest.* the 'Senecan' epic and in this way, the *Romulea* as a collection can be seen as a larger rhetorical project exploring variations in style and genre. At the same time, however, the widespread

[160] Though Huneric is said to have eliminated family members, this was to ensure that his own son Hilderic succeeded him rather than another distant family member. See again Wood (2006: 59-61) for matters of Vandal succession.

referencing of the *Thebaid* also points to the use of Thebes as a rhetorical device, and that by invoking Thebes, we are invited to think of it as possessing the same or similar symbolic connotations as we find in Statius.

To this end, three main characteristics of Thebes are uppermost: as a place removed from, but reflecting the poet's existence; as a place where everything goes wrong; and as a place of recurring warfare between two parties, which is eventually resolved by a third, external party. The first two are related, as first Thebes takes on the role of surrogate for Carthage, then underlines the fact that all is not well by virtue of this association, thus fulfilling the same function as Statius' Thebes. By announcing the association with Thebes, the poet is able at once to underline that the issues that follow are relevant to the place in which he resides, but can indicated with relative impunity that there is something troubled about it. With regard to the third characteristic, it is clear from the very beginning of the poem that there is a clear tension between the agents of marriage acting on behalf of Juno (Venus and Cupid, with the minor support of Liber) and the agents of virginity (Medea, as proxy for Diana).[161] We might ascribe these two groups as the belligerent parties, equivalent to Eteocles and Polynices, which are recalled by invoking the Statian Thebes. However, whereas the *Thebaid* has this tension between two resolved by a third, foreign power, there is no salutary force in *Romul.* 10. Medea, in all her omnipotent power, is the victorious party and destroys the Theban royal family as well as her own children. Though she puts an end to the Theban story, as is shown by the mythistorical resumé in the epilogue, she still does not 'resolve' the Theban dilemma, given her traditional propensity to depart for the next, undefined location.

[161] See chapter 4 for an exploration of this theme in relation to the figure of Medea.

The Medea myth can be interpreted as an expression of fear for the indiscriminate destruction of both a dynasty and a city by a powerful foreign entity. Moreover, this comes about as a result of ill-thought out marriages. From a rhetorical perspective, this is a negative exemplum that one ought not to follow, and a warning as to the potential destructive consequences if one did.

PARIS AND AENEAS

While *Romul.* 10 showed the intertextual influence of the city (here modelled on Rome) as a rhetorical tool, characters can evoke a connection with the Roman past, too. As noted previously, the overriding concern of *Romul.* 8 is the character of Paris, regardless of the poem's title. As such, given his importance, he is also the only character who is given any significant description in the course of the poem. The following examination will reveal that this description is particularly significant in light of Dracontius' acknowledgement of indebtedness to his epic forerunners, and is one way in which our poet mobilises this tradition to comment on the contemporary political landscape, particularly in terms of the question of the primacy of "Roman" power and heroism.

The characterisation of Paris according to these qualities is unique to Dracontius. Although it is less likely that Dracontius made use of Greek texts, the Greek text which stands closest in content to *Romul.* 8 — and which would thus give rise to immediate comparison — is Colluthus' similarly titled *Rape of Helen.* While some

have been eager to see parallels between the two texts,[162] the overall treatment of the subject matter differs considerably. Colluthus' text is particularly different, in terms of characterisation, in the emphasis on Paris' attractive countenance and effeminate nature, which follows on from the Homeric tradition, and nothing which describes his moral achievements or failures as a person. As Scaffai (1982: 64 n.3) puts it, "la virtuosa mollezza di Paride è un luogo commune che… si sviluppa con i lirici e i tragici greci, e poi, in Roma, a partire dall' *Alexander* enniano". Given Dracontius' invocation of Homer, it might also be tempting to see parallels between the iconic Greek epics and our text. While Paris is indeed a negative character in Homer's *Iliad,* the application of negativity is once again different. Whereas in Dracontius the negativity is shared equally between narrator and the characters in the story, in Homer this is the province of the characters. Consider, for example, Hector addressing Paris at Hom. *Il.* 3.38-42:

> Τὸν δ' Ἕκτωρ νείκεσσεν ἰδὼν αἰσχροῖς ἐπέεσσιν·
> "Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε, γυναιμανές, ἠπεροπευτά,
> αἴθ' ὄφελες ἄγονός τ' ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ' ἀπολέσθαι.
> καὶ κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καί κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν
> ἢ οὕτω λώβην τ'ἔμεναι καὶ ὑπόψιον ἄλλων.
>
> But Hector saw him, and rebuked him with reproachful words: "Evil Paris, most fair to look on, you who are mad after women, you deceiver, I wish that you had never been born and had died unwed. I both wish this, and it would have been far better than that you should be an outrage like this and an object of scorn to other men (transl. A.T. Murray & W.F. Wyatt).

[162] Moussy (2002: 14 n.5) for example, insisted that they were structurally similar due to the presence of a storm scene. Morales (2016: 75) has compared Colluthus and Dracontius in a recent article and argues that similar subject matter and period of composition of the two poems demands consideration from the perspective of a larger, ideological discourse about rape. This view is problematic with regard to Dracontius, not least because his narrative is not focused on Helen at all, but rather the failings of Paris and the negative consequences of his actions, besides the fact that it is not a *raptus* in the traditional sense, given that Helen suggests their elopement. As I have argued above, when presented this way in the broader context of the poem, the *raptus* has very little to do with rape at all, but rather the imperatives and constraints of the literary tradition.

Conversely, Paris is regularly *theoeidês,* godlike, for the Homeric narrator. And, crucially, these descriptions make no reference to either social standing or moral rectitude.

In the other Latin narrative works dealing with the Trojan cycle, descriptions of Paris, while negative, do not sustain their negativity with such regularity as Dracontius'. In the *Ilias Latina* (*Homer.*), Paris is indeed identified as being the cause of Troy's misfortune. At *Homer.* 234, he is *belli causa Paris, patriae funesta ruina* ('Paris, the cause of the war, his country's terrible ruin'). Similarly, at *Homer.* 253, he is the *exitium Troiae funestaque flamma* ('the end of Troy and a deadly flame). Indeed, *flamma* is the predominant word associated with Paris in the *Ilias Latina*, but it is far more frequently applied in his capacity as lover, rather than traitor. Moreover, Paris and Helen in the *Ilias Latina* are presented as a pair of elegiac lovers, rather than characters typical of epic. Other epithets used of Paris are neutral, pointing simply to his origin (e.g. *Dardanio… Paridi, Homer.* 318), or even positive (*pulcher Alexander, clipeoque insignis et hasta*, *Homer.* 282). Among all of these epithets, only once is Paris referred to as *praedonis Phrygii* (*Homer.* 292), but Scaffai (1997: 264 n. 292) finds only a resemblance to Virgil, and no Homeric parallel for this turn of phrase, bringing us back to a Roman connection for this negativity towards Priam's son.

It has already been pointed out that the prose works — i.e. Dictys and Dares — are significant narrative sources for Dracontius. In terms of characterisation, these texts show Dictys to be the more negative of the two towards Paris (naturally, given the text's self-designated allegiance to the Greeks). He is a traitor and assassin

(Dict. 1.5) and is a competent schemer, as his actions upon learning about the popular sentiment being on the side of the Greeks show (Dict. 2.8). In Dares 12, there is a list of portraits of some of the characters, including Paris and Aeneas. Most of these are archetypes, showing repetitive, barely individualising physiognomic traits. But besides his physical characteristics of being *candidum longum fortem oculis pulcherrimis capillo molli et flavo ore venusto voce suavi velocem* (Dares 12), Paris is *cupidum imperii* too, a trait which certainly underpins a large part of Dracontius' characterisation.[163]

And yet, while these examples have merely passing similarities with our text, much of the language which is used to describe Paris is found most convincingly to be in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and specifically in connection with its hero Aeneas. In the first place, the epithets which we find applied to Paris (*pastor, praedo*) are also applied to Aeneas, mostly during his exploits in Italy. Moreover, Aeneas is directly compared to Paris. But the simile is meant as a slur, and not a compliment. Importantly, as seen with Homer, these comparisons are given to characters within the epic who are opposed to the hero, so it is thus significant that the narrator should become part of this trend in Dracontius. That these negative aspects of Aeneas, taking place in the second half of Virgil's epic, should be evoked, if not carefully selected, is not surprising. Both figures are outsiders come to upset the *status quo* in order to fulfil their fate. Especially important in this regard is the epithet *praedo*, for Aeneas, too, is *praedo* to the native Italians. Here again we have the archetype of an outsider led by divine intervention to his destiny, but in so doing upsetting the political landscape of the indigenous tribes — and once again, a political landscape which is

[163] See Chapter 3, pp. 151-158.

intricately tied up with marriage. Aeneas himself, furthermore, is called *praedo* and compared to Paris in an exemplum at *Aen.* 7.354-372. The Latin matrons pray for Aeneas as the *Phrygius praedo* to be slain at *Aen.* 11.481-485, while Mezentius uses the term of his opponent in battle at *Aen.* 10. 773-776. And the epithet is fitting, for Aeneas, too, plays by his own rules, the rules which his fate dictates for him.

The parallels extend into description on the level of the story too. Bright (1987: 92) observes that Paris' arrival in Cyprus effectively mirrors his two arrivals in Troy (on both occasions) and that this pattern is thematised as part of his character. Similarly, scholars (e.g. Bright 1987; Agudo Cubas 1978; 2010; Schetter 1987; Wolff 2002) have noted, for the most part in passing, that his arrival there and subsequent meeting with Helen draws heavily on the meeting of Dido and Aeneas in the first book of the *Aeneid.* Aside from the fact that Paris and Aeneas both arrive in their respective foreign countries through the agency of a storm, Paris arrives as an unknown guest[164] and comes upon Helen in the temple of Venus, just as Aeneas came upon Dido in the temple of Juno. Paris' outfit (*vestibus indutus Tyriis…*, *Romul.* 8.482) recalls that of Aeneas in the fourth book of Virgil's poem (*Aen.* 4.261-264). Described by Dracontius using free indirect speech, the meeting itself proceeds as in the *Aeneid*: Paris looks around at the splendour of the hall as does Aeneas, and just as Dido asks about the origins of the travellers, so does Helen ask of Paris who he is and how he came to be on Cyprus. Likewise, where Aeneas must abandon Dido and leave Carthage to sail to Italy to fulfil his destiny, Paris' destiny is, as the story demands, to take Helen with him.

[164] A *perfidus hospes* to Dracontius, likely recalling both Horace *Carm.* 1.15.1-2 and more generally the kind of Virgilian language at Verg. *Aen.* 4.305.

The storm episode, which I have spoken of briefly in Chapter 1 in the context of structural concerns, and how it serves to separate Paris from the rest of the embassy and allow him to meet with Helen also deserves some attention here in the context of how it relates to its Virgilian precedent. Storm scenes are, of course, standard fare in epic poetry. They were first used in Latin literature via the Greek tradition, specifically in Livius Andronicus' translation of the *Odyssey*. Thereafter, they appear in every major epic poet's work from Virgil to the Flavians, but notably also have a significant use as a metaphor in drama, both of the Republican period and Seneca (Burck 1978: 4). In epic, these storm scenes tend to function in both an expository and transitional ways. For example, the storm in Book 1 of the *Aeneid* introduces us to the main character, as well as the reason for his wanderings and the Trojans' misfortunes (i.e. Juno's anger). Yet at the same time, it is the introduction to a significant narrative arc (Aeneas in North Africa and affair with Dido). It is worth noting that there is no storm scene in *Orest.* even though Agamemnon is blown off course to Tauris. This could be attributed to the different generic strategies between *Romul.* 8 and *Orest.* Whereas the latter explicitly inscribes itself in a tragic (i.e. dramatic) framework by calling upon Melpomene, the former poem is consciously emulating standard Virgilian or Homeric epic, and as a result Dracontius could have been compelled to make use of this conventional epic device.

As with much else in *Romul.* 8 which concerns Paris, this storm serves as another connection to Virgil's *Aeneid*. At the beginning of Book 1, Juno asks Aeolus to release captive winds and conjure a storm to prevent Aeneas from reaching Italy, only to send him to North Africa where he can be safely detained by his affair with Dido.

Similarly, an adulterous affair results between a shipwrecked Trojan prince and his foreign host in *Romul.* 8. A cursory comparison between the two storm scenes shows several points of linguistic similarity.[165] However, the storm scene in *Romul.* 8 departs from its model in a number of significant ways which suggest that its interpretation here is quite different. In the first instance, the storm arises out of nowhere, without any intervention from gods or Titan-like personified winds. Its appearance is almost accidental — another in a series of unfolding episodes, as the casual *interea* indicates. Secondly, Virgil's storm has a totalising proportion: the sun disappears and the world is plunged into darkest night, followed by dramatic thunder and lightning. In *Romul.* 8, the storm is limited to wind and water posing a threat to the ship. Thirdly, Virgil acknowledges that the storm affects the whole crew, referring to shouts of men and giving Aeneas a speech designed to calm his fellow sailors. Conversely, the 'threat' in Dracontius is entirely to Paris.

Certain scholars have also noted the way in which storm scenes can be used to express political allegory. Hardie (1986: 90-97) discusses how the construction of the storm in Virgil's *Aeneid* is effectively a series of gigantomachic tropes, with the winds which Aeolus releases threatening not only Aeneas and his crew, but the very fabric of the universe. Gigantomachy, the struggle between the Titans and the gods of Olympus, is a well-established means of expressing concern for the stability of the state, and of any disorder which should seek to unsettle it. In later authors, the storm scene is an important set-piece in a similar gigantomachic tradition, such as in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*. Here, the Flavian author reworks motifs from Virgil's storm scene to show that Boreas and Aeolus represent rebellious and

[165] For example: the involvement of *Africus,* the south-west wind, *intentant… mortem* (Vir. *Aen.* 1.91) vs. *intentans… ruinam* (Drac. *Romul.* 8. 393), *extemplo… solvuntur frigore membra* (Vir. *Aen.* 1.93) vs. *obriguit per membra* (Drac. *Romul.* 8.398). See also Agudo Cubas (1978: 281).

opposing political forces to Jupiter's imperialistic plans, and that by preventing the Argo from reaching Colchis, they are preventing Jupiter from fulfilling his designs.[166] Given the absence of any supernatural powers in the creation of the storm and general focus on Paris himself, a gigantomachic reading of the storm scene in *Romul.* 8 does not appear to be satisfactory. Rather, given its position right in the middle of the poem as well as its structural function, we may take the storm scene in much the same way as the omens which accompany Paris' arrival in Troy, that is, as a portent of the doom which must be the outcome of the story. This is particularly noticeable in the way in which Dracontius describes the sea as being like walls and towers of water:

> *iam ventus subduxit aquas, extundit harenas*
> *pressa carina solo: murus stat celsior unda*
> *circumfusa rati, vastarum turris aquarum*
> *pendet et elati percellunt carbasa fluctus.*
>
> Drac. *Romul.* 8.394-397
>
> Now the wind took up the waters, the keel having been pressed down forced out the sand from the sea-floor: a higher wave, poured around from the boat, stands like a wall, a tower of vast water hangs over them, and the elevated flows beat against the sails.

The comparison of the high waves to architectural features of a walled city recalls Dracontius' earlier description at *Romul.* 8.72-74, where Troy's tower and walls fall in pieces. The prophetic quality is also enhanced by Dracontius adaptation of Virgilian phrasing in *Romul.* 8.392-3: *naufragiumque diu ratibus suspensa minatur | desuper intentans pelago veniente ruinam*, 'And for a long time [the] suspended [wave] threatened the boats with shipwreck, since the sea was coming, it intended ruin upon them'. Here, Dracontius has replaced *mortem* with *ruinam*, less specific to

[166] See Stover (2012: 81-90; 110-111)

a particular person, and rather more generally applied to the well-being of his environment, just as the people of Troy will be ruined by his future actions.

The closure of the storm scene also bears some resemblance to the Virgilian original, and again shows up Paris' character as a poor derivative of Aeneas. Whereas the latter is jolted out of a state of shock to boost his crew's morale, Paris remains stuck fast, and instead leads into a speech despairing of his own situation.

Paris is, of course, an inherently negative character, and any connections with the *Aeneid* may seem superfluous to his characterisation. However, on more than one occasion Dracontius points to the *Aeneid* as an important text to have in mind when reading *Romul.* 8. Firstly, he has made Virgil the object of his epic invocation, elevating him to the rank of god and proclaiming his authority in terms of literary expression (*numina vestra vocans, Romul.* 8.22; *te lingua Latina | commendat…*, *Romul.* 8. 28-9). Furthermore, Dracontius highlights the importance of the *Aeneid* as an integral part of his literary programme, with reference to Paris in particular, by putting the very obvious quote *imperium sine fine* into the mouth of Apollo. It has already been shown how, in this text, prophetic speech and fate is associated with literary authority, so this can be seen as a means by which Dracontius is inviting us to consider Paris (and indeed the other Trojans) as a shorthand for the Romans of his own world.

Dracontius chooses to ignore most intertextual agendas in the Callimachean manner,[167] but when he does engage in this way, it is typically pointed, and narrow in scope. In this specific case it would appear that characteristics of the iconic Roman hero have been selected here for two reasons. The first is quite practical: the *Aeneid* had become a school text almost immediately after it was published, and thus would be the text with which all educated people ('Roman' and Vandal alike) would at least have a reasonable familiarity (if we are to believe *Romul.* 1 and the description of Felicianus as a saviour of Latin literature). Furthermore, if *Romul.* 8 did have, in part, the objective of questioning traditional Roman values, as this thesis is suggesting, then any references to other texts would have to be drawn from texts which could be recognised with relative ease. Aeneas is thus also chosen because he is the emblematic *Roman* hero. As with the Virgilian text being the most widely known and immediately identifiable piece of Latin literature by virtue of its position in the grammar schools, Aeneas could be considered as the most identifiable Roman, particularly in light of the kind of contemporary associations which we will see can be applied to him via mirror scenes. By associating the archetypal Roman founding father with the inept would-be ruler and one-time shepherd, Dracontius is essentially commenting negatively on the very foundations of Roman literary culture and likewise on frameworks of power and empire which are typically Roman. Apollo's speech for example, as we have noted, promises the thoroughly Roman *imperium sine fine*, while Paris' arrival in Cyprus is accompanied by an extended scene of augury, another typically Roman practice.

[167] That is to say, that full line quotes or remembrances, half-lines, and even smaller linguistic units, import their interpretive meaning from their source text into a new context in the new text, thereby colouring the meaning of the poem at hand.

It is thus evident from these portrayals that by duplicating the negative aspects of Aeneas within the negative descriptions of Paris, Dracontius is inscribing his work within the tradition of doubtfulness regarding the heroism and valour of Aeneas as the ultimate Roman hero. This tradition was not a new development of Late Antiquity per se, but skepticism of this nature had until this time been more the province of Greek authors, for obvious reasons of Roman patriotism.[168] This is not to say, however, that there had not been Roman authors who did not question Aeneas' integrity. Both Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius also form part of this tradition, with the former making Aeneas complicit even in the kidnapping of Helen, and furthermore plotting against Priam to bring Troy to its downfall. In Dares, the character is otherwise 'good', but these two authors' involvement in this tradition is nevertheless made all the more significant by Dracontius' close relationship with their retellings of the Trojan material. Even Servius, one of the most prominent and voluminous Late Antique commentators on the *Aeneid,* makes a point of discussing how Virgil works to show that Aeneas must not be thought of as a traitor for taking treasure from Troy, contrary to Antenor (*ad Aen.* 647). Having to explicitly explain this would appear to indicate that there was already an existing feeling of doubt regarding the level of Aeneas' valour and duty. Late Antique works such as the *Origo Gentis Romanorum*, an anonymous, encyclopaedic work describing the mythistorical genesis of the Romans up to the time of Romulus, transmitted together with the *Liber de Caesaribus* of Aurelius Victor (Conte 1999: 646), outright call Aeneas an *proditor patriae* (*Origo* 9.1). Callu (1978: 173) suggests that this distrust of Aeneas begins to become more frequent in Latin works during the 4th century, taking on even more prominence after the sacking of Rome in 410, and that, by association,

[168] Callu (1978: 163); see also Casali (2010: 42-43) for an overview of the differing pre-Virgilian versions of Aeneas' complicity or lack thereof in the fall of Troy.

the burning of Rome was a second burning of Troy. For Dracontius' time, the sack of 455 by Gaiseric would be most relevant, as the destruction was seen to be by all accounts worse and more prolonged than Alaric's sack at the beginning of the century.

Romul. 8 contains an Aeneas character separate from the characterisation of Paris, which makes Dracontius' employment of the Virgilian all the more significant. The Aeneas of *Romul.* 8 is a very minor character. He gets sent to Salamis as part of the embassy with Antenor, Polydamas, and Paris, where he is given only one very short speech bidding a formal farewell to Telamon. His only other appearance is back in Troy after the storm had separated Paris from the other ships, where he delivers a report to Priam. His function, thus, has been reduced to not much more than a simple envoy (even though Priam refers to him as being one of the *egregios comites* and *tria lumina*, *Romul.* 8.238), something which is perhaps necessary in terms of characterisation, considering the dominance of Paris as one of the foci of Dracontius' study of reprehensible figures, and the associations with the Virgilian Aeneas.

DRACONTIAN HYLAS VS. OVIDIAN NARCISSUS

So far we have seen how Dracontius uses intertextual correspondences to articulate a relationship with Romanness in broadly cultural terms: Thebes as an "alternative Rome" where things go wrong; Aeneas as the iconic Roman hero who is an undesirable model. I turn now to *Romul.* 2, which provides another case of intertextual engagement with Romanness but in literary terms. In particular, this

concerns the relationship between Dracontius and Ovid as a representative of the Roman literary tradition.

As I noted at the start of Chapter 1,[169] Dracontius and Ovid are similarly characterised in biographical details, linguistic turns, and approaches to material. Ovid consequently ranks highly among the authors with whom Dracontius shows intertextual correspondences, and several modern studies have also shown the extent to which Dracontius interacts with Ovid on both thematic and artistic levels.[170] Within *Romul.* 2, there are several lines which indicate a close relationship with Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* and within that, particularly to the story of Narcissus. Whereas Ovid describes Narcissus' reflection as having *et dignos Baccho, dignos et Apolline crines* ('hair worthy of Bacchus and Apollo', *Met*. 3.421), when Dracontius describes Hylas' beauty by listing a number of mythic precedents, he is clear to say: *nec Bromius iam talis erat nec magnus Apollo* ('neither Bromius now, nor great Apollo was thus', Romul. 2.106). Hylas' entrance with Hercules depicts him as inseparable from his guardian (*iunctus… haeret*, Drac. *Romul.* 2.95). The verb *haeret*, too, is important in an intertextual context, as Ovid has Narcissus cling in a similar manner to his own image (*adstupet ipse sibi vultuque immotus eodem | haeret…*, *Met*. 3. 418-9). Likewise, the epithet of Hylas as *spectator* in Hercules' speech, can also be seen as an echo of Ovid's description of Narcissus as *spectator* of himself (*spectat humi positus geminum*, *Met*. 3.420). At the end of the poem, the first line of Hercules' speech is also strongly reminiscent of Narcissus' speech, where Narcissus exclaims "*heu frustra dilecte puer*! ('Alas, boy whom I loved in

[169] See pp. 39-40.
[170] See for example the footnotes detailing *loci similes* in Vollmer (1905) as well as the introductions in Kaufmann (2006), Moussy (2002), Bouquet & Wolff (2002: 60-63) and Bouquet (1995).

vain!', *Met*. 3.500). Lastly, the setting of the *raptus* itself would also point to an Ovidian parallel. Dracontius describes the Nymphs' spring as a *vitreum… antrum* at *Romul.* 2.130. The spring in which Hermaphroditus swims before being set upon by Salamacis is also described as being glass-like (*claro… vitro,* Ov. *Met.* 4.355).

While it has been noted by several scholars that Hylas has much in common with Narcissus in the Dracontian version, there has been comparatively little to explain its significance. Malamud (1993: 164) says of this connection that:

> Hylas appears in the literary tradition as a Narcissus-like figure whose transformation into an echo makes him an appropriate focal point for concerns about originality, tradition and authority in a text, and Dracontius too uses him this way.

For her, it is chiefly Dracontius' interaction with Virgil's *Georgics* and the construction of Clymene (for which see Chapter 4) which exhibit this trait. Cazzaniga (1950: 101 n.2) notes that within the Ovidian cast of characters he is reminiscent not only of Narcissus but also Hermaphroditus. His main conclusion to be drawn from this is only that

> *non mi parrà strano, che tali accostamenti tra i varii tipi di garzoni ritrosi, quali Ermafrodito, Narcisso, Hylas, sia da attibuirsi alla tradizione progimnasmatica, erede, ammetiamolo pure, diretta o indiretta di una tradizione poetica ellenistica,*
> (It does not seem strange to me, that such combinations across the various types of coy young boys, such as Hermaphroditus, Narcissus, Hylas, should be attributed to the progymnasmatic tradition, which is, let us admit, a direct or indirect descendent of the Hellenistic poetic tradition)

and that many of the Dracontian turns of phrase can find similar precedents in Ovidian language.

On the face of it, this interaction is largely a product of how Ovid was treated more generally in Late Antiquity.[171] He was present in the grammatical tradition, and of his works, the *Metamorphoses* was quoted most often by far in such varied authors as Priscian, Eutyches, Charisius and Diomedes Grammaticus.[172] However, it is most likely that Ovid does double duty in Dracontius' world: the *Metamorphoses* is at once an encyclopaedic repository, itself distilling mythographic information from varied sources,[173] as well as a poetic model in the broadest sense.[174] If Dracontius is using Ovid in the first instance as a mythological handbook in *Romul.* 2 and elsewhere in the *Romulea*, as a repository of stories which can be drawn from in rhetorical settings, then it is possible that the presence of the Narcissus element stems from a general thematic concern. Ovid's version of Echo and Narcissus is placed in Book 3, amid the series of Theban myths. As several scholars have pointed out, Narcissus' presence there can be seen chiefly as a substitute for the Oedipus story.[175] This is of course a thematic connection, both stories having as a uniting feature fatal accidents related to the sense of sight. By thus choosing to interact with the Ovidian Narcissus, Dracontius could be choosing to highlight the Theban connections of that version. In so doing, Hylas is shown to be free of the evil associations which Thebes metaphorically suggests, and is thus a true innocent, being set upon only by the arrows of outrageous fortune rather than his own failings.

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[171] Even with Fielding's (2010) survey of Ovid in Late Antiquity, there is as yet no systematic study of the circulation of his poems or manuscripts, nor indeed of his place in the schoolroom or rhetorical milieu. As Fielding (2017: 3) later admits, "Apart from this popularity among readers and writers of Latin poetry, Ovid's presence in the intellectual life of late antiquity is difficult to discern".

[172] Cf. the *index scriptorum* provided in Keil (1855b: 609-10).

[173] See Cameron (2004: 290).

[174] So Dewar's (2002: 394) pronouncement: "… as part of the canon, Ovid was not there merely to be imitated: he was there to be used. It may indeed be true that the Ovidian mythological narrative provided one way for poets to take on aesthetically ambitious projects with little or no political risk…"

[175] See Loewenstein (1984), Hardie (1988), Gildenhard & Zissos (2000).

However, Dracontius' use of Ovidian intertexts with regard to Hylas also seems to indicate that he considers his character, and by extension his work, superior to the Augustan poet. This is shown clearly enough by the description of Hylas being more handsome than the models to which Ovid compares his Narcissus. The idea of betterment is also accentuated by the *melius* at *Romul.* 2.2. This is similar to the kind of rhetoric of going over and above and bettering one's literary forebears, as seen most explicitly in the prologue to *De Raptu Helenae*.[176] And indeed there is precedent for this kind of rivalry with Ovid elsewhere in Dracontius' corpus. Bouquet (1995) points out that in the description of the origin of man in the first book of *laud. Dei*, Dracontius is directly interacting with Ovid's description of the same material in the first book of the *Metamorphoses*. As with the description of Hylas in *Romul.* 2, our poet makes a pointed refutation of the verses in Ovid. With reference to Creation at *Met.* 1.78-88, the latter poet describes mankind's origins as being essentially terrestrial, either springing from a divine seed (*divino semine,* 78) or being moulded from the earth by Prometheus.[177] Dracontius rebuts this with "*ast hominem non terra parit, non pontus ab undis | non caelum, non astra creant, non purior aer, | sed dominaturum cunctis Dominator et Auctor | plasmavit…, laud. Dei* 1.333-336, 'But the earth does not bring forth man, nor the sea from its waves, nor does the sky or the stars or the pure air create him, but the Lord and Origin fashioned him to dominate over all'". Bouquet (1995: 21-22) ascribes this to a wish to take Ovid seriously as a thinker. I am not sure that this is necessarily the case. While I also wish to avoid placing too much emphasis on Dracontius' Christianity in

[176] Drac. *Romul.* 8.1-30

[177] Ov. *Met.* 80-3: *"… recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto | aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli, | quam satus Iapeto mixtam pluvialibus undis| finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum*, 'Prometheus, son of Iapetus, took the new-made earth, which, only recently separated from the lofty aether, still retained some elements related to those of heaven, and, mixing it with rainwater, fashioned it into the image of the all-governing gods' (trans. M. Innes)."

the mythological poems, it is natural to conclude that, at least in some small part, our poet may have felt sufficiently secure in his philosophical-theological outlook as a Christian, to cast himself as the Ovid of his time, and in so doing, show moral and poetic superiority through such interaction.[178]

While we may thus read this kind of intertextual play simply as a statement of artistic rivalry, Dracontius' presentation of Hylas has an important second component which nuances this relationship. To understand this, we must first turn to another Narcissus story, which has recently also been shown to have relevance for Vandal Africa. In a study on the Narcissus cento of the *Anthologia Latina* (*Anth. Lat.* 9R), Elsner (2017) describes how the inherently metaliterary aspect of the myth is combined with the overtly metaliterary aesthetic of the cento-form. Within this, he demonstrates that Narcissus' longing gaze is constructed from pointed reference points of Virgil's Dido and Aeneas episode representing the entire span of their relationship: beginning, middle and end. It is chiefly the end which concerns Elsner (2017), as for him, Narcissus' gazing into the pool is a metaphor for the loss of classical culture. This idea of Narcissus gazing into a pool and seeing the classical world receding is similarly applicable to Dracontius' Hylas, although with a slightly different emphasis.

To see Hylas as a manifestation of the metaliterary is clear enough in Dracontius. At *Romul.* 1.20, Dracontius acknowledges the belatedness of his, other poets', and presumably Felicianus' activity with the line "*nos licet nihil valemus, mos tamen*

[178] A similar sense of intellectual superiority and conviction of one's personal interpretation with regard to ancient works is found in the rhetorical pieces of Ennodius, particularly *dict.* 28, where, assuming the voice of Dido, he 'answers' the questions posed by Virgil's Dido at *Aen.* 4.368-371. Is this then a product of Christian authors of Late Antiquity who still display strong involvement with rhetorical training?

gerendus est", which I have treated earlier as indicative of the *Romulea*'s broader intent. At that point I also showed how the relationship between Hercules and Hylas acts as a possible mirror for the relationship between Dracontius and Felicianus. However, we must note here that Hylas is expressly shown to be physically weak and not able to effectively carry the weight of Hercules' boar pelt.[179] Though Dracontius portrays his character and by extension himself as superior to Narcissus and hence to Ovid, the fact that Hylas is weak, dies young, and is an imperfect mirror to Hercules is also a tacit acknowledgement that his work may not reach the same level of fame as his Augustan predecessor. Indeed, the ephemeral nature is shown when Hercules explicitly asks "*quis erit comes alter, Romul.* 2. 158, 'Who will be my second companion'" and sets Hylas up within a nascent tradition of Herculean protégés.

Narcissus' involvement in the Dracontian epic is thus thematic and furthermore reveals a more metaliterary concern, with Hylas as the titular character taking on an iconic role in positioning Dracontius as poet within the literary tradition. If we are to take the interpretation of the Narcissus of the *Anthologia* into account as being a more widely spread interpretation in the literary circles of Carthage, the fact that Hylas is snatched against his will could be taken as representing the classical tradition, of which Dracontius is a representative, being snatched away against its will by the chattering nymphs, the (perhaps) second-rate poets whose *carmina* do not rise above mere gossip. These two levels are especially noteworthy considering the overarching theme of poetry and the submissive poet, announced

[179] See now also Cazzaniga (1950: 100-101). The Italian scholar considers how Dracontius presents Hylas' physical capabilities and projected future in relation to Valerius Flaccus 1.110-11.

already in *Romul.* 1, in addition to the presentation of Clymene and the nymphs as poet-like figures punished for their verses.

CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by showing that our poet was connected to various parts of Carthaginian society through his legal career as well as through his purely poetic endeavours. Not only did this mean that he was involved in and aware of the attendant political scene in which both the legal-bureaucratic and the private, aristocratic spheres participated, very likely overlapping, but that literary production was a key component of how these sectors of society engaged with each other and the world around them. This confirmed the reputation of Carthage as a leading centre of erudition. Furthermore, I showed that we can see indications of the influence of political events on Dracontius' own writing, specifically the Sack of Rome in 455, which brought the Vandal and Roman political and cultural worlds closer together. Here, the situation of Eudocia mirrors that of the Trojan princess Hesione, particularly as both are seen by outsiders as political prisoners, when in reality they are legitimate members of their new royal families and key to their stability and survival. The Eudocia episode not only showed how Dracontius was connected to his political environment, but also seemingly spurred on the literary scene itself. The presence of three imperial women, of which Licinia Eudoxia had a direct literary ancestor in the poet Aelia Eudoxia, together with their entourages likely influenced the *grammaticus* Felicianus, who is credited with repatriating the enigmatic *fugatas litteras*. A key figure dominating the beginning of the *Romulea* as well as the Carthaginian literary scene according to Dracontius, Felicianus may have had direct access to other literature from abroad and promoted it either by

command or as a way of reinvigorating the pre-existing literary offering. I then showed that the combined effects of increased Roman imperial presence in Carthage and the greater access to different authors are most apparent in the way in which Dracontius applies intertextual meaning. In particular I looked at the move to Thebes in *Romul.* 10, the way the character of Paris in *Romul.* 8 as well as the relationship between Dracontius and Ovid in *Romul.* 2. A common thread to all these was an ambivalence regarding the primacy of Rome and Romanness. In the first instance, Thebes was seen in the Statian sense of an anti-Rome, where everything goes wrong; Paris' characterisation is largely modelled off Virgil's Aeneas, and then only from his negative attributes; and lastly, Dracontius' Hylas was a counterpart to the Ovidian Narcissus, thereby proving the Carthaginian present's superiority over the Roman past. Taken together, this chapter has shown how Dracontius and his literature is intrinsically linked to the vicissitudes of both his social circles as well as the state at large. In the coming chapters, I shall therefore examine in what ways he is concerned with the well-being of that state, and how his epic poetry is a rhetorical model for how it should be preserved.

III

COMMENTARIES ON KINGSHIP

INTRODUCTION

While the previous two chapters have dealt with how Dracontius operates as an artist, first in relation to the purely technical aspects such as treatment of myth and handling of intertextual agendas, and then in broader relation to the society in which our poet operates, the next two chapters deal with specific instances of how he uses character to articulate issues of rulership and power in order to show that the social and cultural milieu is ever-present in Dracontius' mind. In this chapter, I look particularly at the male characters and how they are not suited for positions of power. I begin by elucidating the framework for the archetypal presentation of such characters. I then consider the way in which the Vandal aristocracy wished to adopt Roman social characteristics before looking at particular iterations of the archetype and how they reflect on this ideal: as a general statement of good *versus* bad rulers, as a commentary on the undesirability of alternative seats of power, as a reworking of the Vandals' deliberately obfuscated origins, and lastly instances where the archetype is abandoned and a more desirable model is presented.

THE DRACONTIAN ARCHETYPE

In line with the general character of Dracontian epic as a set of rhetorical variations on themes involved in the promotion of Roman values, Dracontius' portrayal of his important male characters is unique. In particular, this refers to the creation of

stock characteristics which recur with some minor variations across Dracontian writing, including the Christian works. As such, this 'Dracontian archetype' comprises shared epithets relating to social standing and unsavoury personal qualities, as well as a standardised description of an ostentatious outward appearance. Before analysing specific applications of this archetype, I will briefly outline its main features here.

PLACE IN THE SOCIAL ORDER

This component of the archetype identifies the character as being or originating outside of the accepted social order, and often also outside of the urban context.[180] He consequently poses a threat to the proper functioning of that order as he does not have to behave according to its laws. Dracontius typically uses epithets here relating to occupation. For example, Paris in *Romul.* 8 is most often referred to as *pastor,* an epithet which is used 24 times.[181] He is also *praedo* — considerably less often at only three times, but with no lesser significance.[182] The first is a slur against the fact that for all that he has now experienced a dramatic reversal of fortune and claimed his 'true' birthright as a prince of Troy, it is his upbringing as a shepherd on Mount Ida which is predominant and marks him as a parvenu and social climber. The second characterises him as a brigand — not only one who steals what is rightfully the property of others, but one who lives by his own set of laws, in

[180] The urban-rural conflict is a well-established trope of Latin literature. Very often this has to do with questions of power and control, as city building and urbanisation represent invading and imposing human control and order over the correspondingly untamed and free countryside. In epic terms, this is akin to the relationship between *furor, virtus* and *pietas*. Cf. Hardie (1990) on the use of this in Ovid as a means to critique the *Aeneid*. Comparable sentiments are found in Virgil's own *Eclogue* 9, which has been interpreted as the destruction of a poetic way of life (exemplified through pastoral) by war, for which see Martindale (1997: 120)

[181] *Romul.* 8.34,40,65,70,76,90 (all the narrator), 97,98 (both Paris himself), 117 (narrator), 138,148,177 (all Cassandra), 190,206 (both Apollo), 217(narrator), 403, 417 (both Paris), 432, 489, 498, 502, 507, 542, 592, 621, 638 (all the narrator).

[182] *Romul.* 8.1, 544, 581 (all the narrator).

short a source of political power contrary to the establishment.[183] The inequity in frequency of these two epithets is representative of Dracontius' fixation with class:[184] it is Paris' lowly origins and the qualities of an impostor which the poet tends to stress as being most distasteful. This comes across especially strongly, for example, where Dracontius describes the royal regalia and how it alone does not sufficiently mask the fact that he was a shepherd the fact that Paris was once a shepherd (*Romul.* 8.213-217). *Pastor* is similarly used of Aegisthus in *Orest.*[185]

In *Romul.* 10 the characterisation of Jason extends to *nauta* and, more pointedly, *pirata.* On the one hand this is a natural progression. Unlike Paris and Aegisthus, Jason's myth is intimately connected with the sea, the voyage of the Argo being the first sea-going journey made by humans. The attribute of sailor and pirate is thus more appropriate than that of shepherd (though the latter is still present). On the other, as much as it is unique in terms of the poems under consideration here, this epithet is still very much associated with Aeneas. For not only is Aeneas, too, the pioneering coloniser of far-off lands, but there are indications within contemporary late Antique literature of seeing him as a pirate as well. The poem most relevant

[183] I characterise *praedones* here as a social class in the same way which Habinek (1998: 69-87) does when analysing the works of Cicero, which is to say that they represent a power system outside that of the state, and thus causes a sense of unease to those operating within the established political system. See also general characteristics of brigands with regard to physical appearance, morals, and relations to the state in C. Wolff (2003: 25-52).
[184] My treatment of class refers not only to strict social orders (e.g. Roman *ordines*) but more encompasses a more general sense of categories of people who may or may not participate in conventional society.
[185] The epithet is used of him, directly or indirectly, 16 times throughout the course of the epic, at *Orest.* 139, 184, 205, 235, 270, 339, 419, 453, 470, 479, 530, 575, 619, 722, 730, 750. Tempone (2010: 221-2) has taken a more positive outlook on epithet *pastor* being applied to Aegisthus. Citing the comments of Servius to Vir. *Aen.* 12.587, who explains *pastor* as equivalent to *dux exercitus,* she follows a more etymological approach, contrasting the latter collocation with the Homeric *iunctura* ποιμὴν λαῶν, and thereby concludes that this meaning of *pastor,* the leader of a flock of sheep, contrasts with Agamemnon's own epithets *ductorum doctor* and *regum rex* (*Orest.* 25). While such positive ascription ignores the very obvious distaste which Dracontius exhibits to such characters, the etymological connection of Servius to leadership nevertheless reinforces the idea of the Dracontian archetype expressing concern on the poet's part towards characters operating outside of the conventional power structures.

here is *Anth. Lat.* 223R/214SB, a versified rhetorical exercise based on a *locus Virgilianus* by a certain Coronatus. These kinds of exercises respond most closely to the genre of *ethopoeia*. Typically, this rhetorical form, when used as a progymnasmatic exercise, takes as its inspiration a mythological character at a given moment of dramatic intensity. From this setting, a speech is written, imagining what might be said by the character at this point. Sometimes, however, situations are re-imagined based not on a particular character, but on a quotation from a known text, which is most commonly Virgil. Coronatus' poem takes its theme from Virg. *Aen.* 3.315, '*vivo equidem vitamque extrema per omnia duco*', and represents the words of Aeneas to Andromache at their meeting in Epirus. Near the end of the poem, Aeneas compares his wanderings to those of a pirate: *atque domus mihi pontus erat Phrygiique penates | et quasi iam pirata fui…, Anth. Lat.* 223R/214SB. 17-18, 'And the sea was home to me and of the Phrygian gods too, and I was now almost like a pirate'.

UNBRIDLED AMBITION

The obsession with class at times spills over into a sense of insatiable megalomania. From the outset, Paris believes himself to be superior given his designation as judge of the gods, outrightly disdaining all the trappings of the countryside and his previous life: '*iam grex horretur, fontes casa pascua silvae, | flumina rura pigent nec fistula dulcis amatur; | non placet Oenone…*, *Romul.* 8.61-3, 'Now the flock was seen to be dreadful, the springs, houses, pastures, woods, rivers, countryside were sources of shame to him, nor was the sweet pipe loved; Oenone displeased him…'. Likewise, almost immediately after Paris is welcomed back into the royal family and dressed in the robes of state, he wants more: *solam cupit addere famam | maiorum*

titulis, vivaces quaerere laudes, Romul. 8.215-16, 'he desired to add his only fame to the titles of his ancestors, to seek out long-lived praises…'. Paris shares this sense of megalomania with Priam (and which is very prominently absent in Hector, the narrator's preferred Trojan prince).[186] The similarities between Paris and Priam are noticed by other characters within the story, thereby linking their statuses. Hesione is reported to say at *Romul.* 8.367 that she sees much of Priam in Paris' face, and while Priam is the only character to have the epithet *tyrannus*, Paris is addressed as *rex* already by Helen. As such, *tyrannus* only occurs twice in *Romul.* 8: first at line 311 (*Si Priami recidiva domus manet illa tyranni | post ignes reparata meos…* 'if that (now) restored house of Priam the tyrant remains having been restored (again) after my fires…') and subsequently at line 556, after Helen decides to run off with Paris (*sic effata volens rapitur per colla tyranni | iam Priami cum clade nurus…,* 'Having spoken thus willingly, she was seized by the neck, already the daughter-in-law of Priam the tyrant with this disaster').

Megalomania in *Orest.* takes the form of basic greed, as Aegisthus' only concern after murdering Agamemnon is for the spoils of war:

> *aestuat impatiens, quod regni nomen inane*
> *offendit, quia perdit opes, quibus esse tyrannus*
> *posset et armari ferroque auroque valeret.*
>
> Drac. *Orest.* 313-5
>
> He fumed impatiently, since the empty name of the kingdom offended him, because he lost the treasure with which he could be ruler and was strong enough to be armed with sword and gold.

YOUTH AND INEXPERIENCE

[186] Cf. *Romul.* 8.603-606: (*quamvis Alexander si viribus Herculis esset | aemulus aut certe Meleagrum aut Thesea fortes | aequaret virtute potens, tamen Hectore magno | sospite nemo Parin lugeret corde dolenti),* '… although if Alexander were similar in strength to Hercules or indeed, strong in valour so that he should equal brave Meleager or Theseus, nobody, however, would mourn Paris with a heavy heart if great Hector was unharmed'.

As these characters intrude on the normal, accepted social order, attaining positions of power only to fail to handle the requirements of the job, inexperience is the next key feature of the archetype. This is further underlined by the fact that these characters are invariably young. *Puer* and *iuvenis* are the chief epithets here.[187] From this follows on a great sense of ineptitude: Paris wants to behave like the royal family which he has just joined, but finds himself hardly up to the task when actually confronted with the duties of a diplomat. Thus in the embassy to Salamis, Paris is conspicuously silent, Dracontius reserving his speech for non-official contexts. Likewise, during a monologue in the midst of the storm, the protagonist says in mock-sententious language that:

> "*felici sorte creati*
> *pastores, quos terra capit, quos nulla procella*
> *concutit.*
> . . . . . .
> *nam gravis est regnare labor, metus excutit ingens*
> *corda ducum, ne bella ruant, ne tela minentur*
> *exitium crudele: …*
>
> *Romul.* 8. 402-409; 420-424
>
> "Shepherds, whom the land contains, whom no storm buffets, are made for a happy fate. […] For to rule is a serious labour, a great fear shakes the hearts of leaders, lest wars should break out in a rush, lest weapons should threaten a cruel end…"

Aegisthus, too, is not fit to rule after he usurps power, instead relying on Clytemnestra as his mouthpiece and guide in matters of rule. He is directly described as *iners,* 'incompetent' with reference to his lowly status[188] and Clytemnestra underlines his unsuitability to rule by designating him as *civis Egistus* at *Orest.* 410, in metrical comparison to *rex Agamemnon* in the previous line.

[187] Paris: *Romul.* 8.69, 111, 444, 593, 615 (narrator), 551 (Helen); Jason: *Romul.* 10.56 (Juno),
[188] Drac. *Orest.* 453: "*dum regnaret iners… pastor,* 'While the incompetent shepherd ruled'"; *Orest.* 276: "*aut desertor iners, ovium pecudumque magister?,* 'or an incompetent deserter, master of sheep and cattle?'";

MATERIAL LUXURY EXPRESSED THROUGH COSTUME

The final component of the archetype relates to outward appearance and in particular the clothes he wears. The most extensive of these descriptions is that Paris' outfit when he lands on Cyprus. Here he is described as wearing Tyrian clothing:

> *pauca precatus erat supplex et templa subibat*
> *vestibus indutus Tyriis et murice regni*
> *perfusa chlamys ipsa fuit, quam purpura fulgens*
> *flammabat diffusa humeris ; hanc fibula mordax*
> *iungit, et ornatus iuveni plus ammovet aurum,*
> *quo distincta micat radians per stamina vestis.*
>
> *Romul.* 8.481-486
>
> The suppliant begged these few things, and entered the temple dressed in Tyrian clothes. The cloak itself, which the purple, shining and spread across from his shoulders, made red, was completely dyed with royal murex. A brooch closed it with its grip and, thus decorated, gold, with which the outfit was radiant and shining by means of its individual filaments, further marked out the young man.

This latter phrase, appearing variously as *vestibus indutus/indutum/induitur Tyriis* is repeated once in each of *De Raptu Helenae* (*Romul.* 8.482), *Medea* (*Romul.* 10.258), and the *Orestis tragoedia* (*Orest.* 305), applied respectively to Paris, Jason, and Aegisthus. It also occurs at *laud. dei* 3. 72, where it is applied to a wretched man who was dressed in finery and ate well, and for that reason was called a criminal by the poor.[189] The signification is thus nuanced to be one of empty luxury, and of unscrupulous gain with no thought as to the consequences, which certainly characterises at least Paris and Aegisthus. Given the narrative context of these characters (that they have all taken power in ways which can be seen as unlawful), it can be further said that this phrase is one way of marking out a 'pretender king' archetype. Additionally, the intertextual links with Virgil's descriptions of Aeneas

[189] Given the Christian context, this could also show the influence of Biblical stories such as the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16). *Tyrias… vestis* occurs also at Horace, *serm.* 2.4.84, with a similar emphasis on luxury.

suggest that this archetype has a subsidiary function of associating such behaviour to some extent with what might be thought to be traditionally Roman, or at least with the activities associated with the Trojans (as proto-Romans) which are expressed in the *Aeneid*.

The clothes at once are of course significant of royal finery, but may also have a link to the kinds of clothing which envoys to Constantinople wore around the time of composition.[190] This insistence on clothing as having the perceived power to affect one's character is once again indicated by the description of the royal regalia as not fooling anyone as to his origins as a shepherd.

VANDAL IMAGE

The most remarkable feature of the Vandal aristocracy at Carthage, and that which has led to revived interest in treating it on its own terms in recent decades, is the aplomb with which they embraced the trappings of Roman cultural life. Alongside the reports of our hardly impartial Christian sources regarding religious persecution, the Vandals by the time of Dracontius showed a keen interest in Roman literary culture. [191] Nor was this necessarily a half-hearted or cosmetic effort at engaging with this crucial aspect of Roman aristocratic life. Thrasamund, for example, whom we know to have been at least partially significant in Dracontius' life by freeing him from prison, was possessed of a keen enough mind to debate theological matters with Fulgentius of Ruspe. [192] Likewise, as I have noted in regard

[190] Cf. the *De cerem.* above notes 109 and 110.
[191] See particularly the occasional poetry in *Anth. Lat.* in which (presumably) professional Romano-African poets write occasional poems on Vandal subjects. At least some of these, e.g. the *Epithalamium Fridi* would suggest that there was some prestige in adopting Latin literary culture in this way. Cf. also *Romul.* 1 and 3.
[192] *Vita Fulg. Rusp.* 21.

to the rhetorical basis of Dracontius' works, the *Anthologia Latina* gives an important insight into the kind of literary patronage in which Vandals engaged. Regardless of whether they were fully engaged with the finer details of the poetry which was produced in their honour, the image which they wished to project to wider society is that of benevolence, clemency, and erudition. This is necessarily achieved by using a Western Roman frame of reference, a not uncommon rhetorical strategy when talking about foreign rulers in imperial panegyric.[193]

Consider, for example, a brief panegyric of Luxorius to the late Vandal king Hilderic (*Anth. Lat.* 203R). Here the poet highlights the king's Roman connections by comparisons with the preceding Theodosian emperors. On the one hand, this places him squarely in a Roman context: he is to be seen as the continuation of the Theodosian house, a point which I have repeatedly stressed as important to the legitimisation of Vandal power. On the other it also has him outdo his Roman predecessors: his rule is more peaceful and more grand. It is in this ideological context which we must consider an important feature of Dracontian epic, that of good kingship and the health of the state.

GOOD VS BAD RULERS

The question of good rulership is inherent to Roman heroic epic, given that it is predominantly a political genre.[194] Meditations on this subject extended into other cultural materials, too, with the exempla populating progymnasmatic exercises likewise emphasising and promoting such characteristics as moral rectitude, justice,

[193] See here particularly the panegyric to Anthemius of Sidonius Apollinaris (*carm.* 2), where the addressee, an Easterner placed on the throne by the Emperor Leo, is lauded by comparing his achievements in Western, Latinate terms (cf. Boshoff 2016).
[194] See again the Introduction, pp. 1-4.

and humility. It is therefore unsurprising that Dracontius' epics, which belong to both worlds, show much interest in this topic. What is more significant for our poet's time, however, is that his audience was not exclusively Roman. The effects of this are twofold and contribute to the cultural aims of both the conquered and the conqueror. By not only including these features, but highlighting them in the titular or otherwise conspicuous characters, Dracontius thus not only perpetuates Roman behaviour among his compatriots, but also serves to initiate those of a non-Roman cultural background into the mores of his own. So too do the bad rulers of Dracontius' poetry serve as tools to portray the rulers of Vandal Carthage to their subjects as both morally superior and more capable of governing. What then makes a bad ruler, and how does the archetype contribute to mediating this? This is most clearly shown in *Orest.*, the only poem in which an archetypal character actually rules.

The story of Orestes deals at its core with the successive cycles of vengeance and retribution. Clytemnestra takes revenge on Agamemnon for sacrificing Iphigenia, and Orestes in turn avenges himself and his father on both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Orestes is then pursued by the Furies seeking divine vengeance for his crime of matricide. As such, none of the characters can claim to be blameless or exemplary in their conduct. Despite this, and taking into account Dracontius' own appeal of human nature as being *bona mixta malis*,[195] there is a distinct tension between Aegisthus and Orestes as who is the more worthy ruler. Our poet makes this distinction on both an external and internal level. The chief external consideration in *Orest.* is that Aegisthus has effectively usurped power from the

[195] Drac. *Satisf.* 58

legitimate heir using violent means. This is clearest in the immediate aftermath of the murder:

> *vestibus indutus Tyriis homicida et adulter*
> *et poenale caput cingit diadema coruscum.*
> *tamquam legitimus heres Agamemnonius aulae*
> *(et magis heredem convenerat esse Thyestis)*
> *intrat et orbatum per singula quaerit Orestem.*
>
> Drac. *Orest.* 305-9
>
> The murderer and adulterer was dressed in Tyrian robes and a shining crown circled his guilty head. As if he were the lawful heir (and it was just as well that he was an heir of Thyestes) he entered Agamemnon's palace and sought the orphaned Orestes everywhere.

Here Dracontius underlines Aegisthus' position and demeanour with the hypothetical comparison in *tamquam* and specifically uses the term *legitimus heres*, the latter the only occurrence of the word *legitimus* in this sense in Dracontius. The poet also makes a pointed reference to the regalia he wears as symbolic of his new role. We find a more insidious presentation of Aegisthus' usurpation further on:

> *sed vilis adulter*
> *nescius atque rudis regnorum frena tenere*
> *ipse sibi genium fastu facit: ore minaci*
> *asper erat famulis regalibus, advena servis;*
> *imperium non mite dabat, quibus ipse profecto*
> *si famularetur, crimen sibi turpe putarent.*
>
> Drac. *Orest.* 412-18
>
> But that common adulterer, though unknowing and uneducated as to how to hold the reins of the kingdom, arrogantly gave himself the authority: with threatening speech he was harsh to the royal household, [and acted as] a stranger to the slaves; he displayed cruel power to those for whom he would be a shameful source of offence if he were to be their slave.

The line *ipse sibi genium fastu facit* (414) indicates that not only does he usurps power (the emphasis on the reflexives, that he is taking this for himself) but that this is done *fastu*, without any regard for convention, custom, or law. His newfound power also turns him into a tyrannical figure, alienating those familiar to him and in short inhabiting (*sensu stricto)* the exemplary evil usurper. Taken together, these

two extracts offer the core of bad rulership. Dracontius similarly emphasises that Aegisthus is a usurper through other characters' interactions: Dracontius neatly sums up at *Orest*. 544-5 that revenge, duty, marital law, and the legitimate succession are all inextricably linked. Here Agamemnon instructs Orestes: "*nam patrem docet esse suum, quem vindicat armis | dignus adulterii vindex, pius ultor et heres,* 'for he, the worthy avenger of adultery, shows that his father is his own, since, as a dutiful avenger and heir, he avenges him with arms.'" The themes are reinforced later when Pylades must further exhort Orestes to take action, imagining Agamemnon to say: *"sic, nate, paras defendere patrem, | sic decet extincti genitoris fata dolere, | sic dabis inferias nostris tu manibus ultor?,* Drac. *Orest*. 595-597, 'Do you prepare to defend you father in this way, my son? Is it befitting to mourn the fate of your dead father in this way? Are you thus presenting the underworld to my shade?'".

Although Dracontius never uses *usurpatio* or *usurpare* at any point, the way in which the poet presents Aegisthus is consistent with the technical interpretations of *usurpatio* of the time, which was primarily an issue of upsetting class hierarchy.[196] This is shown in two *novellae* issued jointly by Theodosius II and Valentinian III in 439 (*Nov. Theod.* 15.1), and subsequently in 444 (*Nov. Theod.* 15.2). As the *interpretatio* informs us, the main idea of these edicts is that people of the curial classes should not entertain ideas of rising in the ranks (*ut nullus curialis natus ad aliquos honores adspiret*). In his examination of the way these issues play out across Roman history, Reinhold (1971: 276) highlights the importance of visual (and

[196] *Usurpo* is chiefly used in prose, and even then usually in a rather technical and legal meaning. When it is used in poetry, it is in a non-technical sense of simply 'taking over'. For some examples from Late Antiquity, cf. Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 16.270: *iunctum sibimet pro iure sodali | usurpans animum;* Auson. *Mos.* 366: *nec fastiditos Salmonae usurpo fluores.*

necessarily physical) symbols as a key indicator of usurpation as discussed in legal texts. Indeed, as he further explains, following definitions from Suetonius and Ammianus Marcellinus, usurpation is technically defined as taking over the *insignia* of a higher class (Reinhold 1971: 276; *ibid.* nn. 4-5). In this case, the rubric of usurpation is broadened to include any kind of unlawful movement between the social orders. A key feature of the Dracontian archetype is a reference to luxurious clothing which, in the case of Aegisthus, is the regalia of the king.[197] The whole first chapter of the twelfth book of the *Codex Theodosianus,* dedicated to matters relating to the decurions, is full of issues relating to usurpation of socio-political roles in the upper classes. Several turns of phrase present in this legal text are relevant to our conception of Aegisthus in particular, as several of the constitutions refer to such usurpations of position as being unmerited (*indebitus*), or the insignia to be worthless or empty as a result (*inanis, vacuus*). Compare here the description of Aegisthus being unsatisfied with the *inane nomen* of being ruler (*Orest.* 313). This parallels a similar situation with Paris at *Romul.* 8.224, where Priam describes his son as despising the *torpor iners* and general ability to be at leisure. The *Codex Theodosianus* is likely to have been the set of laws which were followed in North Africa (cf. Santini 2006: 18), and which our poet is likely to have been familiar with, if we take Dracontius' acknowledgement of a legal profession to mean a thorough knowledge of such texts, even if the laws themselves may not have been in active use.

[197] Drac. *Orest.* 305-6: *vestibus induitur Tyriis homicida et adulter | et poenale caput cingit diadema coruscum,* 'The murderer and adulterer was dressed in Tyrian clothes, and a shining diadem crowned his guilty head'. Cf. Paris dressed in the robes of state at *Romul.* 8.213-7, despite which he still fails to conceal his true nature and status.

Moreover, Aegisthus is low class, despite being from the Thyestean branch of the king's family. This obsession with class, which we find elsewhere in Dracontius (almost exactly repeated in *Romul.* 8 in the person of Paris, and our poet similarly meditates on with Jason in *Romul.* 10), as well as the political dimension of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus' dalliance is unique to our author. For Dracontius, being low class is linked to being unfit for positions of power on account of lack of experience and general ineptitude produced by not having exposure to these offices. The ineptitude in *Orest.* is more pointed than that which we find in relation to Paris in *Romul.* 8. Looking to *Orest.* 413, we see that whereas Paris is simply playing at being a ruler (i.e. he is not actually in power) and he acknowledges this in his speech in the middle of the storm, Dracontius specifies that Aegisthus is *nescius* and *rudis*. Contrasted with Orestes' rhetorical training at Athens, he is not only unlearned in the ways of statecraft, but plainly and bluntly ignorant when compared with Orestes' learning.[198] If we are to take as our starting point Athens, as the concentration of all that is elevated socio-culturally in the world of the poem, we could take it as comparable to the cultural power which Rome has. Particularly of interest here is that as a result of being sent to Athens, Orestes is trained in rhetoric, the highest arts of Graeco-Roman literary culture, much like Dracontius and his contemporaries. This is a significant parallel to the historical situation, for if we are to read Orestes as representing a prodigal son returning to his rightful station, and having come from a place of rhetorical learning, this could be compared to either Huneric having been fostered for a time at the court of Valentinian, or indeed Hilderic's Roman connections through his mother, the imperial princess

[198] Orestes' presentation as generally favourable, and more importantly, that he is politically legitimate is emphasised elsewhere too. He is the *spes Agamemnonia* (*Orest.* 290) and is compared through exempla to other favourable and legitimate characters in the Dracontian corpus: Hercules, and especially Ajax (*Orest.* 845-8). The latter is at issue in *Romul.*8, when discussing the legality of bringing Hesione back to Troy.

Eudocia. Indeed, the prevalence and importance of training in classical culture, including rhetoric, among the Vandal royal family, would seem to support such a reading of Orestes and Agamemnon as being associated with the ruling ("legitimate") family in Carthage.

Orestes is very much the standard against which Aegisthus is measured, and many of the characteristics defining Aegisthus' behaviour which I have just discussed, find their opposites in Orestes. In the analogous scene in Athens, where Pylades convinces Orestes to take action following Agamemnon's visitation, Orestes sets off the exchange similarly with a question of what ought to be done: *"dic mihi, frater," ait, "dic iam modo quid sit agendum, Orest.* 557. He has reservations of a personal and moral nature, hesitating to kill Clytemnestra because she is his blood , and was both mother and father to him while Agamemnon was away at war (*haec pater, haec mihi mater erat pugnante parente, Orest.* 571). He believes that killing Aegisthus is sufficient punishment. Pylades, on the other hand, once again makes use of fear as a strategy to win Orestes over. He highlights the fact that the Greeks may not see him as a legitimate ruler if he does not kill both adulterers (*quaeso cave... ne, iugulatricem patris dum vivere censes, | credaris non esse suus..., Orest.* 589-591). And where Clytemnestra insisted that the deed must be done now because it could be effected with impunity, Pylades stresses that Orestes must go through with it *because* there will be retribution, being pursued to the end of his days by the ghost of Agamemnon, and that he will otherwise be the usurpers' next victim (*Orest.* 591-601). Pylades also affirms his loyalty (*ibo libens comes ipse tuus..., Orest.* 609). This speech too has the elements of self-preservation, both in the sense of trying to avoid a future in which there is the possibility of death, as well as in the sense of being in

favour politically. In Clytemnestra's speech we see how she does not care what the reaction of the Greeks will be, since she is linked now to the Thyestean line. By contrast, Pylades insists upon the fact that the Greeks may not see Orestes as being legitimately descended from the Atreids if he refuses an outright murder.

Good rulership also demands the state keep a healthy pecuniary situation. To this effect, Dracontius particularly emphasises that Aegisthus' rule is invalidated by the fact that the spoils of war brought back by Agamemnon have now disappeared along with Orestes:

> *aestuat impatiens, quod regni nomen inane*
> *offendit, quia perdit opes, quibus esse tyrannus*
> *posset et armari ferroque auroque valeret.*
> Drac. *Orest.*313-15
> He seethed impatiently because the empty name of the kingdom offended him, since he had lost the wealth with which he was able to be a ruler and be prosperous enough to be protected by both the sword and gold.

Conversely, Dracontius textually emphasises the interrelated value of legitimate succession of Orestes to Agamemnon's rule and the material wealth of the kingdom by means of the polysyndeton at *Orest.* 289-90: *quae ratis advexit regem, haec pignora regis | spesque Agamemnonias et Troica gaza reportat*, 'And the ship which brought back the king, now carries again the king's offspring, and the hope of Agamemnon and the treasure of Troy'. This inherently constitutes a bad ruler, for he has neither the sanction of a legitimate succession nor the wherewithal to make a success of his newfound position.

It is important to note from this passage that Aegisthus voluntarily views himself as taking on the role *tyrannus*. Dracontius' use of *tyrannus* in his secular works appears to be rather fluid: though they are both legitimate rulers canonically and

within the world of the poems, both Priam and Agamemnon are referred to as such. This is usually by characters who oppose them, or by the narrator when he is describing something from such a character's point of view.[199] But so too are Paris and Aegisthus referred to as *tyrranus*, and both in instances where they are regarded as taking the place of another more legitimate character. It seems too conservative to take *tyrannus* to mean simply ruler, its usual poetic meaning, particularly as it stands alongside other more typically neutral titles (*dominus, rex*…), nor does it seem enough that this should be taken as a Late Antique Graecism. Like Dracontius' viewpoint on his various characters, it is plausible that the implied meanings should shift along with those it is applied to. Note too that Agamemnon is no longer *tyrannus* but *rex* in the voice of the narrator, suggesting again a personal hierarchy of favour on the poet's part. The usage of the epithet *tyrannus* in this way echoes the situation presented in Seneca's *Agamemnon*, where Aegisthus says of Agamemnon to Clytemnestra:

> *gravis ille sociis stante adhuc Troia fuit:*
> *quid rere ad animum suapte natura trucem*
> *Troiam addidisse? rex Mycenarum fuit,*
> *veniet tyrannus: prospera animos efferunt.*
>
> Sen. *Ag.* 249-252
>
> He was overbearing to associates while Troy still stood: what do you think Troy's fall has added to a spirit that is naturally harsh? He was king of Mycenae, he will return as tyrant: success swells men's minds. (trans. J.G. Fitch)

Whereas the Senecan Agamemnon's propensity for behaving like a tyrant is magnified by his recent victories, such that his character intensifies from *rex* to *tyrannus,* the Dracontian Aegisthus bypasses the former entirely, aiming straight for tyrannical rule. Moreover, the lack of material reward (i.e. the spoils of war sent away with Orestes) which Seneca sententiously indicates as *prospera* show up

[199] Viz. *Orest.* 124 (narration, but Clytemnestra's point of view); *Orest.* 314 (narration, but Aegisthus' point of view), *Orest.* 419 (narration, describing Aegisthus' unsavoury traits).

Aegisthus' success as empty, leaving bare his pretensions to power rather than any concrete foundation upon which he can rule.

Tyrants and usurpers are a well-established rhetorical trope. There are numerous examples of tyrannical characters in the declamations of the Elder Seneca, and indeed the major declamations of Quintilian, a few of which seem to come close to the kind of issues which Dracontius proposes in his treatment of the Orestes story. Petronius includes them as satirical examples of schoolteaching and Cicero thinks up several exemplary rhetorical-style questions to describe the current political situation in his letters.[200] Nor is it surprising to find similar sententious statements in Seneca's tragedy, which owes much to rhetorical theory broadly speaking. For example, at the end of *Agamemnon*, Aegisthus says to Electra: *rudis est tyrannus morte qui poenam exigit* ("Boorish is the ruler who demands punishment by death", Sen. *Ag.* 995). We have already seen how the material from which grammarians and rhetoricians drew their moral dilemmas are not only reflective of the society in which they operated, but also reflect a moral ideal which they aimed to impress upon their audience in professional pieces and inculcate into young minds in school exercises. Though originating from separate cultural spheres, these do not necessarily need to be thought of as being discrete concepts for our interpretation here. By definition, rhetorical training prepared students for the law courts, and given the legalistic vocabulary which Dracontius often employs, these could together form a source on which our poet could draw in constructing his version of the Orestes story.

[200] E.g. Sen. *Contr.* 4.7, the subject of which is *tyrannicida adulter tyranni,* and whether the tyrant or the tyrannicide is more justified in killing (or attempting to kill) the other; the episode is referenced again in Quint. *Inst.* 5.10.36; Petr. *Sat.* 1.3 and Cic. *Ad Att.* 9.4 both speak more generally of tyrants as stock characters in the rhetorician's toolbox.

Further counting against Aegisthus is his selfishness. As I have pointed out, he takes the reins of power *fastu* — arrogantly — only because of his desire to rule. The adulterous pair's motivation for committing the murder neatly encapsulates this trait: they must kill Agamemnon only because he is a threat to the continued existence of their affair. By thus ridding themselves from the legal ramifications (as exemplified by Agamemnon as upholder of the laws of Greece)[201] through murder, there is the added benefit of Aegisthus being able to take the place of the king of Mycenae, since there is nobody strong enough to challenge him at that given moment. Moreover, Clytemnestra is the true power behind the throne, as it is she who suggests the idea to him, and later addresses the people. I will explore Clytemnestra's contribution to this dimension of Dracontius' concern for a healthy state in chapter 4, but at this point it suffices to say that Aegisthus being subject to a woman's manipulation does him no favours as model of good rule. This aspect of their relationship is not found at all in treatments such as that of Seneca, where it is Aegisthus who must convince Clytemnestra to go through with the murder, although there is predcedent for the legal aspect of their predicament.

The citizens, however, are more immediately concerned with the ignoble murder of Agamemnon rather than the fact that Aegisthus has usurped power, or indeed that Orestes is the rightful heir. The emphasis is instead placed on wishes for a more glorious death for their king (*utinam iuvenem per bella feriret Amazo | Penthesilea* ,

[201] Drac. *Orest.* 164-168: "*occidimus: redit ille meus post bella maritus | victor et armatus, zelo mordente minatus | moribus Argolicis leges inducere castas | tristibus imperiis. alieni criminis ultor, | quid faciat pro iure suo?*, 'We're done for: my husband returns victorious after the war, and armed with a biting zeal, he will have threatened to introduce chaste laws to sad empires according to the ways of Argos. As an avenger of the crimes of another, what indeed will he do for his own law?'"

Drac. *Orest*. 344-5), as well as matters of ritual and superstition (*[utinam] nec pede tractus humo iacuisset ab arce remotus, |cuius honore carens tumulatur nocte cadaver,* Drac. *Orest*. 348-9). This is effectively an echo of statements which Dracontius himself as intrusive narrator makes earlier: "*credere quis posset…| eversorem Asiae foderet quod cultor agelli | aut desertor iners, ovium pecorumque magister, | et caret igne rogi, dederat qui Pergama flammis!",* Drac, *Orest*. 272, 275-77, 'Whoever could believe that he who tends a worthless piece of land, or an idle deserter, a master of sheep and cattle, could run through the destroyer of Asia and that this man, who had put the citadel of Troy to flame, would himself want for flames in his pyre!'. At issue here, then, is rather the paradox of whether men of naturally great standing in life ought to have glorious deaths, and, contingent to the matter of usurpation, the question of *damnatio memoriae*.

In summary, what makes Aegisthus a bad ruler is that he forcibly takes control over the kingdom and thereby damages it through a combination of self-interest and arrogance, and his inability to rule properly. By contrast, Orestes is not a perfect leader, and his acceptance by the populace is not guaranteed, but in the key points he is clearly the more desirable of the two. Even as late as the time of Dracontius, the Vandals themselves, who could be seen as having usurped the rightful rule of Roman Africa, would have had to shake off the perception of being foreigners and parvenus with no knowledge of how to rule in the Roman way.[202] Moreover, a unique feature of Vandal kingship was its unusual rule of succession. Dracontius here promotes the "correct" heir according to a traditional Roman rule of

[202] See for example the use of the word *barbari* in *Romul.* 1. They are not only literally barbarians by not being Roman, but are also barbarians in the sense of being uneducated as to Roman ways. Being part of Felicianus' audience and thus instructed in the secrets of Latin literature would seemingly assist them to reduce the image of barbarism in both senses.

succession, perhaps revealing his own factionalism (whether personal or part of a broader circle of patronage) for Hilderic, the half-Roman Vandal king and true heir to the Theodosian dynasty.

Unlike the other texts, where a specific event in the history of the Vandal kingdom seems to play a significant role in the conception and interpretation of the text, *Orest.* appears to operate more on a broader, thematic level unrelated to events of any period in the history of Vandal Carthage. Several examples of this are evident. For example, Gaiseric, having sailed to Rome in order to nullify Eudoxia's unlawful marriage, and in turn returning with a large treasure, can be considered as a parallel to Agamemnon, who likewise sails to uphold the marriage laws of Greece in support of Menelaus, and also returns with a large treasure. The situation in Italy immediately prior to the sack of 455 also has some thematic relevance here. Valentinian III was assassinated in early 455 by the usurper Petronius Maximus, who thereafter (forcibly) married the late emperor's widow Eudoxia. Unhappy with this situation, Eudoxia sent to Gaiseric for aid. In describing Eudoxia's motivation for calling upon Gaiseric, Procopius portrays the assassination of Valentinian III at *Vand.* 4.38 in a similar manner to the Dracontian interpretation of Aegisthus and Agamemnon. In particular, the murderer is portrayed as unholy (ἀνοσίος) and, more importantly, the emperor's death as unbefitting to one of his social status (αὐτοῦ τε ἀναξίως καὶ τῆς βασιλείας). Procopius' account of the sack further has some narrative parallels with the way in which Dracontius treats the first episodes in *Orest.,* particularly the detail about a ship which does not return with the rest of the fleet, and the treasures which are brought back to Carthage[203]:

[203] In Procopius' version of events, money is the main motivation for Gaiseric sailing to Rome (*Vand.* 1.5.5.1).

> Γιζέριχος δὲ [...] χρυσοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βασιλέως κτημάτων πολύ τι χρῆμα ἐν ταῖς ναυσὶν ἐνθέμενος ἐς Καρχηδόνα ἔπλει, οὔτε χαλκοῦ οὔτε ἄλλου ὁτουοῦν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις φεισάμενος. ἐσύλησε δὲ καὶ τὸν τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Καπιτωλίου νεὼν καὶ τοῦ τέγους τὴν ἡμίσειαν ἀφείλετο μοῖραν. [...] τῶν δὲ μετὰ Γιζερίχου νεῶν μίαν μέν, ἣ τὰς εἰκόνας ἔφερε, φασὶν ἀπολέσθαι, πάσαις δὲ ταῖς ἄλλαις οἱ Βανδίλοι ἐς τὸν Καρχηδόνος λιμένα κατῆραν.
>
> Procop. *Vand.* 1.5.3-5
>
> But Gizeric [...] placing an exceedingly great amount of gold and other imperial treasure in his ships sailed to Carthage, having spared neither bronze nor anything else whatsoever in the palace. He plundered also the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and tore off half of the roof. [...] But of the ships with Gizeric, one, which was bearing the statues, was lost, they say, but with all the others the Vandals reached port in the harbour of Carthage. (trans. H.B. Dewing)

This does not necessarily mean that the murder of Agamemnon should be considered as a retelling of the murder of Valentinian III, nor that Aegisthus and Clytemnestra's regime should be seen as a thinly veiled reference to Petronius Maximus and Eudoxia, nor indeed that the later author has any actual connections to Dracontius. It does not take more than a cursory glance to determine that several story elements either do not match, or are not present at all. Likewise, there are features which show more affinity with other parts of the historical situation. The familial issues would also seem to point more to the Hasding royal family, given their noted propensity for removing any political opposition to the line of succession.[204]

As we have seen, the archetype also has much to do with origins and the way the character fits into society. In their quest to present themselves as Roman, both these issues, first of being non-Roman to begin with, and then operating from a power base which sits outside the traditional Roman paradigm, had to be managed. *Romul.* 10's iteration of the archetype shows how these how these issues can manifest.

[204] See again Vict. Vit. 2.12

ALTERNATIVE SEATS OF POWER

The image of piracy is closely tied up in the anti-Vandal propaganda of Late Antiquity, and consequently this picture has equally influenced much modern historiography on the subject. Typical of the 'classic' historical treatments of the Vandal Kingdom in the 20th century are works such as Christian Courtois' *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (1955), and Emile Gautier's *Genséric, roi des Vandales* (1932), which talk at length about the Vandals' naval activities in the Mediterranean as being piratical or piratically-minded.[205] This attribution stems from the strong naval presence which the Vandals had in the western Mediterranean, such that they were able to take control of Sardinia and raid the Italian coastline.[206]

The most prominent example of the use of *pirata* to describe Vandals in literature is to be found in the panegyrics of Sidonius Apollinaris, particularly those dedicated to Majorian (*carm.* 5) and Anthemius (*carm.* 2). In these poems Sidonius not only presents his dedicatees with the expected gilded rhetorical praise in the manner of Menander Rhetor's *basilikos logos*, but also contextualises and qualifies his deference by reminding the emperors of the issues which they now face and which they must solve if they are to be successful in the public eye. The loss of Africa is indeed one of the most pressing of these issues, perhaps even more so for Anthemius given that Majorian had failed to make good on his expedition to reconquer the province.[207] These observations are perhaps made keener by the fact that Sidonius has no good reason to favour either Majorian or Anthemius. The

[205] Most recently, Gíl Egea (1997) has questioned the validity of this characterisation.
[206] See e.g. Merrills & Miles (2010: 109-10).
[207] See Henning (1999: 134-149; 154-169) for useful overviews of both these emperors' reigns and relationships with the various strata of the Roman political landscape of the second half of the 5th century.

former, together with Ricimer, murdered Sidonius' father-in-law Avitus, while Anthemius was a Greek appointee of the Eastern Emperor Leo, far removed from the affairs of Gaul. Indeed, it is only almost by accident that Sidonius composed the panegyric to Anthemius, having been asked by the hosts with whom the poet happened to be staying in Rome[208].

As such, Sidonius' characterisation of the Vandals is perpetually in the context of the Romans' attempts to regain the provinces that have passed from their control; they are the foremost enemy which the new emperor must concern himself with dispatching. He opens his panegyric to Anthemius with a sustained naval theme: the state which the Greek emperor inherits is likened to a ship without a helmsman, and it is upon this 'political sea', as it were — representative of both the physical Mediterranean which separates the two powers, and metaphorically as the uncertain and unstable territory which is the political climate in which the powers surrounding that physical body of water participate — that we find Rome's enemies as pirates:

> *atque carens rectore ratis respublica fractam*
> *intulit, ut digno melius flectenda magistro,*
> *ne tempestates, ne te, pirata, timeret*
> Sid. *carm.* 2.15-17
> And the ship of state, lacking a pilot, has committed her broken frame to be more deftly guided by a worthy steersman, that she may no more fear storm or you, pirate.

When compared with our Dracontian archetype, Sidonius' Vandal pirates display some similar attributes. Most relevant here is a section of the panegyric to Anthemius. The extract takes place in the middle of a speech by Oenotria, the personification of ancient Italy, to the Tiber, in order that he might petition Roma in

[208] Sidonius discusses the circumstances surrounding the composition of the panegyric at *Ep.* 5.

turn to petition Aurora (standing in for Constantinople and the Eastern Empire) to grant Anthemius as defender of the West:

> *hinc Vandalus hostis*
> *urget et in nostrum numerosa classe quotannis*
> *militat excidium, conversoque ordine fati*
> *torrida Caucaseos infert mihi Byrsa furores.*
> *praeterea invictus Ricimer, quem publica fata*
> *respiciunt, proprio solus vix Marte repellit*
> *piratam per rura vagum, qui proelia vitans*
> *victorem fugitivus agit…*
>
> Sid. *carm.* 2.348-355
>
> On this side, the Vandal foe presses hard; and every year he wars with multitudinous navy to destroy us; the natural order hath been reversed, and now parched Byrsa launches against me the frenzy of the Caucasus. Moreover, unconquerable Ricimer, to whom the destiny of our nation looks for safety, barely drives back with his own unaided force the pirate that ranges over our lands, that ever avoids battle and though he has fled, acts as the victor (trans. W. Anderson, adapted).

In the first instance, that Italy was still being attacked (this poem being composed in 468, thirteen years after the sacking of Rome) is seen as disturbing the natural order of things. The Vandals themselves are cowardly, and then arrogant: first avoiding, or escaping pitched battle (i.e. prone to raiding), and then playing the part of the conquering hero. These are similar traits to what might be found in the Dracontian archetype. Besides the term *pirata*, Sidonius' characterisation also shares the sense of dissimulation through the phrase *victorem fugitivus agit*. For the case of *Romul.* 10, Sidonius' *fugitivus* evokes Dracontius' description of Jason as *fugax*, while the habit of playing at what one is not neatly lines up with, for example, *Romul.* 8. 215-7: … *solam cupit addere famam | maiorum titulis, vivaces quaerere laudes, | ut celet quod pastor erat*, 'He wished to add his only fame to his ancestors' titles, and to seek long-lived praises, so that he might hide the fact that he was but a shepherd'. As has been shown by Tizzoni (2014; 2012), Dracontius does have knowledge of Sidonius' works, and seems to have been inspired by the

latter's description of Aurora's country in *carm.* 2, particularly in the Edenic sections of the *Laudes Dei*. It would thus be reasonable to suggest that Dracontius would have been aware of the rest of the panegyrics too, and consequently the way that the Vandals were viewed from across the Mediterranean.

While he does not use the word *pirata* explicitly, Ennodius still associates the Vandals with raiding (*Vandalorum… depraedationes,* Ennod. *Pan.* 13.70) by the time of Thrasamund in his panegyric to Theodoric (and this in spite of the marriage ties between the two houses).

Concurrent to the idea of piracy is the representation of the material reward resulting from these actions. Indeed, in Dracontius, characters who cross the sea tend to do so either with the express purpose of finding plunder, as is the case with Jason,[209] or find themselves in possession of treasure of some kind as a by-product of whatever other reason they had to travel, such as Agamemnon in *Orest.*[210] and Paris in *Romul.* 8. In Sidonius, this is not overlooked either: *pinguis per transtra sedebat |Vandalus opperiens praedam, quam iusserat illuc | captivo capiente trahi…*, Sid. *Carm.* 5.390-1, 'The fleshy Vandal sat on the thwarts waiting for the spoil, which he had bidden his captives to capture and bring thither' (trans. W.B. Anderson).

[209] *Romul.* 10.32-35.
[210] *Orest.* 29-34: *divitias Asiae rex censens corde silenti | maxima fulmineo dictabat dona Tonanti, | optima Iunoni scribebat munera magnae, | atque Minervali dona addicebat Athenae, | omnibus et superis, Danais quicunque favebant* (The king assessed the riches of Asia with silent heart, and dedicated the greatest of the gifts to thundery Jupiter, the best gifts to great Juno, and [the rest] to Athena, the goddess Minerva, and to all the gods who favoured the Greeks). Note also that these riches remain a key concern for the characters later in the poem, when Orestes is taken to Athens along with the treasure, leaving Aegisthus enraged (*Orest.* 310-337).

If it is the piratical activity of the Vandals in the Mediterranean to which Dracontius refers by characterising Jason as *pirata*, then it goes some way towards confirming that the Greeks within the Dracontian universe stand in for the Vandals of the poet's contemporary existence. However, Dracontius' position towards Jason, and what or who he consequently represents, is somewhat more nuanced. The arrangement of epithets used of Jason points towards a measure of transformation from positive to negative, or more pointedly, heroic to unheroic. At the beginning of the epic, Jason retains the characteristics of a hero: he is *regnaturus,* and is called *temerator,*[211] *callidus,*[212] *pulcher* (as is usual in the tradition), *peregrinus*.[213] In contrast to this, all the later epithets fall back on the usual array of insults: *pirata nefande, ignotus, pastor, mendicus, perfidus*. We may draw a broad distinction between these two "blocks" of epithets, namely that the negatives increase in prominence only *after* Jason's association with Medea. In this version of the story, Jason is as much a victim of Medea as he is a pawn of the gods, and it is notable that Jason's dressing in "Tyrian" clothing, a key part of the negative archetype, takes place only during Jason and Medea's wedding. It would thus give the impression that Jason is not a

[211] *Temerator* is usually negative, being associated with rape and personal violation. It is in this manner that Statius uses it at *Theb.* 11.12 (*Apollineae temerator matris*) and indeed that Dracontius uses it elsewhere: *Romul.* 5.237-8 (*sacrilegus, temerator, iners inimicus et hostis| publicus ille foret?*). Its usage here appears to be more neutral, with the sense of 'violation' being more along the abstract lines of breaking boundaries, in this case the physical boundary of the sea. Nevertheless, breaking of natural boundaries is necessarily hubristic, as such an action is contrary to natural laws (see Kaufmann 2006: 136 and Wolff 2002: 191 n. 22).

[212] As Kaufmann (2006: 141 n.41) points out, the natural association of *callidus* is with wily Odysseus, and Jason is very far from Odysseus in character, particularly given his passivity. This passivity, however, is a further shared feature of the Dracontian archetype, appearing in Aegisthus as *iners* (*Orest.* 453: *dum regnaret iners… pastor*). Although his actions do lead him to become a sacrificial victim, *callidus* here could be seen as an extension of pioneering spirit expressed with *temerator*. It should be noted that his plan only fails once he lands on Colchian soil, and as we see later, the association with Medea causes him to lose the heroic qualities he begins with.

[213] Again, although not explicitly positive, *peregrinus* does at least lack the negative connotations of *fugax,* which he is called later. The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (10.1.1307.73-5) defines *peregrinus,* in its primary sense, as being used of those "*qui (quae) differunt vel distant ab indigenis, illi loco propriis, itaque ibi ignoti sunt (vergit ad notionem q.e. hospes…, q.e. viator sim.)"*. Conversely, *fugax,* in its strictest sense, is closely tied up with the qualities of fearfulness and cowardice (cf. *Th.L.L.* 6.1.1473.30-1).

reprehensible character (in the poet's eyes, at least) at first, but is made such by way of external forces. This echoes the shift in narrative focus from love and the paradox of the sacrificial victim becoming lover, and *vice versa,* in the prologue[214] to the matter of the safeguarding of Thebes and the dangers of worshipping the wrong gods in the epilogue.[215] Within the hierarchy of dislike, the poet's distaste for Medea far outstrips that for Jason. And furthermore, the poet expresses a wish for Thebes to end its cycle of violence and evil. By the end of the poem, Jason has, by marriage, become part of that city (especially given his lack of an alternative homeland), and that destructive cycle about which Dracontius is so evidently worried.

These external forces are all in one way or another related to love: in the first instance of *pirata,* Jason is addressed by Cupid, to whom he has just prayed for salvation. Cupid's assistance, stemming from Juno's earlier insistence that Jason be saved in return for having helped her before the epic begins, leads to the marriage with Medea, and hence further transformation into this archetype.

The characterisation of a male figure in a position of power as being inept and hence undesirable as a ruler is largely the domain of the poet-narrator, which is to say that it is in the voice of the narrator that the negative epithets are spoken. This is likewise the case in *Orest* and in *Romul.* 8. In *Romul.* 10, the distribution of negative epithets to the speaker is somewhat different. On the whole, the really negative epithets used of Jason are spoken by other characters. Of the epithets, Medea has

[214] Drac. *Romul.* 10.30-31: *cur hospes amatur | qui mactandus erat, vel cur mactatur amatus?* 'Why was the guest, who was meant to be sacrificed, loved, and why was he who was loved sacrificed?'
[215] Drac. *Romul.* 10.588: '*parcite vos saltim Thebis…',* '[Venus and Bacchus,] spare now Thebes…'; Drac. *Romul.* 10.600-1: *sit<que> nefas coluisse deos, quia crimen habetur | religionis honos, cum dat pro laude pericla,* 'Let it be against the natural law to worship the gods, since honouring of superstition is held to be a crime whenever it produces danger in place of praise'.

five (*nauta,*[216] *fugax, pirata nefande, callide,*[217] *mendicus Iason, perfidus Iason*), Diana one (*Aesonidi*), Cupid one (*pirata decore*), and the *satelles* of Aeëtes, indirectly, one (*ignoto…marito*). The rest (seven instances) are all the narrator.[218] In comparison, Dracontius is much more critical of Medea, describing her in the very first line already as *atra virgo*. In short, then, while it cannot be doubted that Jason is an ambivalent character who, though he does have some heroic qualities, does not make any use of them, and equally has a number of neutral and negative characteristics, it would appear once again that Dracontius' loyalties lie with the Greeks of this story.[219]

The fact that Jason is presented within the framework of the archetype suggests that there is a moral point to be gleaned from the question of piracy. From the point of view of a rhetorical exemplum, this aspect of the archetype does not so much suggest that being a pirate is a bad idea in and of itself, though it definitely is questionable as far as credentials to rule are concerned. Rather, Dracontius seems to be advocating against the unintended consequences of this profession, and particularly the misadventures which one could encounter along the way which would lead to one's ultimate downfall. With particular reference to *Romul.* 10 this concerns bad marriages, or marriage which cause more trouble than good. Of course from a moral formation perspective this is not literally suggesting that the model is

[216] "Alle Belege von *nauta* in *Romul.* 10 beziehen sich auf Jason. Ausser an der vorliegenden und zwei weiteren Stellen (44 und 200) erhält der Begriff einen eindeutig negativen Beiklang" (Kaufmann 2006: 121 n. 18).
[217] Cf. Kaufmann's (2006: 141 n.41; 331 n. 343) discussion of the differences between the two instances of *callidus* being applied to Jason. The second instance, where Medea uses it, is used ironically. This further indicates that there is a definite transformation which takes place as a result of Jason's association with Medea.
[218] These are: *nauta* (*Romul.* 10.18; 200), *pelagi temerator primus* (19), *callidus heros* (41), *pulcher,* (179), *peregrinus* (198), *ingratum maritum* (284).
[219] Notably, the other Greeks, Creon and Glauce, do not have negative epithets, even when Medea talks about them. Only Glauce is referred to once by Dracontius as *paelex* (*quando cruentatam fecit de matre novercam | mixtus amore furor dotata paelice flammis*, *Romul.* 10.22-23).

against becoming a pirate, but more broadly that a ruler who would let his kingdom engage in piratical activity and then forms political attachments which are short-term solutions for protecting his interests may in fact be doing himself more harm in the long run.

THE ARCHETYPE AS COMMENTARY ON ORIGINS

Concomitant with Jason's status as a pirate is his apparent lack of fixed origin: when Dracontius introduces the Theban episode, he has Jason express his desire to return to Greece, but does not specify where. In fact, there is no back story for Jason at all. We are told nothing about how he came to be on the *Argo*, nor indeed why he needs the Golden Fleece in the first place. All we are told is that he is the son of Aeson, and, regarding the Fleece itself, only that:

> *dives apud Colchos Phrixei velleris aurum,*
> *pellis erat, servata diu custode dracone.*
> *hanc propter pelagi temerator primus Iason*
> *venerat, ut rutilas subduceret arbore lanas.*
> *Romul.* 10.32-5
> In the country of the Colchians was the rich pelt the gold of the Phrixean fleece, kept safe for a long time by a dragon guardian. On account of this Jason, the first penetrator of the sea, had come [there], so that he might steal the glittering wool from the tree.

By contrast, in earlier treatments of the myth, such as that of Ovid, Jason is already *claro… Iasone* (*Met.* 7.5) before the story begins. Likewise, we have references not only to the fact that he is the son of Aeson (frequent use of *Aesonides*, *Aesone natus, heros Aesonius*), but also that he comes from Iolcus (*victor Iolciacos tetigit cum coniuge portus,* Ov. *Met.* 7.158). While he is definitely classed as an outsider (*quid in hospite regia virgo | ureris et thalamos alieni concipis orbis?,* Ov. *Met.* 7.21-2), there is no sense of his being homeless and wandering as is expressed with the *peregrinus* and *fugax* which Dracontius gives us. Likewise, in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* we

are at least made aware of Jason's lineage, his home city, and the purpose behind the quest for the Golden Fleece, although it should also be noted that this epic is markedly lacking in epithets, both positive and negative, for Jason. This is therefore another of Dracontius' mythological innovations.

This lack of detail leads to two possible explanations. In the first instance, it could be another of Dracontius' expectations of his audience to know such detail from their own common mythological knowledge, and thus he feels that it is unnecessary to have to explain this himself, much in the manner of events like Hecuba's dream and the previous destruction of Troy in *Romul.* 8.[220] Following on from this, it could also be representative of a specifically late Antique tradition, not to associate Jason with any particular city.[221] On the other hand, this could be a deliberate obfuscation of Jason's origins for the purpose of further deepening the pseudo-Virgilian archetype, particularly given that the texts which were used as mythological handbooks, such as Ovid, were still likely to be in wide circulation at this time. By having only the barest of details about his background (i.e. that he is the son of Aeson, and a Greek), Jason's wish to return to his family and show off both his bride and his new-found wealth is therefore problematic. This lack of origin and standing is further emphasised when Aeëtes is informed of Medea's marriage. The Colchian king's concern is not for the fact that Medea has married without his permission, but rather that she has married someone who, as a foreigner, has little to no reputation:

nuntius interea maesto volat ore satelles

[220] Hecuba's dream: *Romul.* 8.122-4; previous sacking of Troy: repeatedly throughout *Romul.* 8.261-348.
[221] The first chapters of Dares Phrygius also avoid talking about where Jason comes from, beyond the vague *in Peloponneso*, though this is likely a scribal addition.

> *ad regem subvectus equo natamque tyranno*
> *indicat ignoto passim nupsisse marito.*
> *expavit genitor: sic quondam tristis Agenor*
> *concidit Europae senior fraudatus amore,*
> *cum nesciret adhuc generum meruisse Tonantem.*
>
> *Romul.* 10.311-316
>
> Meanwhile a servant acting as messenger travelled by horse and with a mournful face went to the king. He announced that the king's daughter had indiscriminately married an unknown husband. The father flew into a panic: for once upon a time Agenor, sad, aged and bereft of Europa's love, succumbed in this way, since he did not know yet that he had won Jupiter as his son-in-law.

In the first instance, Jason might well simply be unknown to the Colchians, but this to me seems unlikely, and that his status of an unknown is both deliberate and universal, for even amongst the Thebans he seems not to be recognised for his heritage. Conversely, it is on account of his daring in bringing back the Fleece which earns him praise from Creon, and no mention is made of any family: *miratur rex ipse Creon, laudatur Iason | quod freta quod terras sic felix praedo vagetur, Romul.* 10. 367-8, 'King Creon himself was amazed and in this manner Jason was praised for the fact that he wandered on land and sea as a successful brigand'. Here the sense of no fixed abode is expressed by *vagetur*.

As we have seen in the other epics under consideration in this thesis, there is a tendency for Dracontius to take the side of the Greeks in his epic world, and there is evidence to suggest that the Greeks can stand for the Vandals of Dracontius' own contemporary milieu. If this is to be followed through in *Romul.* 10, then this lack of origin for Jason is more justified, given that the Vandals themselves seem not to have any fixed origin. Furthermore, even if they were 'aware' of their own origins, or had origin myths, they did not seem to want to employ these in any kind of expression of collective identity. For example, in the very short panegyric *In laudem regis* of Florentinus (*Anth. Lat.* 376R/371SB), Thrasamund, the recipient, is only ever

praised in the context of Carthage.[222] Although it was the rule of panegyric to include information about the dedicatee's upbringing and origins, however much it might be adapted by way of semi-mythologisation, particularly in verse panegyrics, the Hasding dynasty is also only mentioned in passing.[223] Its brief appearance notwithstanding, Florentinus' characterisation of the Hasdings is very important here, for Carthage is described as the *Asdingis genetrix* (*Anth. Lat*. 376R/371SB. 30). In short, the Vandals, at least by the time of Thrasamund, seem to have adopted Carthage as their homeland, as if they were always associated with North Africa. This can be seen to be mirrored somewhat in the numismatic evidence we have for Vandal Carthage. The iconography used on coins of the period is uniformly taken over from Roman usage, and there is no attempt to 'Vandalise' this imagery. Clover (1986) asserts that the imagery used speaks not only to Carthage as a city by using representations of Lady Carthage, and showing what he refers to as 'municipal pride', but equally reaches into the distant Phoenician past by using early symbols such as the horse's head and palm trees.[224] It should also be noted that for a while,

[222] The poem is only 39 lines long, and is particularly memorable for its anaphoric litany of '*Carthago*' at *Anth. Lat*. 376R/371SB. 28-36. Other places mentioned here are the suburb of Alianae, Africa more generally, Lydia, Parthia and the Far East (*Seres*), but nothing north of the Alps.

[223] Men. Rhet. 2. 370.9-14: 'If neither his city nor his nation is conspicuously famous, you should omit this topic, and consider whether his family has prestige or not. If it has, work this up. If it is humble, or without prestige, omit it likewise, and start with the emperor himself…'; Men. Rhet. 2.370.30-371.3: 'It must be carefully noted that, if we find ourselves able to conceal lack of repute by some technical device… we must do just this; if there is no such technical resource, we must omit the topic' (trans. Russell & Wilson). See also MacCormack (2012 : 250).

[224] It is a long-established part of the Medea tradition that Jason is supported by Juno and her appearance in *Romul.* 10 is not out of the ordinary. However, to add to the possibility that the Greeks in Dracontius' poetic universe represent the Vandals of the poet's contemporary existence, particularly when they are contrasted with another nation (e.g. Trojans or Colchians/Scythians), we might consider the symbolic importance of Juno protecting Jason and setting off the events of the story together with the importance of Juno to Carthage. Most relevant among this imagery is the figure of Lady Carthage. Typically represented by a woman crowned with ears of wheat — she appears thus as the personification of Africa in Sidonius Apollinaris' panegyric to Majorian (*carm.* 5) — Clover (1976: 5) notes that the figure itself is an interpretation of the Phoenician goddess Tanit, who, by *interpretatio Romana,* became associated with Juno Caelestis. Jason's divine support might be a figurative support from Carthage, especially seeing as it is Juno who pushes for the marriage, in the manner of contemporary political marriage.

Vandal kings did not issue their own currency, but reused that of earlier emperors. The only other occurrence of the Hasdings as a dynasty in poetry occurs at Dracontius' *Satisfactio*, where it likewise is only a passing reference.[225] Latin prose texts dealing with this subject are no more yielding of references along these lines.

There are oblique references to the origin of the Vandals in later authors. Jordanes, for example, locates them probably somewhere in the Baltic when discussing the mythic history of the Goths, who he imagines originated from the island of Scandza:

> *ex hac igitur Scandza insula quasi officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum cum rege suo Berig Gothi quondam memorantur egressi… unde mox promoventes ad sedes Ulmerugorum, qui tunc Oceani ripas insidebant, castra metati sunt eosque commisso proelio propriis sedibus pepulerunt, eorumque vicinos Vandalos iam tunc subiugantes suis applicavere victoriis.*
>
> Jord. *Get.* 25-6
>
> Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name… Soon they moved from here to the abodes of the Ulmerugi, who then dwelt on the shores of Ocean, where they pitched camp, joined battle with them and drove them from their homes. Then they subdued their neighbours, the Vandals, and thus added to their victories (trans. C.C. Mierow).

This passage, as specifically providing an origin for the Goths (and indirectly for the other peoples which they conquer early on), is only found in Jordanes, and it is more than likely a fanciful addition to a work which is more broadly based on earlier sources such as Cassiodorus and Orosius (see Christensen 2002: 299-300). Procopius takes a more 'scientific' approach and proclaims that the Germanic tribes were once all one, and are simply branches of the same supergroup (*Vand.* 2.3-6), but likewise places them as having originated around a body of water, this time in

[225] Drac. *Satisf.* 21-24: *ut qui facta ducum possem narrare meorum, | nominis Asdingui bella triumphigera | unde mihi merces posset cum laude salutis | munere regnantis magna venire simul,* 'So that I am able to narrate the deeds of my lords, the triumph-bearing wars of the Hasding name, from where at once a great reward might come to me from my ruler's gifts with praise for his well-being.'

the Crimea. Both of these, geographical uncertainties aside, broadly concur with the (very little) archaeological evidence which we might be able to link to the Vandal origins. This archaeological assemblage, known as the Przeworsk culture, is associated with the lands around the Danube, but given that we have practically no readily identifiable Vandal material culture from Carthage, it is uncertain just how convincing this link is (cf. Merills & Miles 2010, Bockmann 2013). The locating of their origins aside, there appear to be no traces of any indigenous myths of origin which may have been employed by the Vandals.

In conclusion, Jason, by not having clear origins or family, and by his characterisation as a pirate, could well be seen as representing a Vandal ruler. Indeed, he seems to adopt Thebes as his new home in much the same way that the Vandals adopted Carthage, and the accumulation of negative epithets can be viewed as the ill-effects of being associated with a foreign power. The culmination of these ill-effects is the destruction of the royal house of Thebes along with Jason.

ABANDONING THE ARCHETYPE

As we have seen, morally good characters do exist in contrast to those embodying the archetype. Even then, these often have some or other failing which, while not as serious as those archetypal characters, nevertheless casts doubt on them too. The exception to this is the character of Hylas. As we have also seen, Dracontius emphasises that Hylas is a pale imitation of Hercules. While neither are kings or potential kings, the latter character is important in the construction of Romanness as delineated by the aims of the rhetorical exercises, forming part of several Roman foundation myths. While Hercules is not a main character in *Romul.* 2, insofar as he

is not the object of Venus' revenge, he is nevertheless the one character who bears the brunt of Hylas' loss at the end of the poem. Furthermore, Hylas' relationship with Hercules is of course canonically important, and, as in the other poems of the *Romulea*, variations in presentation of traditionally important features are more often than not where Dracontius is making a politically charged point. It is therefore instructive to consider here the presentation and character of Hercules in terms of his symbolism as an alternative Roman hero, as well as his status as such in the social and literary culture of Late Antiquity, before considering how these features are treated in Dracontius' poem. Hereafter I will consider the characterisation of Hylas with regard to his aforementioned relationship with Hercules, and thus how the morally good characters might operate as exempla in a world of the morally challenged.

To begin with, we must consider the nature of the myth itself. Osmun (1983: 57) identifies four themes which recur in the Hylas story. Two are in some measure didactic, instructing the listener to be wary of letting one's partner out of sight, and the "peril of youthful male beauty". The third theme — not being led astray by temptation — Osmun (1983: 57) considers a moral teaching, and the last is aetiological, providing an alternative origin for the echo. There have been various interpretations of the Hercules and Hylas myth since Antiquity. Heerink (2010: 1-2) details several of these, beginning with aetiological examples which range from the cultic (Strabo, origins of a cult in Mysia)[226] to the scientific (Nicander, explaining seasonal changes). He further summarises modern research which displays a similar range, including that Hercules and Hylas' relationship is representative of

[226] See also Stafford (2012: 136).

homosocial rites of passage in Greek culture, as well as a meteorological interpretation, giving the *aition* for seasonal change. Heerink's (2010) own position is to read the Hercules and Hylas myth as it is found in later literature as a metapoetical reflection on the given poet's literary relationship with his forerunners. Thus he characterises the Hercules-Hylas episodes in Propertius, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius as being linked to Virgil's *Aeneid*, as well as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to a lesser degree. For example, he sees the episode in Valerius Flaccus as an *Aeneid* in miniature, instigated by Juno's hatred for Hercules, just as for Aeneas, and seeing Hylas as an Ascanius-like figure, not least due to his characterisation as the *spes* for continued empire, but also on account of parallel hunting episodes. The imagery of Hylas following Hercules is also thus interpreted metapoetically, as in his reading of Statius' episode, with the phrase *sequens vestigia* (Stat. *Theb.* 5.442) foreshadowing that author's comments on the *Thebaid* as not wanting to (or being incapable of) outdoing the *Aeneid* in book 12.[227]

Hercules in Romul. 2

It could be said that Hercules is the figure which unites most of the mythological poems of the *Romulea*, even though he may not actually feature in them at all. Aside from being a character in *Romul.* 2, and the speaker 'imitated' in the *ethopoeia* of *Romul.* 4, he is also relevant to the plots of *Romul.* 8 – he was directly involved in the first destruction of Troy which the Trojan envoys are so keen to invoke during the embassy to Salamis – as well as *Romul.* 10, given that he was also a member of the Argonauts accompanying Jason to retrieve the Golden Fleece. Besides the interconnectedness of these stories in the tradition, such ubiquity can likely also be

[227] Stat. *Theb.* 12.816-7: *vive, precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta, | sed longe sequere et vestigial semper adora.*

ascribed to the nature of the collection itself as the "Romulean" poems, which I interpret to mean "poems in the style of the Romans".

Hercules is not at first glance a major role in the cast of characters in *Romul.* 2: he is referred to mostly in passing, usually in conjunction with scene changes, and tends to be portrayed as the subject of reported action, rather than the main protagonist of a given scene. Despite this, he is integral to the story, and it is specifically his role as Hylas' companion which provides us with a key interpretive tool in *Romul.* 2.

The relationship between Hercules and Hylas is treated, in various forms, fairly frequently in Graeco-Roman literature. Although there are no significant epic treatments which have Hercules as their hero, the pair is present in Apollonius Rhodius, and his Latin derivative Valerius Flaccus. For the most part, however, Hercules and Hylas as a unit are most often found in other genres, such as pastoral (Theocritus), elegy (Propertius) or satirical epigram (Martial). Following on from Weber's (1995: 82-93) useful conspectus of the extant literature, two major features can be concluded with regard to the nature of their relationship. Firstly, that Hylas always takes on a subordinated role whether in the guise of assistant (Apoll. Rhod. 1.132 and Val. Flac., 1. 109-110)[228] or sexual partner (Martial) – which is also expressed through Hercules' hypermasculinity and Hylas' corresponding effeminacy;[229] and secondly, that the pair are used in elegiac texts as an exemplum of pure, real love. Dracontius' presentation of the pair is kept fundamentally along these lines, but a few particular deviations are useful to observe here, and it is this

[228] Weber (1995: 72-101) gives varied examples, from descriptions of Hylas' youth and beauty (chiefly Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus, and Propertius), to the explicitly acknowledged homoerotic aspects of their relationship (e.g. Martial, Lucian of Samosata's *Navigium*).
[229] See further Weber's (1995: 72-101) comparative discussion of the presentation of Hylas throughout Graeco-Roman literary history, as well as Stafford (2012: 134-136).

attention to specific detail, which turns our author's version into a pointed commentary on both the Roman past as well as Dracontius' literary history.

When we first meet Hercules and Hylas, Dracontius presents the youth effectively as an imperfect mirror image of the hero:

> *gestans fulminei pellem cum dentibus apri;*
> *et licet invalidus haec pondera ferre laborat,*
> *ipse tamen gaudet, quasi iam commune triumphum*
> *gestet et Alcides non solus fuderit aprum.*
> *Romul.* 2.96-99
> [Hylas] carrying the shining boar's pelt [still] with its tusks ; and although being was physically weak, he struggled to bear this weight, he rejoiced however, as if he carried a shared triumph, and that Hercules had not brought down the boar by himself.

Hylas carries Hercules' boar pelt even though he is by no means as physically capable, and in so doing seeks to partake of the older and more able man's victory.[230] In this way, Hercules and Hylas can be seen as two different sides of the same coin, particularly given that the emphasis is laid on Hylas attempting to emulate Hercules in visual terms. This is made especially clear in the passage above by the pleonastic use of *iunctus* closely followed by *haeret* in the line immediately preceding this passage (*Romul.* 2. 95). The relationship is thus presented as one which is effectively symbiotic.

[230] The boar referred to is presumably the Erymanthian boar, usually either the third or fourth labour, which would place Dracontius' version of this episode fairly early on in the sequence of labours. This is somewhat complicated by the reference to the Antaeus episode, which while not a labour, is placed later, either before the garden of the Hesperides or Geryon. Stafford (2012: 36) discusses that this labour was not particularly popular in literary treatments, but somewhat more so in art. She further points out that the conclusion of the labour, where Hercules gives the boar's carcass to King Eurystheus, is somewhat comic, and that this scene, which is most prevalent in artistic depictions, probably serves to underline the "irony of [Hercules'] servitude to lesser men". If indeed it is this kind of relationship which Dracontius envisages by making his Hercules wear the boar's pelt instead of the more traditional lion's skin, it would again fit well with the idea of *Hylas* as dealing with similar material to the *Satisfactio*.

This symbiosis is further reinforced through ring-composition. At the beginning of the poem, Dracontius declares Hylas to be Hercules' *solamen dulce malorum* (*Romul.* 2.3). These *mala* are recalled again at the end. But even here, though ostensibly Hercules is at a loss because he cannot find Hylas, it is implied that his reliance upon him is more pervasive than just an assistant. Dracontius writes:

> *"O frustra nutrite, puer, spectator ubique*
> *virtutis per cuncta meae (te teste pericla*
> *saepe tuli, cum victus aper, cum fracta leonis*
> *colla Cleonaei telo parcente necantur,*
> *cum simul Antaeum rapui Telluris alumnum):*
> *quis mihi sudorem lasso post proelia terget?*
> *quis comes alter erit cum dat fera bella noverca?*
>
> *Romul.* 2.152-8
>
> Oh boy vainly nourished, everywhere a spectator of my valour through all my deeds (often I have borne dangers with you as a witness, when the boar was vanquished, when the neck of the Nemean lion was broken, and [the beast] killed without weapon, when I at the same time seized Antaeus, the child of the Earth): who will wipe away the sweat for me, wearied after battle? Who will be a second companion when my stepmother unleashes savage war?

Hercules opens by lamenting the fact that all his work has been for nothing (*frustra*). This would appear to point to a teleological purpose on either Hercules' or Hylas' mother's part, as if there had been a greater purpose for which Hylas had been entrusted to Hercules. Given that the frustration of this plan for Hylas to eventually become Herculean in manner causes so much consternation to Hercules, it is worth asking what, in the context of mythological symbolism, this character represents to a Late Latin writer.

Hercules in Classical Roman ideology

Within the catalogue of mythical figures concerned with Roman (imperial) ideology and identity, Hercules plays no small part. Specifically with regard to the episode in

which Hercules confronts the brigand Cacus, he is an important figure in Rome's proto-history, subsequently becoming a cultic figure. Beyond this, Hercules was often used in literary and rhetorical settings as an exemplum of moral and Stoic rectitude, contrary to his presentation in Greek myth as the boorish destroyer of cities (Galinsky 1972: 127-9). This image was modified further into something useful for imperial propaganda. As Anderson (1928: 9) reports: "the rôles played by Heracles might be regarded as two-fold – world-ruler (κοσμοκράτωρ) and protector of mankind (σωτήρ), the latter approaching that of saviour or even messiah". Simon (1955: 129) adds further the following characteristics: "symbole tragique et grandiose de la destinée humaine, martyr de la vertu, image de la perfection et de toute sagesse". Simon (1955: 133-134) provides several examples of emperors, besides Augustus, who made use of Hercules as part of their imperial image.

On a literary level, Zarker (1972: 34, 45) has shown how in certain metaphors, comparisons, and exempla in the *Aeneid* Hercules is used as both model and countermodel for the characterisation of Aeneas as hero, thus contributing to the conception of *virtus* (Galinsky 1972: 126-8). As a rhetorical exemplum, Hercules is popular shorthand for those who sought to promote their virtuous qualities: several figures, such as Scipio Africanus, Pompey, Caesar, and Mark Antony either being compared to the hero, or claiming descent from him (cf. Anderson 1928: 29-45). Though Hercules stories are not given a starring role in Latin epics, his presence is nevertheless felt elsewhere in Latin literature: in the work of authors such as Horace (*Odes*), Propertius (particularly in *Odes* 4, the so-called Roman odes) and Seneca (*Hercules furens, Hercules Oetaeus*).

The status of Hercules in Late Antiquity and imperial ideology

Imperial association with Hercules continued well into Late Antiquity. At the time of the Tetrarchy, Diocletian and Maximian's creation of an imperial lineage stretching back to Jupiter and Hercules respectively, though they themselves did not come from illustrious backgrounds, was a means to express imperial unity and collegiality (Simon 1955: 138; MacCormack 1981: 31, 170-2). This special relationship was made visible not only in panegyrical language, such as in the panegyric of Mamertinus given in 289, where Maximian is shown to exceed Hercules; but also in material culture, specifically in numismatic imagery and the legends on coins.[231]

Hercules remains an important figure of comparison in the encomiastic literature of Late Antiquity, not only by retaining the close associations of moderate and yet virile imperial power, but also as a symbol of Romanness by virtue of his associations with Roman foundation myth. Closer to the time of Dracontius, we still find uses of this trope in the panegyrics of Sidonius. In a short panegyric to Majorian he refers to the emperor as a second Hercules: "*haec quondam Alcides; at tu Tirynthius alter,| sed princeps, magni maxima cura dei,* Sid. *carm.* 13.15-16, Hercules once did these things; but you are a second Tirynthian, but a prince too, the highest concern of great God.)". Elsewhere in the context of imperial panegyric, Sidonius has Jupiter compare Avitus, his father-in-law and presumptive emperor, to Hercules:

[231] *Pan. Lat.* 2.2.1: *[nos] qui te praesentem intuemur deum toto quidem orbe victorem, sed nunc cum maxime in eadem occidentis plaga non pastorem trino capite deformem, sed prodigium multo taetrius opprimentem, quidquid spiritus et vocis habeamus, omne id in laudibus tuis non occupare modo, sed, si res poscat, absumere?,* "For we see you here, a present god, and victor over the whole earth, you who on this same Western shore did not merely suppress some monstrous three-headed herdsman, but you suppressed a horror much more frightful" (trans. S. MacCormack).

> *haud alio quondam vultu Tirynthius heros*
> *pondera suscepit caeli simul atque novercae*
> *cum Libyae se rupe Gigas subduceret et cum*
> *tutior Herculeo sedisset machina dorso.*
> *hunc tibi, Roma, dedi, patulis dum Gallia campis*
> *intonat Augustum plausu faustumque fragorem*
> *portat in exsanguem Boreas iam fortior Austrum.*
>
> Sid. *carm.* 7.581-7
>
> With such a face did the Tirynthian hero of old take up the weight of the world and his stepmother at the same time, when Gigas (Atlas) took himself away from the rock of Libya (Gibraltar) and when the machine of the world sat in greater safety on Hercules' back. I have given this man to you, Rome, while Gaul thunders with acclaim the name Augustus on its spreading plains and the Northern Wind now braver carries this auspicious noise against the bloodless South Wind.

In another important development of Late Antiquity (yet one which is not the symbolism which Dracontius draws on in *Romul.* 2), Hercules had become associated with the Sun, and later, a more Christianised conception of the Sun. Macrobius for example, speaking in astrological terms, says: "*nec Hercules a substantia solis alienus est, quippe Hercules ea est solis potestas quae humano generi virtutem et similitudinem praestat deorum*" (*Sat.*1.20.6). The language used here, as Simon (1955: 152) is quick to point out, is almost theological, and not far removed from that of the Christological debates of the time, especially with regard to consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and related issues. In this way, it was a few short steps before the figure of Hercules, already in philosophical circles a model of virtue and probity, became a rival to the figure of Jesus.

There seems however to be little Christianising of the Hylas myth in *Romul.* 2, despite Bright's (1987) suggestion to the contrary. Indeed, there are elements which could be interpreted as being rooted in Christian conceptions of marriage and sexuality, such as the forced chastity of Clymene and Hylas' marriage — indicating a higher, spiritual level of marriage — or the implied apotheosis of Hylas at the end of

the poem — indicating saintliness. Overall, however, it is the secular, classical imagery which dominates.

As can thus be seen from these few examples, the symbolism of Hercules remained an integral part of Roman self-fashioning throughout Late Antiquity, and, more importantly, was retained in genres which were overtly concerned with presenting this image to the public. It would thus follow that, *Romul.* 2 being a text found in a secular, rhetorical collection, it is the Hercules-as-Roman-progenitor image which is to be understood here.

As I have noted previously, the Hylas myth is a companion piece to that of Narcissus.[232] Key to Narcissus and his downfall is the element of specularity. In the *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus is given as the first story in which a prophecy of the newly blinded seer Tiresias is put to the test. The prophecy (*Met*. 3.346-397) is as follows: "*de quo consultus, an esset | tempora maturae visurus longa senectae, | fatidicus vates 'si se non noverit'* inquit ('Having asked about [Narcissus], whether he would see the far-off times to his mature old age, the seer said, "If he does not recognise himself"). Narcissus is thus condemned to die young as long as he does not recognise himself according to Tiresias' prophecy, and thus he is a prisoner of fate. His demise is also related to attraction to his own reflection.

Dracontius, too, shows interest in specularity in creating his Hylas. As I have already pointed out, Hylas acts effectively as a mirror for Hercules. That mirror may well not reflect reality, firstly in the sense that Hylas only attempts to be like

[232] See above pp. 143-144.

Hercules but is clearly not up to the job, and secondly that the differences between them clearly outweigh the similarities. Moreover, Dracontius strongly invokes the idea of vision and spectacle as we progress through Hercules' final speech at *Romul.* 2.152-163. Hylas is the *spectator virtutis* (152-3) and *testis* (153) to Hercules' deeds. The relationship between them is thus not only that of teacher and student, but also of role-model and one aspiring to that standard. Given the importance of Hercules in the cultivation of Roman identity, we can see this in the same terms as the kinds of rhetorical models which grammarians moulded young minds.

Hylas' purity and general innocence is underlined again through reference to the Dracontian archetype, which brings *Romul.* 2 neatly into line with both the other texts under consideration in this thesis as well as the generic category of 'short epic'. While the most prominent features of the archetype – the overt references to *praedo* or variants thereof – do not appear in *Romul.* 2, the figures to which these are applied in the other short epics are never far away. This can be seen in the exempla with which the nymph describes Hylas: *non fuit Hippolytus talis, non pastor ab Ida, | nocturnae fulgore deae non pulcher Iason,* Drac. *Romul.* 2.104-5 (Hippolytus was not such an equal, nor was the shepherd from Ida, nor indeed Jason, handsome on account of the lightning of the goddess of the night). While these are in the first instance employed as comparisons of youthful male beauty, they are simultaneously figures who are tainted in some way, and who are, for the most part, protagonists in the other texts of the *Romulea*. Hippolytus is chaste to unnatural extremes[233] as well as being complicit as the object of Phaedra's unnatural lust; Paris transgresses legal and moral boundaries by kidnapping Helen, and

[233] As we see elsewhere in Dracontius, chastity and virginity are states which several characters actively seek to neutralise or preserve (particularly seen in *Romul.* 10.61-65, and conversely at 10.454-460).

subsequently brings ruin upon Troy. Lastly, Jason is a bigamist and is associated with the evil sorceress Medea. In this particular iteration, Jason's sinister aspect is underlined by the use of *nocturnae… deae.* As we have seen in other Dracontian epics, the cover of night is typically used for supernatural workings (Agamemnon's ghost in *Orest.,* Medea's infernal prayer in *Romul.* 10).

Most significantly, the way these epithets are employed, introducing each with a negative, is to say that Hylas is *not* like these figures, which in effect makes him one of the most positively viewed characters in the entire Dracontian epic corpus. Not only does he escape being tainted by the moral ambiguity which the exempla represent, but he is furthermore seen as integral to Hercules' image and the well-being of all he represents. Once again, this is expressed in terms which have close ties to the rhetoric of Roman imperial succession, for Hylas, like Ascanius, and several child emperors in the West during the later Roman period, is the embodiment of hope for the future.[234] Here Dracontius notes:

> *cui gesta fatetur,*
> *Alcidis comitem fontis rapuisse puellas,*
> *Ignibus Idaliis exustas Herculeas spes.*
> *Romul.* 2.148-150
> And he (Cupid) spoke of his deeds to her (Venus), that the girls of the fountain had kidnapped Hercules' companion, and that the hopes of Hercules had been burnt out by the Idalian's fires.

Indeed, the identification of a particular youth as hope for the future is another point where Dracontius seems to have confected qualities from more than one

[234] Meaghan McEvoy (2013: 18, 52, 138) examines the theme of *spes rei publicae* as a political slogan used particularly of child emperors during Late Antiquity. The formula was first used in this way with the scions of the Constantinian dynasty, and subsequent attempts to create links between later emperors, particularly Gratian and Honorius, and this house were widely advertised.

model.[235] In addition to Ascanius, the only of Aeneas' descendents to be called by the epithet *spes*, the fact that Hylas will not be able to live out the destiny which Hercules and his mother desire for him suggests that he also shares the qualities of Marcellus, the real-life adopted heir of Augustus who died before he could fulfil his duties.

The question of hope has additional significance in a rhetorical context. We have seen in Chapter 2 how Hylas was connected with Narcissus, and that Narcissus' myth was related to the creation of art. The Hylas myth is likewise seen as having metaliterary significance. I also noted that there was a Late Antique cento of the Narcissus myth which has been latterly interpreted by Elsner (2017) as a lament for the loss of classical culture. If we consider the symbolic relationship of Hercules and Hylas more abstractly, and in line with both the rhetorical-poetic relationship which Dracontius has with Felicianus,[236] together with the role of Clymene as a poet-figure, which I shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4, we might consider that Hylas is representative of an abortive attempt at the prolonging of Roman literary culture. Clymene and the other nymphs, whose poetry does not rise above mere gossip, would love to possess him and thus kidnap him, but are unable to fully make use of their marriage with him, as he is too young.

CONCLUSION

This chapter formed the first part of an investigation into Dracontius' attitudes towards rulership and the well-being of the state. I began by identifying and outlining the main features of the "Dracontian archetype" a set of recurring

[235] A recurring technique in *Romul.* 2, as we shall see in Chapter 4, pp. 232-233.
[236] As I have discussed above in Chapter 2, p. 115.

characteristics and phrases used to describe certain male characters. Inevitably these were largely negative characters to begin with, who were either placed in or seized positions of power and who are either demonstrably unable to manage the duties of that position or are so blinded by personal ambition and megalomania that they are oblivious to the ruin which they cause. This characterisation of the inept ruler is important in the context of Vandal acculturation to Roman ideals. As a significant part of the purpose of rhetorical education was also moral education, the presence of such an archetype served as both a model to be avoided for the ruling class as well as a warning to the populace that this was not how the ruling class operated in reality. I then examined the way in which variations on this archetype portrayed varied aspects of rulership with specific reference to the Vandal context. In the first instance, I explored the general concept of the good and bad ruler, through the examples of Aegisthus (compared with Orestes and Agamemnon) and Paris (compared with Hector). I then considered the issue of alternative seats of power, a particularly unsettling aspect of the archetype, as it implied that the character could not be reined in and thus posed an unlimited danger to the stability of the state. Here again, I considered the idea of social status with regard to Paris and Aegisthus as *pastores* and at the same time *praedones*. Following from this idea of lowly origins, I considered how in the case of Jason he seems to have no origins at all, something which was shared with the Vandals, who attempted to efface all trace of their northern European origins. In this case, Jason became part of the Theban royal house and shared in its fate just as the Vandals presented themselves as intrinsically related to the fate of Carthage. Finally, I examined a case where the archetype was ostensibly abandoned in favour of a genuinely good future ruler in *Romul.* 2. Here Hylas, the protégé of Hercules, can be read as the hero-in-waiting,

trained to be a better-looking mirror of his mentor. Hercules often features in literature as a figure associated with the origins of Romanness, and thus it is apposite that Hylas, the almost-double, can be read as aspiring to be the ultimate Roman, just as the Vandals tried to do. Aspiring to be the ultimate Roman was also something which the poets of Dracontius' time seemed to want to do in a literary context too. Given the metaliterary aspects of Hylas' myth, I also discussed how his good character can be read as indicative of literary hopes and aspirations which fall short of the mark.

IV

POWERFUL WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter dealt with the presentation of several male characters in relation to their suitability as rulers. Just as there are recurring features constituting the Dracontian archetype from which we can identify the business of good kingship as an important focus for our poet, so there are recurring features with regard to female characters which reveal underlying concerns, though these are achieved by thematic rather than linguistic means. I shall therefore begin this chapter by setting out the general way in which Dracontius presents his major female characters: Medea, Clytemnestra, Venus, and latterly Clymene and Helen. This is followed by an examination of the way these figures are treated as totalising, and therefore threatening, with particular reference to the tropes of gigantomachy and divine law. I then consider the connection of these women to marriage, and how this reflects the socio-cultural aspects of Roman society which rhetorical training sought to cultivate. Finally, I consider the Clymene episode in *Romul.* 2 as a re-presentation of questions of poetic culpability.

THE PRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN DRACONTIAN EPIC

On balance, there are relatively few female characters of significance across Dracontian epic. Several of these are of course necessary to the requirements of the myth at hand. A Medea story, for example, without a significantly developed Medea

has no rhetorical or literary currency. Their presence, though limited and then largely negative, nevertheless plays an important part in the story and the choice of what Dracontius highlights. Moreover, these women are placed in positions of sufficient power that they are able to cause their environments sufficient damage, the nature of which varies according to the poem. Medea is the most obvious example of this: from the very first line of the poem she is immediately identified as *atra* 'dark' (Drac. *Romul.* 10.1), then *rea* 'criminal' (*Romul.* 10.3) and a few lines later *nefas* 'evil' (*Romul.* 10.6). Her attributes are uniformly threatening, including the ability not only to restrain the gods (*captivos deos*, *Romul.* 10.2) and the very fabric of nature itself, namely the elements (*elementa clientes, Romul.* 10.2) but bend them to her will as her servants (*servire puellae, Romul.* 10.3).

Conversely, Medea's opponent in *Romul.* 10, Venus, is *blanda, modesta,* and *mitis,* among other similarly positive epithets. Elsewhere Venus, too, has a negative streak. In *Romul.* 2, she is the jealous and fragile goddess offended by the actions of Clymene, a lower ranking divinity, and keen to avenge the slight. Here, her nature is implied rather than described as in *Romul.* 10. Cupid's speech at *Romul.* 2.15-44 is indicative, where he places himself at her service, cataloguing all the kinds of love affairs which they have instigated together, and those which they could instigate given the chance. In particular, the speech shows the imperialistic tendencies of the pair: nobody is safe from their touch and no relationship is off-limits, even should it result in incestuous liaisons.

In *Orest.* Clytemnestra already occupies a position of political power, apparently acting as regent in Agamemnon's absence. She uses this power to undermine the

stability of legitimate succession by conspiring to kill her husband with her lover Aegisthus. Dracontius presents Clytemnestra's negative attributes as a lack of virtuous behaviour while in a position of power, combined with the seductive power which a woman has over a man. Indeed, we can discern the main contours of Clytemnestra's character and motivation from the speech in which she convinces Aegisthus to go through with Agamemnon's murder at *Orest*. 163-203. Clytemnestra's speech is a reaction to a prophecy of Cassandra, announced while she is *sacro correpta furore,* which causes Clytemnestra to find Aegisthus and plot against Agamemnon (having previously thought him drowned at sea, lines 124-131). Her failings are, in order, a manipulative nature, upsetting of the natural order by controlling her consort, shifting blame onto others and in turn causing them to do one's own dirty work, being a temptress and generally deceitful. From the outset, a need for self-preservation brings about her unfeeling pragmatism, which she couples with emotional manipulation.[237] She begins her proposition immediately with the sense of action needing to be taken (*iuvenis, dic, quid sit agendum*, 163), before launching into a description of the status quo: Agamemnon has returned, and he will kill both her and Aegisthus following the law of the land. He has been zealously avenging the elopement of Paris and Helen in Troy, and will do even worse to his own wife and her lover. Her solution to the predicament is simple: they must kill him first. Her manipulation of Aegisthus begins by shifting the blame onto him: it is he who is effectively responsible for the situation and their fates are intertwined – their allegiance to one another must thus be firm:

> *per te casta negor, per te fero damna pudoris,*
> *nec volo tam multi sceleris reperdere fructum.*

[237] Dracontius attributes this to a specifically feminine trait: "*quae sexus armata dolis sub fraude latenti | incipit effari,* Drac. *Orest*. 162-3, 'And armed with the artifices of her sex, she began to speak with concealed trickery'".

. . . . . .
est nobis commune bonum, commune periclum,
sors pariter nos una manet. . .
Orest. 178-179, 181-182
Because of you I am called impure, because of you I bear the loss of modesty, nor do I wish to lose the fruit of so manifold a crime. . . Our good fortune and our danger is shared, one fate awaits us in equal measure.

The tone then shifts from equality towards one of command as Clytemnestra invokes her social status as a queen and hence Aegisthus' inferiority as a shepherd.[238] Fear as a motivating device underlines much of her argumentation. In the first instance, there is the immediate fear of Agamemnon's reaction to their adulterous liaison. Their future (i.e. the fact that they may die for their actions) is equally a cause for fear (*nam mecum miser ipse cades Agamemnone viso, Orest.* 188). But after her imperious turn, she acknowledges that she is scared as a woman (recalled from her reaction to Cassandra's prophecy just before the speech). That is, she primarily fears for herself. The whole speech is designed so that she can make Aegisthus do the dirty deed of murder. So, she contrasts that fear with the statements that he has nothing to fear at the moment, that there will be no retribution if he effects the deed now: after all, Menelaus is in exile, and Orestes and Electra are too small and insignificant to pose an obstacle (*Orest.* 193-195). In contrast to the grim outlook of the future as it stands, she makes sure to tempt him with the idea of riches and power and a happy ending (*sic merces, non poena datur, Orest.* 197) if he should do this for her, stroking his ego by saying that *nec metuam Danaos: heredem servo Thyestis* (*Orest.* 203, 'I do not fear the Greeks: I preserve the heir of Thyestes'). As a final melodramatic touch, Clytemnestra dissolves into tears (*lacrimis… ora rigabat*, *Orest.* 219), prompting Aegisthus to a hyper-masculine display of his martial prowess (*Orest.* 220-223).

[238] For which cf. chapter 3, p. 153.

Moreover, Clytemnestra is fully aware of the power she has as a woman over Aegisthus and is not by any means ashamed to use it. Her second speech to Aegisthus, reassuring him that the reward they have gained as rulers of a city is much greater than just the treasure which is now missing, reconfirms the general contours of her character and lays further emphasis on the fact that these are traits specific to women.[239] She acknowledges the *dulcedo linguae* 'sweetness of her tongue' (*Orest.* 326), the *dulce venenum* 'sweet poison' (*Orest.* 327) which she has *blandita perite* 'expertly lavished' (*Orest.* 328), are tools which, combined with her sexual power, she can use to control Aegisthus (*mollibus artifices iungens amplexibus artus*, *Orest.* 329). Negative epithets indicating Clytemnestra's duplicitous nature abound too: she is *callida* 'wily' (*Orest.* 316), *anceps* 'two-faced, dangerous' (*Orest.* 317), *proterva* 'wanton' (*Orest.* 381) and a *meretrix* 'prostitute' (*Orest.* 842).

Not only does Clytemnestra transgress sexually by engaging in an adulterous liaison with Aegisthus, but she also abrogates her responsibilities as mother. Motherhood is important for Dracontius elsewhere, particularly in terms of the long-term effect it has on the nature of the children. At *Romul.* 8.7-11 he maintains:

> *nam totum de matre venit, de matre creatur*
> *quod membratur homo; pater est fons auctor origo,*
> *sed nihil est <sine> matre pater; quota portio patris*
> *omnis constat homo? matris fit tota propago*
> For everything comes from the mother, is created from the mother, since man is formed limb by limb; the father is the source, the author, the origin, but no father exists without a mother; how many parts of the father does every man consist of? I propose it all comes of the mother.

[239] Cf. chapter 3, p. 156, 169.

In *Orest.* for the most part, Clytemnestra is uninterested in any of her offspring: Iphigenia is never mentioned as a reason for vengeance against Agamemnon,[240] and she is neither worried for the welfare of Orestes or Electra in the aftermath of the murder nor shows any reaction at all to their 'death' when told Dorylas' confected story. Dracontius further underlines this in an aside following the murder, by commenting that she is like to a stepmother rather than a mother ("*Dic mihi, Musa, precor, qua spe materna noverca | quaerere neglexit pueros et tradere captos | patris in occasus?, Orest.* 350-352 'Tell me, Muse, I beg you, by what maternal hope has a stepmother neglected to look for her children and to hand over their father's prisoners at his death?'). The characterisation of *noverca* is particularly important in Senecan tragedy.[241] Stepmotherhood has much in common with the ideas of usurpation as we have seen with Aegisthus becoming ruler. Typically, the stepmother is presented as scheming to unseat the children of her new husband in favour of her own offspring, with any action which follows from this ending in poisoning. Undoubtedly, this is another rhetorical trope, the unsettling nature of which, as McAuley (2015: 230) notes, was particular to the Roman cultural and legal context.

Essentially, and appropriate to the rhetorical context in which Dracontius operates, Clytemnestra represents the worst possible iteration of the rhetorical arts. As Quintilian discusses at *Inst.* 2.20, eloquence is one of the highest virtues, but even that can be used for ill, at which point it becomes a *mala ars* or κακοτεχνία.[242] In

[240] Although it is not the primary reason for Aegisthus and Clytemnestra's actions in Seneca's *Agamemnon* either, Clytemnestra at least mentions it to her nurse at Sen. *Ag.* 162-73.
[241] See particularly McAuley (2015: 228-232).
[242] Quint. *Inst.* 2.20.2: "*nam et fuisse multos et esse nonnullos existimo, qui facultatem dicendi ad hominum perniciem converterint*, 'For I judge that there were many and are still some who turned the skill of speaking to the downfall of men'".

Clytemnestra's case, persuasion has become manipulation, and the goal of her skill is the downfall of another, for personal gain. Orestes, on the other hand, is trained in *studium sollers et gloria linguae* (*Orest.* 292), in direct contrast to the *sexus doli* and *fraus latens* which Clytemnestra employs. In tandem with Aegisthus' ineptitude, Clytemnestra has power but clearly uses it first and foremost for herself and not in favour of the populace. Any good that comes from her actions is accidental rather than intentional, as we see in her speech informing the people that she and Aegisthus will rule together at *Orest.* 384-411, in which she states that Agamemnon's warmongering was damaging to the city[243] and that she is now bringing a greater period of *otium* and peace to them.

Taken together, Clytemnestra is thus a threat to the greater well-being and stability of the state on account of orchestrating the usurpation of her own offspring's legitimate birthright. Her tendency towards manipulation and self-preservation also casts doubt on the integrity of the state and her rule. With Clytemnestra we may also consider her sister Helen in *Romul.* 8, who, if not expressly negative, is nevertheless an ambivalent character who easily relinquishes her marital duties in favour of an adulterous liaison with Paris.

It is thus evident that self-interest, if not selfishness, is the uniting feature of all these characters, and that it is the dogmatic pursuance of it which brings harm to their societies. It is also important to note that the actions of all these female characters are tied up with the question of marriage.

[243] Drac. *Orest.* 389-391: "*regis culpa fuerit, qui exhausit civibus urbem | tot nisus viduare nurus, orbare parentes | et natos spoliare rudes pietate paterna*, 'It was the fault of the king, who impoverished the city of citizens, who, having relied on them, widowed so many young women, orphaned children of their parents, and despoiled sons in their prime on account of paternal duty.'"

TOTALISING WOMEN

The unease surrounding these women also stems from their totalising nature, a feature which recurs in different forms in the poems. Moreover, Dracontius presents this totalising nature in relation to the supernatural. Importantly these are things which cannot be controlled by the world of men, hence the poet's hesitation to make known Medea's deeds on account of their sacrilege, and the only recourse of the poet to stop these events being prayer.[244] Medea again is the benchmark for a totalising woman, given her powers to control the gods and elements. The omnipotent attribute is developed particularly in the tragic version of Seneca, and as we have seen earlier, Seneca plays an important part with regard to both source material as well as expression, and it is in this tradition which Dracontius continues here. Moreau (1994: 295), for example, characterises Medea as a '*figure fantasmique*', partaking of a dual nature: that of a woman undermining the natural order of the universe by acting in a masculine way (the *virago* of Latin literature), and that of a demonic power, an archetypal figure harmful towards men.

Dracontius makes use of demonic attributes once again in the *Orestis tragoedia*. Here, Clytemnestra is a totalising figure not through the control of the supernatural, but rather through becoming a supernatural being herself. In *Orest.* the ghost of Clytemnestra appears to Orestes some time after her murder, not as she was in life, but transformed into a Fury:

Dum solio fruitur patrio diademate pulcher,

[244] Drac. *Romul.* 10.13-16: "*quae carmina linguis | murmuret aut urens species quae nomina dicat, | haec vatem nescire decet. quae nosse profanum est | quod fuerit vulgasse nefas!,* 'It befits the poet to be ignorant of what songs she sings in her tongues or which names her burning visage speaks. And it is sacrilege to have known those things, evil to have made known what happened!'"

stetit ante oculos genetrix sua non ut inermis,
sed faculis armata rogi, succincta cerastis.

Orest. 820-822

While he was enjoying his father's throne, handsome in his crown, his mother stood before his eyes, not as one unarmed, but armed with the torches of the pyre, and girded with serpents.

As with much in Dracontian epic, her presentation and function here is reliant on an elegant use of parallelism.[245] Earlier in the poem, the ghost of Agamemnon visits Orestes in Athens and threatens to pursue him until the end of his days if he does not avenge his murder by killing Clytemnestra. Dracontius presents Clytemnestra's appearance as an almost exact mirror of Agamemnon. Whereas Agamemnon appears bloody, wheezing and dishevelled, wounded as at the time of his death,[246] Clytemnestra is reincarnated and brought back to full vigour wielding torches and snakes, two key attributes of a Fury. In the aftermath of Agamemnon's call to action, Pylades suggests to Orestes that Agamemnon would be justified in following him through all roads and places of human habitation:

non iure parentis
umbra soporatum quae te convenit Athenis
occurret per mille vias? per limina portae
obsidet et tremulis haec vocibus astra lacessens
invehitur…

Orest. 591-595

Will the shade of your parent, which came to you while you were asleep (here) at Athens not be justified to confront you along a thousand roads? He will besiege you on the threshold of the gate and with a trembling voice which exasperates the heavens at the same time, he attacks you with these words…

[245] For the broader applications of which see chapter 1, pp. 80-95.

[246] Drac. *Orest.* 520-526: "*et stetit ante toros ambobus visus Atrides | in somnis, non qualis erat post bella triumphans, | sed qualis cecidit percussa fronte bipenni: | tristis, iners, tremulus, gemitu suspiria rumpens; | pallida puniceo perfuderat ora cruore | et tremulas languore manus, cervice vaganti | ac pede vincla trahens quibus est abstractus ab aula,* 'And Agamemnon stood before their bed, visible to both in their sleep, not triumphant as he was after the war, but as he fell, his forehead smashed by the axe ; sad, languid, trembling, punctuating his sighs with groaning; he had covered his pale face with red blood and his trembling hands with languor; his head lolling and dragging on his feet chains with which he had been dragged out of the hall…'

Clytemnestra outdoes Agamemnon's threat to pursue Orestes, extending her reach to practically all corners of the world, inhabited or not:

> *claude adamanteas ferrato cardine portas,*
> *obstrue per chalybem, si sunt tibi mille fenestrae:*
> *omnibus ipsa locis adero tibi saevior umbra*
> *per freta, per campos, per silvas, flumina, montes."*
> *Orest.* 833-836
> Close the adamantine doors on their iron hinge, if you have a thousand windows, block them up with steel: I myself shall appear to you in all places as a shade that's cruel indeed, through straits, through plains, through the woods, rivers, and mountains."

Orestes is thus presented with a series of moral dilemmas: first whether to kill his mother in order to avenge his father, or face retribution, and then whether, lest he face an even greater retribution he would defile a holy space in dispatching of his mother's shade. Clytemnestra's words to Orestes specifically underline this by pitting *pietas* as duty to the family against *pietas* as duty to the gods.[247] The result of his decision is to go mad (*perfurit Inachius vindex, Agamemnonis heres*, *Orest.* 845).

Traditionally Orestes is pursued and driven mad by the three Furies before being healed of his madness by Iphigenia and subsequently being absolved of his crime by a court of mortal men in Athens. Dracontius' conflation of this with Clytemnestra would at first seem to be another of his typical changes to myth. There is, however, an immediate literary precedent for Clytemnestra's transformation into a Fury in Virgil. In the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, Dido, reeling after Aeneas leaves her, is compared to Orestes in his state of madness, as follows:

> *Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus*
> *et solem geminum et duplices se ostendere Thebas,*
> *aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes,*

[247] Drac. *Orest.* 831-2: "*non sat erat pietatis vulnus acerbum, | ut scelerata manus macularet sacra deorum*?, 'Was the harsh wound of duty not enough, that your criminal hand defiles the sacred spaces of the gods?'".

> *armatam facibus matrem et serpentibus atris*
> *cum fugit…*
>
> Vir. *Aen.* 4.469-473
>
> She was in the state of Pentheus, when, with mind deranged, he saw the Furies advancing in ranks, two suns appearing in the sky, and two cities of Thebes; or of Agamemnon's tormented son Orestes on the theatre-stage, seeking to escape a mother armed with firebrands and black snakes… (trans. W.F. Jackson Knight).

The passage is doubly significant for our purposes as Virgil underlines the theatrical connection of this particular version with reference to *scaenis*, the same word which Dracontius uses at the end of the poem to describe the preceding action. If we take this into account together with our poet's other overt references to tragedy being mixed with epic, it is again clear that Dracontius is aiming to give the general mood of tragedy while still being very clear that he is writing epic. If we also take into account the rhetorical milieu in which Dracontius was active and was intimately familiar, these and other Virgilian lines, with their detail on the Orestes myth which is replicated in Dracontius' poem, also suggest that the poem had its origins in the paraphrastic tradition.[248] It was a well-established practice, both in the schoolroom and in erudite society, to take quotations from Virgil and elaborate on them in rhetorical pieces, a practice which we find examples of in the *Anthologia Latina* as well as in Ennodius. There is no reason why this practice should not be extended beyond just rhetorical forms to full poems as well.

Symbolically, the Fury is a physical representation of several aspects threatening the stability of the state.[249] Firstly, it manifests the unsettling political power Clytemnestra had while living, and combines that with issues of divine justice and of

[248] Virgil again refers to Orestes as an exemplum at *Aen.* 3.330-2.
[249] Cf. comments in Hardie (1993: 62-3) regarding the *Aeneid* and the *Bellum Civile*. He discusses the figure of Allecto who appears to Turnus in *Aen.* 7 and inspires him against Aeneas (and consequently against the nascent Roman state). This episode is taken over into Lucan's epic, where Allecto-like figures oppose a personified Roma.

the proper functioning of the universe. Second, as the Virgilian exemplum indicates, she is a manifestation of *furor*, which in *Orest.* again takes on totalising proportions.[250] When Orestes goes mad following the apparition, he sees his mother everywhere and in everyone, snakes and fire abound and illusory feasts prevent him from eating. Orestes is not only the true heir through whom the wellbeing of the state is restored, but, as its new king is the singular representation of the state. The effects of madness on him thus indirectly represent a further assault of the very fabric of the state. He cannot trust his own people, because he sees his avenging mother in all; the world appears to be engulfed in flames; and the abundant food, taken as the resources of the kingdom, is unable to be enjoyed.

Furor is by Dracontius' time an ancient Latin epic trope, which in its first fully-fledged exponent Virgil uses of those characters which hinder Aeneas' progress to achieving his goal of founding a new Troy in Latium. Consequently, it is the antithesis of *pietas* and *virtus*.[251] While Orestes seems to lack the latter, this definition is just as applicable to *Orest.* given that Dracontius articulates the moral question of honouring one's familial *pietas* often and conspicuously throughout the poem.[252] Moreover, the threat which Clytemnestra and her accompanying *furor* embodies is related to another epic trope, that of gigantomachy.

Albeit on a much-reduced scale, as this kind of tension is typically expressed on cosmological levels in Latin epic, the idea of the madness which Clytemnestra brings

[250] This is, in fact, a broader application of Furies in epic: see Feeney (1991: 163-4).
[251] See Hardie (1993: 58-60).
[252] For example: *impietate pium, reprobae probitatis Oresten,* Drac. *Orest.* 8; *dat furor arma pius, pietas dat noxia ferrum*, *Orest.* 19.

with her representing gigantomachic conflict is noticeable particularly at *Orest.* 860-1, where the narrator says of Orestes:

> *quid faciat? quos ille deos, quae numina poscens*
> *eliciat supplex? An tertia regna fatiget?*
> What ought he to do? Which gods and which powers would he call down as an entreating suppliant? Would the third kingdom grow weary of this?

The Underworld is frequently invoked in questions of gigantomachy, with specific reference to the myth of Proserpina. In short, this myth concerns the preservation of the stability of the universe by having Jupiter find Pluto a wife and otherwise prevent all-out war between the three realms of the world. Ovid, for example, uses the phrase *tertia regna* at *Fast.* 4.584, a section which references the same story, while Jupiter works to placate the *ultima regna* at Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 224. Indeed, Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae*, is equally important as a model involving transformation into a Fury and subsequent gigantomachic conflict.

Here the goddess Ceres is compared explicitly with the Fury Megaera when she discovers that Proserpina has been kidnapped and plans to have her revenge on the gods of Olympus.[253] Like Clytemnestra, she is also *pernix,* though here in its proper sense of 'speedily' rather than a mediaeval sense of 'pernicious'.[254] Dracontius would have known Claudian's work (cf. Kaufmann 2006: 45) and the figure of Ceres could thus be a model for Clytemnestra in this mode of revenge. The associations of Clytemnestra with the Claudianic Ceres are also interesting in the context of

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[253] Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 3.376-9; 386-8: *hae placuere faces, pernix invadit utramque | cincta sinus, exerta manus, armata bipenni | alternasque ferit totisque obnixa trementes | viribus impellit* [...] ***qualis** pestiferas animare ad crimina taxos | **torva Megaera** ruit, Cadmi seu moenia poscat | sive Thyesteis properet saevire Mycenis*, 'These [cypresses] pleased her as torches, she went forth swiftly against both, her lap girded, her hand outstretched, armed with an axe, and she knocked down now one now another, and resolutely she with all her strength struck the trembling [trees]... like grim Megaera rushes to inspire the poisonous javelins to crime, or demands the walls of Cadmus or hurries to rage in Thyestean Mycenae'.
[254] Cf. *DMLBS* s.v. *pernix*.

usurpation as was discussed in the previous chapter.[255] In Claudian's epic, Ceres is described as being Fury-like in the third, unfinished book, where she rages against the gods of Olympus for having kidnapped Proserpina. Her actions while in this state are wilfully destructive, setting fire to the Sicilian countryside. Remembering that Dracontius portrays Clytemnestra as the true power behind the throne, engineering Aegisthus' rise to power, and being the mouthpiece of the monarchy, the overtones of such an association further serve to underline the potential for destruction which such an usurpation might have. As we see in the other epics, it is again a powerful woman who brings about misery and destruction on the inhabitants of a city. The Claudianic Ceres (and even the Senecan Medea) also exhibits a totalising nature: [256]

> *accingar lustrare diem, per devia rerum*
> *indefessa ferar. nulla cessabitur hora,*
> *non requies, non somnus erit, dum pignus ademptum*
> *inveniam, gremio quamvis mergatur Hiberae*
> *Tethyos et Rubro iaceat vallata profundo.*
> *non Rheni glacies, non me Riphaea tenebunt*
> *frigora; non dubio Syrtis cunctabitur aestu.*
> *stat fines penetrare Noti Boreaeque nivalem*
> *vestigare domum; primo calcabitur Atlas*
> *occasu facibusque meis lucebit Hydaspes,*
>
> Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 3.316-325
>
> I will gird myself to purify the day, untiring I will be carried through the lonely places. No hour will be spared, there will be no rest, no sleep, until I find the child taken from me, though she be submerged in the lap of the Iberian sea and she lies surrounded by the deep Red Sea. The ice of the Rhine, and the Riphaean cold will not hold me back; there will be no hesitation in the uncertain heat of Syrtis. My purpose stands to penetrate the territory of the south wind and to seek out the snowy abode of Boreas; firstly Atlas will be trampled underfoot, and the Hydaspes will light up with my torches'.

Furthermore the description of the palace also corresponds with Claudian. In Clytemnestra's warning to Orestes we are presented with a palace equipped with adamantine, iron, and steel, tough and 'industrial' materials to be used as protection

[255] See pp. 160-172.
[256] Cf. Sen. *Med.* 400-414, as well.

against the apparition. In Claudian's case, it is the palace in which Ceres keeps Proserpina in a state of semi-imprisonment. There too, it is a preponderance of 'artificial' and 'industrial' materials which are emphasised: iron, steel, bronze, and electrum:

> *devenere locum, Cereris quo tecta nitebant*
> *Cyclopum firmata manu: stant ardua ferro*
> *moenia, ferrati postes, immensaque nectit*
> *claustra chalybs.*
> . . . . . .
> *atria cingit ebur; trabibus solidatur aenis*
> *culmen et in celsas surgunt electra columna*
>
> Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.237-240; 244-245
>
> They came down to a place in which Ceres' palace shone, having been made strong by the hands of the Cyclopes: there stood high walls in iron, iron doorposts, and steel enclosed the immense doors... Ivory girded the hall; its highest point was reinforced with bronze beams and electrum columns rose up into the sky...

In spite of the comparatively luxurious materials which are used in the construction of the palace, the emphasis is placed on those architectural features which underline enclosure and imprisonment. And whereas Claudian's palace is Ceres' means of keeping the real world away from Proserpina, to keep her in the safe (though overbearing) hands of her mother, Clytemnestra's jeering is conversely meant as a way to distance the maternal figure from her son.

As I showed in Chapter 3, Dracontius uses the inept ruler archetype as a tool to talk about issues of kingship, and through presentation of a negative example, stresses what ought to be the 'right way' of approaching rulership. This had its roots in the exercises of the rhetorical schools where, as Kaster (2001) showed, the goal was as much the promotion of good moral and cultural habits as the development of good linguistic skills. We may consequently approach the presentation of the female characters in Dracontian epic in a similar manner. Although there is very little

Christian content in the secular poems, and I maintain that readings which treat Dracontian epic as a Christian-moral interpretation of classical myth avoid more important political points, it is worth considering that the promotion of underlying Roman values still play a large part, particularly given the eagerness of the Vandals society to adopt Roman habits. Moreover, this eagerness to appeal to Roman values may have become more acute with the arrival of the imperial women in the aftermath of 455. That these are being expressed through female characteristics does not mean that they should be seen as models for women, though doubtless the audience for these poems was mixed as all aristocratic entertainment. Rather these are universal values which, if applied correctly, amount again to the well-being of the state and society at large. The values expressed are in the case of the negative female characters largely to do with marriage. This is clearly an important issue in Vandal Africa, given the way in which the Vandal rulers used political marriage as a means to cement their power in the Western Mediterranean.[257]

WOMEN AND THE POWER OF MARRIAGE

In Dracontian epic as a whole marriage is a frequently exploited theme. Existing marriages are torn apart, adultery reigns, marriage is used as a means of punishment and control and the erasure of all traces marriage in favour of a celibate existence. Consequently there is much emphasis laid on the preservation of the marital and family unit. This has again frequently been interpreted as a manifestation of the Christian morals of the author influencing the seemingly 'pagan' material (cf. esp. Klein 2001, Rapisarda 1951 as typical examples of this view). However, in two of the poems under consideration here, *Romul.* 10 and

[257] Cf. Introduction p. 18-20.

Romul. 2, the idea of a tension between virginity — that is, both the state of being unspoiled as well as a more general state of not being married — and marriage operates in a more overtly political manner. As one might expect, it is chiefly Venus and Cupid who are involved in all these iterations. In *Romul.* 10, Venus and Cupid use marriage as a way to protect Jason according to Juno's wishes, while in *Romul.* 2, the water nymph Clymene becomes the object of Venus' revenge. In this section, I will look at how this theme of marriage as a means of neutralising the power of virginity is presented and operates in *Romul.* 10, before comparing it to the significance of marriage in the Vandal context. The treatment of this theme in *Romul.* 2 will be the subject of its own section later on in this chapter. It will become apparent that there are parallels between the thematising of virginity and marriage and the political situation of our poet's period.

The themes of virginity and marriage and the tension between them are evident from the beginning of the story: Medea is identified as *virgo* in the first line, and is a priestess of the virgin goddess Diana. Juno, the patron goddess and hence embodiment of marriage, sets the story in motion by undermining Medea's state in order to repay her debt to Jason. Nor is this a passing interest: our poet sustains this tension at later points too. In Medea's preparations for revenge her choice of deities to invoke is in stark contrast to the erotic gods promoting marriage and congress in the first part of the poem, for they are almost all associated with barrenness or the pure state of virginity. She invokes first the Moon, who is traditionally associated with motherhood and the cycles of womanhood, but also in the context of *Romul.* 10 is another facet of Diana and Proserpina, whose myths are both associated with virginity. Likewise, she invokes the Furies, who are well known to be virgin

goddesses.[258] The Moon is here said to be full (*plenae cornua lunae*, *Romul.* 10.388, cf. Wolff 2002: 211 n.185). Despite fullness being the most extreme point of the Moon's journey around the ecliptic, full moon is a very weak position astrologically, since the Moon, reflecting all the light of the Sun by being exactly opposite it in the sky, is not only considered opposed to the celestial king, but exposed and vulnerable as it is fully lit.[259] In order to remedy this, Medea makes the Moon progress abnormally fast to new moon (*sidereis transcendens saltibus astra*, *Romul.* 10.390). This action is paradigmatic of the Medea's goal, which is to undo the effects of her marriage, including destroying her two children, and return to the 'untouched' (i.e. the 'new' in new moon) state of her maidenhood. The tension between virginity and marriage, and the desire on Medea's part for one to eliminate the other, is made explicitly clear a few lines later:

> *virginitas si casta placet, retinere pudorem,*
> *si libet et nunquam contagia blanda mariti*
> *quaeritis, innuptae nuptam exhorrete sorores.*
> *si Furias saevire precor nec sponte nocetis,*
> *non estis Furiae: nomen mutate domosque*
> *ponite serpentes, alienas reddite flammas*
> *et puerum Veneris, quem iam tempsistis, amate."*
>
> *Romul.* 10.454-460
>
> If pure virginity pleases you, if you want to retain your modesty, and never seek the attractive taint of a husband, tremble, unmarried sisters, at the married woman. If I entreat the Furies to rage, and you do not do any harm of your own accord, you are not Furies. Change your name and your dwelling, put down your serpents, return the flames that are not yours and love Venus' boy, whom you have despised."

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[258] As seen at *Romul.* 10.456, Dracontius refers to the Furies as *innuptae… sorores*, probably showing the influence of encyclopaedic compendia such as Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid*, where it is noted that "*Furiae numquam nupserunt"* (*ad Aen.* 6.280).

[259] See footnote 261 in this chapter, on the symbolism of the Sun as king. Both Wolff (2002: 211 n.185) and Kaufmann (2006: 353 n.388) correctly note that the reference to the phase of the Moon together with the following line have to do with the correct time at which to perform magical rituals: in this particular instance, it is better to perform dubious acts when no-one can see them. However, given that this does not take a month, I prefer to read *captabat* as "seized" rather than "observed" as does Wolff's (2002) translation, which also fits better with Medea being able to control nature.

In the poet's epilogue, Dracontius entreats the tutelary deities of Thebes (Venus, Cupid, and Liber) to refrain from any further involvement in the city's affairs. These are, of course, the same deities who are aligned against Medea by either creating or supporting her union to Jason:

> *blanda Venus, lascive puer, Semeleie Bacche,*
> *parcite vos saltim Thebis quibus auctor origo*
> *aut soboles praeclara fuit : tibi mater, Iacche,*
> *Thebana de stirpe et, arator, tibi Diones*
> *Harmoniam nupsisse ferunt: pro munere Thebae*
> *et pro tot meritis sic funera tanta merentur?*
>
> *Romul.* 10.587-592
>
> Alluring Venus, wanton boy, Bacchus son of Semele, spare at least Thebes, for whose founder, origin, and offspring were famous. Your mother, Iacchus, came from Theban stock and they say, ploughman, that Harmonia, daughter of Dione, married you: in return for this gift and for so many benefits, does Thebes deserve so many deaths?

Indeed, as I have shown earlier in Chapter 1, this is reflective of the chiastic organisation and represents the three phases of the narrative:[260] setting up marriage as a protective measure against a powerful enemy, the reaction to this after some time, and the revelation on the poet's part of how this has caused misery for more than those involved.

The trope of virginity as something which is to be fought *against* at all costs is not new. Already in Ovid, we find Venus and Cupid as 'sexual imperialists' who seek to expand their power over all regions of the world (and which has been interpreted as a metaphor for Roman imperial ambitions; see further Johnson 1996). This is carried further in the *De Raptu Proserpinae* of Claudian, where the Underworld is seen as the final frontier to the power of Venus. In this poem, the titular character's value as a either virgin or wife is of interest to most other parties: for Jupiter,

[260] That is, ignoring the prologue and epilogue of the five-part structure outlined in Chapter 1 (page 86).

Proserpina's marriage is beneficial for the peace and stability of the world (i.e. as a means to prevent gigantomachy), while for her mother Ceres, keeping Proserpina in a state of maidenhood is a means for her to justify her own apparently contradictory power. Specifically in this latter text, Venus, and the power of love broadly conceived, is seen as a means to an end. Jupiter, the highest authority, says:

> *cur ultima regna quiescunt?*
> *nulla sit immunis regio nullumque sub umbris*
> *pectus inaccensum Veneri. iam tristis Erinys*
> *sentiat ardores; Acheron Ditisque severi*
> *ferrea lascivis mollescant corda sagittis.*
>
> Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.224-28
>
> Why is the last kingdom resting untouched? Let no region be immune and no breast in the shadows be left un-flamed by Venus. Now let the sad Fury feel the ardour of love; let the iron hearts of Acheron and harsh Pluto soften with these lustful arrows.

The pervasive presence of virginity-related issues in the *De Raptu Proserpinae* and in Dracontius can be ascribed to changes in the social climate in Late Antiquity, fostered by Christianity. Indeed, virginity had several social benefits by this time which were heretofore unavailable to women. As Averil Cameron (1989: 196) puts it, "Virginity – the denial of female weakness and the potential threat women presented to men – conferred power". In the case of the history of Medea literature, when this innate virginal power is combined with supernatural power, this makes for a very disturbing character indeed.

In *Romul.* 10 the power of virginity is inherently dangerous, too. This is made clear when Venus calls upon Cupid. In her address to him she says:

> *Pyrois, mens ignea mundi*
> *atque vapor fecunde poli, successio rerum,*
> *affectus natura genus fons auctor origo,*
> *tu vitae fecunda salus, tu blanda voluptas,*
> *tu princeps pietatis, Amor, te praeduce mundo*

alternant elementa vices et non perit orbis

Drac. *Romul.* 10.127-132

Pyrois, fiery mind of the world, and fecund heat of the sky, you are the succession of things, you are the birth, progenitor, source, author, and origin of love, you are the fecund saviour of life, you are charming pleasure, you lead us to family affection. Amor, with you as leader the elements in the world alternate in turn, and the globe does not perish.

Love is seen as the sum total of all generative forces. It thus follows that virginity, broadly conceived, is a threat to the continued existence of the world and that any tension between the two is a matter of conserving the natural order of things.[261] This is particularly significant in that by the end of the poem, the world of the Theban royal family, of which Jason is now a part, is brought to an end along with its miseries, and the idea of succession firmly rejected (*linquite mortales miseroque ignoscite mundo, | parcite iam Thebis, diros cohibete furores,* Drac. *Romul.* 10.572-3, 'Leave behind the mortals and spare their miserable world, spare now Thebes, and rein in this terrible madness'). Medea herself is already a threat to the natural order in and of herself, as we are told on numerous occasions that she can bend both the elements and the gods to her will.[262] The power of a state similar to virginity is also seen in Diana's curse, where the goddess wishes childlessness and widowhood on Medea (*funera tot videat fuerint quod pignora mater, | orba parens natos plangat, viduata marito | lugeat et sterilem ducat per saecula noctem,* Drac. *Romul.* 10.296-8, 'As a mother, let her see as many funerals as she will have children, let the bereft parent mourn her children and widowed of her husband let her lament and spend her nights forever barren').

[261] Cf. *Romul.* 2. 29, where Pallas is referred to as *virgo ferox sexu*, 'the maiden arrogant in respect of [the duties of] her sex'.

[262] Already at the beginning of the epic Dracontius catalogues the extent of her powers: *…virginis atrae | captivos monstrare deos, elementa clientes,| naturam servire reae, servire puellae, | astra poli et Phoebi cursus et sidera caeli | arbitrio mulieris agi, pendere Tonantem, | quod iubeat Medea nefas, ubi mittere flammas | imperet aethereas, Romul.* 10.1-6, "to show the gods as captives of the dark maiden, the elements as her servants, nature serving a criminal, serving a girl, that the stars in the heavens, and Phoebus' course, and the stars in the sky, are driven according to the whims of this woman, to show Jupiter lying in wait for whatever evil Medea should order, when she orders him to send forth ethereal flames".

While both the examples of Ovid and Claudian emphasise a tension between protection and elimination of a state of virginity, the motivations and effects are subtly different in Dracontius' *Romul.* 10. Whereas Ovid makes the tension an issue for the personal power of Venus, and Claudian makes it a tool for officially sanctioned empire management, I submit that Dracontius' interpretation of this trope has more to do with marriage as a political expedience. To this end, and despite the fact that it is an already established part of the tradition,[263] it is indicative that the instigator of the request for Venus and Cupid to take on Medea is Juno, the goddess of marriage, rather than Venus herself, as emblematic of sexual love, or indeed Jupiter, the divine *imperator*, as we find in Claudian.

Though he shares the broadly imperialistic imperative with these two earlier authors, what sets Dracontius apart in *Romul.* 10, at least, is the specifically martial aspect which Cupid brings to his actions. Cupid, and the wedding in general, is shown in a strongly martial light. Indeed, it is not a mere desire to wage war on the state of virginity but to destroy it completely and have it entirely in the power of Love. Thus, extreme warlike terminology such as *populare* is used explicitly at *Romul.* 10.26-7, where Medea is first made to fall in love with Jason: *sensit amoriferum Scythicam fixisse sagittis | et volucrem puerum <u>populatum</u> templa Dianae,* 'He felt that the love-bringer had struck her, the Scythian, with arrows charged with love and that the winged boy had laid waste to Diana's temple'. Later on, Diana's temple is said to be redolent of the smells associated with Cupid, indicating both the imperialistic and totalising nature of Love's conquest once again

[263] See discussion on the role of Juno and other gods in the tradition in Kaufmann (2006: 146).

invading the space of his opponent.[264] The natural (and very Roman) conclusion to war was the *triumphus,* and this too is reflected in Cupid's nature when he leads the troupe of allegorical figures through Diana's temple: "*at puer ignipotens victor per templa triumphat, Romul. 10.262,* But the boy, powerful with the fires of love, triumphed victorious through the temple". The very act is equally martial in practice, for Cupid and the agents of marriage and non-celibate life invade the domain of the virgin Diana, rather than the festivities being moved to the palace.[265]

The practice of *triumphus*, like the *adventus*, the ceremonial arrival of the emperor in a city, fulfilled many of the same political functions. In both cases, the result was an almost theatrical spectacle which at once showed the majesty, power, and semi-divine presence of the emperor (MacCormack 1981: 17-18). Indeed, as McCormick (1986: 3-4) indicates, the function of these kinds of ceremonies had much to do with presenting the state as stable and healthy, essentially perpetuating a myth of "eternal victory". As with the adoption of many other Roman institutions, the Vandals are described in similar terms of triumphal rulership. McCormick (1986: 263-4) cites Florentinus' panegyric to Thrasamund (*Anth. Lat*. 376R) and the characterisation of Huneric's royal persona as *triumphalis et maiestatis regiae* as an example of this tradition continuing.

It goes without saying that Dracontius' use of this trope can be seen as another way of engaging with and renewing the epic tradition. However, as in each of the earlier

[264] Smells associated with Love: *Romul.* 10.286-7: *subito quod sparsus ubique | ambrosius sic fraglet odor*, "Suddenly there was a reek of ambrosia which was sprinkled everywhere" which picks up the passage at *Romul.* 10.119-121 and more generally the association of exotic smells in the comparison of Cupid to the Phoenix. Compare also the sulphurous smells which are associated with Medea during her invocation and magical scenes.
[265] Indeed, Medea's actions are thoroughly independent of the palace, as is shown by the *satelles* having to inform Aeëtes of the marriage after the fact.

texts of Ovid and Claudian, in which a case could be made for the idea of sexual imperialism to be related to a preoccupation of their contemporary society, it is equally plausible for similar parallels to be found in Dracontius' time, given the high-profile nature of political marriage in the fifth century. In order to examine this, I turn once again to the historical record to examine the presentation of the foreign women with whom the Vandal kings were betrothed, the circumstances surrounding their marriage, and the effects — desirable and otherwise — which resulted from these attachments.

Our historical sources for the period are unhelpfully short on detail regarding the virtues of the imperial women related to the Vandal royal house. There are nevertheless indications in the historical record of marriage, or treaties involving marriage, used as a means of protecting the nascent Vandal state. After Carthage had fallen in 439, Gaiseric sent Huneric as a political hostage to Rome, as part of the same treaty whereby Huneric was to be married to Eudocia. Later still, Thrasamund marries Theodoric the Great's sister Amalafrida. As part of this agreement, Theodoric gave military support to Thrasamund, as Procopius notes.[266] In a letter of the Ostrogothic king to Thrasamund, it is explicitly stated that this action of political marriage is for the furthering of peace between the two nations and, effectively, that it is a means to protect the two states' interests:

> *quamvis a diversis regibus expetiti pro solidanda concordia aut neptes dedimus aut filias deo nobis inspirante coniunximus, nulli tamen aestimamus nos aliquid simile contulisse, quam quod germanam nostrum, generis Hamalis*

[266] Procop. *Vand.* 1.8.11-12: ὁ δέ οἱ καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἔπεμψε καὶ Γότθων δοκίμων χιλίους ἐν δορυφόρων λόγῳ, οἷς δὴ ὅμιλος θεραπείας εἵπετο ἐς πέντε μάλιστα χιλιάδας ἀνδρῶν μαχίμων ("And Theodoric sent him not only his sister but also a thousand of the notable Goths as a bodyguard, who were followed by a host of attendants amounting to about five thousand fighting men," trans. H.B. Dewing).

> *singulare praeconium, vestrum fecimus esse coniugium: feminam prudentiae vestrae parem…*
>
> Cass. *Var.* 5.43.1
>
> Although I have been petitioned by various kings for the purpose of consolidating peace and we have, with God as my inspiration, either given my nieces or joined my daughters [in marriage], I do not however reckon that I have contributed something similar, other than to make my kinswoman, the singular advertisement of the Amal kind, your wife. She is a woman equal to your wisdom…

While this could be easily dismissed as *captatio benevolentiae* to make Thrasamund more amenable to the serious political and diplomatic content of the letter, the relationship between the two kingdoms is instructive for our purposes here. Though they were both "Germanic" kingdoms, there is a sense of rivalry between them, as is shown in the writing of Ennodius:

> *Quid castigatas Vandalorum ventis parentibus eloquar depraedationes, quibus pro annua pensione satis est amicitia tua? evagari ultra possibilitatem nesciunt duce sapientia: adfines esse meruerunt, quia oboedire non abnuunt.*
>
> Ennod. *Pan.* 13.70
>
> What should I say about the plundering of the Vandals, which has been held in check by the obedience of the winds, and for whom your friendship is sufficient in exchange for an annual pension? They know how not to overstep their boundaries owing to great wisdom: they have deserved to be related by marriage, since they do not refuse to obey.

The Vandals show their supremacy by raiding Italy and in turn the Ostrogoths want to stem this by keeping the Vandals "on side" and thus broker political and pecuniary arrangements with them.

In *Romul.* 10 Liber specifically highlights the fact that Aeëtes seems to want to keep his daughter from being married (though it has already happened) and thus in a state of virginity, in a sort of backward superstition ("*sic tibi, rector," ait, "mentem possedit inanis | religio*?) and refers to the state of virginity as being a burden which is difficult for her to bear (*virginitatis onus melior tolerare sacerdos | non potuit*). This issue of the value of virginity is prominent in Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae*,

where Ceres similarly wishes to keep her daughter from marriage, even though there is no want of suitors. It has been noted by Kaufmann (2006: 45) and latterly Stoehr-Monjou (2013: 168) that in various aspects of *Romul.* 10 there is some degree of interaction between Dracontius and Claudian. In *Rapt. Pros.,* Ceres' impulse to avoid her daughter's marriage is so great that she practically imprisons Proserpina in her palace in Sicily. There is a dynastic element to this concern too, given that Pluto demands a wife from Jupiter, and Proserpina is Jupiter's daughter, and that if the former does not come to pass, there is the ever-present threat of gigantomachy. Even in Claudian's time, there was still considerable interest in the need to produce an heir, given that neither of Honorius' marriages to Stilicho's daughters Maria and Thermantia produced issue. Liber's 'selling point' to Aeëtes is the fact that Medea will produce offspring, and his line will continue (which is of course ironic given that Medea will eventually kill them). In Vandal times, the need for a politically important marriage and legitimate issue was perhaps a more serious and pressing concern, despite the unusual process of succession practised by the Vandals.[267]

For our own period, Thrasamund's marriage to Amalafrida was said to have been arranged on account of the Vandal king's previous marriage being childless. The second marriage also did not bear children, though Amalafrida, had a son by her previous husband.[268] As has been discussed at greater length in the chapter on

[267] See Wood (2006: 59-61) for a discussion of the system of succession and various attempts at subversion of the process by Gaiseric and Huneric.
[268] Second marriage: ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἡ γυνὴ ἐτελεύτα, οὐ γενομένη μήτηρ οὐτε ἄριστα τὴν βασιλείαν βουλόμενος, ἐς Θευδέριχον τὸν Γότθων βασιλέα πέμψας ᾔτει οἱ γυναῖκα τὴν ἀδελφὴν Ἀμαλαφρίδαν διδόναι, ἧς δὴ ἄρτι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐτεθνήκει, Procop. *Vand* 1.8.11, "And when his wife died without becoming the mother of either male or female offspring, wishing to establish the kingdom as securely as possible, he sent to Theodoric, the king of the Goths, asking him to give him his sister Amalafrida to wife, for her husband had just died," trans. H.B. Dewing. Amalafrida's son: *Amalafridam germanam suam matrem Theodahadi, qui postea rex fuit, Africa regi Vandalorum coniuge dirigit Thrasamundo*…, Jord. *Get.* 299, "he directed Amalafrida, his sister and mother of Theodahad, who was afterward king, to the African king of the Vandals Thrasamund as husband"

Romul. 8, Gaiseric's arrangement of a marriage between Huneric and Eudocia, and subsequently Thrasamund's marriage to Amalafrida are examples of how this political marriage was a constant feature of Vandal society, and which would have indeed have filtered into the concerns of the elite at court.

By the end of the poem, it is virginity which has emerged victorious in the battle of wills between the gods of love and Medea. While Juno, as goddess of marriage, set the events in motion at the very beginning of the poem, it is Medea, with the aid of the virginal Furies, who puts an end to it. We might like to understand the conflict between these two concepts as being representative of contemporary concerns over the possibility of an end to a dynasty, most likely the Hasdings, by external forces.

While political marriage was certainly a feature of the Vandal Kingdom's dynastic and state-building programme,[269] we also have references in the historians to the second marriages of two Vandal kings, Huneric and Thrasamund. Both of these rulers were significant to Dracontius. Huneric was father to Hilderic, the only half-Vandal and half-Roman ruler (and thus perhaps a more sympathetic figure to a Romano-African by virtue of his imperial connection) as well as a recently posited figure for the *dominus ignotus* (cf. Wolff 1998; Merrills 2004). Thrasamund was the ruler who set Dracontius free after the same episode. The circumstances in which their stories take place are particularly instances where the first wife had failed to prove satisfactory on some level, whether by not providing an heir, or by becoming embroiled in court intrigue.

[269] See Conant (2012: 23-6; 38-9).

Before his marriage to Eudocia, Huneric was betrothed to the daughter of the Visigothic king Theodoric I (who is called Theodorid in this account). Our only source for this event, Jordanes, reports that the unnamed princess had been suspected of poisoning her husband. In retaliation, Huneric cut off her nose and ears before sending her back to Toulouse:

> *Huius ergo mentem ad vastationem orbis paratam comperiens Gyzericus, rex Vandalorum, quem paulo ante memoravimus, multis muneribus ad Vesegotharum bella precipitat, metuens, ne Theodoridus Vesegotharum rex filiae suae ulcisceretur iniuriam, quae Hunerico Gyzerici filio iuncta prius quidem tanto coniugio laetaretur, sed postea, ut erat ille et in sua pignora truculentus, ob suspicionem tantummodo veneni ab ea parati, naribus abscisam truncatamque auribus, spolians decore naturali, patri suo ad Gallias remiserat, ut turpe funus miseranda semper offerret et crudelitas, qua etiam moverentur externi, vindictam patris efficacius impetraret.*
>
> Jord. *Get.* 36.184
>
> Now when Gaiseric, king of the Vandals, whom we mentioned shortly before, learned mind was bent on the devastation of the world, he incited Attila by many gifts to make war on the Visigoths, for he was afraid that Theodorid, king of the Visigoths, would avenge the injury done to his daughter. She had been joined in wedlock with Huneric, the son of Gaiseric, and at first was happy in this union. But afterwards he was cruel even to his own children, and because of the mere suspicion that she was attempting to poison him, he cut off her nose and mutilated her ears. He sent her back to her father in Gaul thus despoiled of her natural charms. So the wretched girl presented a pitiable aspect ever after, and the cruelty which would stir even strangers still more surely incited her father to vengeance (trans. C. Mierow).

Although the event is portrayed in terms which are disparaging towards Huneric, showing that he is cruel and underhanded in his dealings with political alliances, it nevertheless underlines the fact that these alliances were fragile, and that the characteristics of all involved in the marriage could lead to dangerous outcomes. Conversely, Thrasamund married Amalafrida, daughter of Theodoric the Great of the Ostrogoths, after his first wife (also unnamed) failed to provide him with children. Despite the important political ties which Amalafrida brought to the Vandals, she was an unpopular figure among certain parts of the Vandal aristocracy, particularly Thrasamund's successor Hilderic, who had her imprisoned.

In both of these cases, the women are identified as threatening in some way: the Visigothic princess supposedly attempted to posion Gaiseric, while Amalafrida could have been seen as still too close to enemy political power in Rome. In *Romul.* 10, Medea, too, is adept with poisons. The crown which self-combusts is said to be laced with poison and the natural imagery of beautiful, brightly coloured things belying their toxicity is likewise evoked in the description of Glauce's wedding gift ("*exitiale repit mox praemia taetra venenum, | atque aurum mentita nocens radiare corona | creditur et gemmas flores imitantur iniqui*, *Romul.* 10.491-3, 'A fatal poison soon seeps into the foul gift and the harmful crown, feigning to be gold, is believed to shine, and the poisonous flowers imitate gemstones'"). Later, Medea's chariot, the ekphrastic representation of her very being, is also described thus: *currus taeda fuit, sulphur iuga, temo bitumen | et rota cupressus, solidarat frena venenum, Romul.* 10. 559-60, 'The chariot was pine, the yoke sulphur, the beam bitumen and the wheel cypress, poison strengthened the reins'. That poison is associated with the reins of the chariot is also significant: it is the means by which the machine is controlled, and, figuratively, the way in which Medea as a character carries out her destruction. The materials used in the description of the chariot, emphasising the fiery hellishness of Medea's domain here again appear to reference Claudian's *Rapt. Pros.* and thereby reinforce the connection with virginity. At the end of the third book of the unfinished epic, Ceres, who is herself a character of ambiguous fertility,[270] is described as though transformed into a Fury while raging at the gods of Olympus. The episode, in which she sets fire to the Sicilian countryside recalls fiery devices similar to those used as shorthand in Dracontius' chariot: cypress trees to use as

[270] Although she is the goddess of the harvest, gave birth to her daughter Proserpina, and has a chariot which causes heightened fertility in its wake (1.186-190), she is explicitly said to have *fessa viscera* (Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.124) and as *infecunda* (*Rapt. Pros.* 1.125).

torches (*Rapt. Pros.* 3.376-7), and the sulphurous emissions of Mount Etna (*Rapt. Pros.* 3.398-9). By having Medea kill Jason, her children, and the Theban royal house, it could be seen as a manifestation of unattached women who wielded much power, power that would likely go unchecked, and which political marriage sought to control. A triumphant Medea who destroys Thebes could thus be seen as an expression of fear for the safety and security of Carthage at the hands of the old enemy of Rome, now renewed under Ostrogothic rule.[271]

In this section I have shown how the issue of marriage as a temporary solution, which negates the power afforded to Medea by her virginity is a key issue for the development of the plot. Moreover, Dracontius' preoccupation with it can be related to the contemporary historical context of political marriage being a recurring, constant feature of the Vandal kingdom's existence. It is not only the fact that political marriage was a necessary part of its means of survival in the Mediterranean political scene, but also that the players involved, such as Amalafrida, were not always liked, and had been seen by other members of the Vandal royal family (the supporters of Hilderic) as a threat from the Ostrogoths who now embodied the old power of Rome. Moreover, this temporary solution is effected to protect Jason from being sacrificed, which, as is shown in the structure of the poem, comes to pass anyway. As a result, Jason lies at the heart of this story just as much as Medea does.Given that in *Romul.* 10 the marriage is effected in order to protect Jason, it is necessary to examine his characterisation and find more connections to the Dracontius' Vandal context.

[271] Cf. especially Arnold's (2014) view of no ideological discontinuity between the emperors of Western Rome and the Amali.

I have noted elsewhere the importance of women in the construction of Vandal legitimacy and statecraft.[272] First Eudocia was employed by Gaiseric to connect the Hasdings to the Theodosian house; later on, Thrasamund married Theodoric's sister Amalafrida in a similar measure to solidify ties in the Mediterranean political sphere. In particular, the latter was regarded with suspicion after Thrasamund's death. As the sister of the ruler of Italy, it could well be that the Ostrogoths were suspected as having too much sway over her, especially as this was her second marriage, and she already had an adult son (the future king Theodahad). These fears were to play out in the failed revolt against Hilderic in 523, which resulted in her being imprisoned. As has often been remarked in this thesis, Hilderic can be considered as the true heir of the Theodosian house, and thus the plot of the *Orestis tragoedia* could well be used to describe the tensions in this situation. In our story, Orestes is shown to be educated to a high level, like the author, in a typically Roman manner, and is pitted against the unlawful, and inept Aegisthus. The former could thus be considered as a Hilderic-like figure, given that he is the rightful heir to Agamemnon (just as Hilderic is the son of Huneric), who must take the throne once he is of age, ousting a distant family member (Gunthamund and Thrasamund were nephews of Huneric). Given our uncertainty as to when these poems were written, it is impossible to say which of these events provided the impetus, but there is sufficient material in the historiography and within the poem itself to suggest that social issues like those of usurpation and class are an issue at the time of the poet's writing, and that the concerns are of a broader, general nature rather than necessarily relating to specific events.

[272] See Introduction, page 16, and especially discussions in chapters on *Romul.* 8, page 74ff., and *Romul.* 10, page 108.

CLYMENE'S OFFENCE — DRACONTIUS' *CRIMEN*?

Even though its title of *Romul.* 2 is *fabula Ylae* in the manuscript, it takes a significant amount of time for Hylas and Hercules to actually make their entrance, and indeed the *raison d'être* for the story occurring at all is the vengeance of Venus against the nymph Clymene.[273] The plot of the Hylas myth is, in fact, rather secondary in Dracontius' version. In this way it not only mirrors *Romul.* 8, where we find the figure of Paris dominating the story rather than being narrowly focussed on the kidnapping of Helen, but it also surpasses it by having, like in *Romul.* 10, the action of the mythic plot depend entirely on other, unrelated mythic interactions as prerequisites. Whereas in *Romul.* 10 the events of the Medea myth were permitted to occur because of Juno's outstanding debt to Jason, here, it is Venus' need to fulfil her own sense of vengeance which almost accidentally draws Hylas and Hercules into the story. This *primum mobile,* as it were, of *Romul.* 2 reveals more interesting information than first meets the eye, particularly with regard to how an historically informed reading of the text might be effected. To this end, I now turn to the short passage in which Clymene's offence is set forth:

> *Solis amata canit Clymene mea crimina Nymphis*
> *meque suo prensam Nymphas monet indice Sole,*
> *Vulcanique sonat captivo Marte catenas.*
> *quas audire libet de nostra clade canentem.*
> *sed si de nobis certe cantare placebat,*
> *iudicium Paridis vel nostros, nate, triumphos*
> *cantarent fluidae carpentes pensa puellae.*
>
> *Romul.* 2.55-61
>
> Clymene, beloved of the Sun, sang of my crimes to the Nymphs, and instructed the Nymphs that I had been caught by the Sun's information, and loudly spoke of Vulcan's chains while Mars was held captive. And it pleased them to listen to her singing of our destruction. But certainly, if it pleased her to sing about us, let the girls of the sea's currents sing of the Judgement of Paris and our triumphs, my son, while they card their wool.

[273] In much the same way as Juno saving Jason is the only reason for the events of *Romul.* 10 to unfold as they do.

Unlike *Romul.* 10, where Venus and Cupid act on Juno's behalf to prevent Jason's sacrifice by making Medea fall in love with him, the pair's motivation in *Romul.* 2 is much more personal. Clymene, a nymph, has been speaking ill of Venus to the other nymphs, and Venus in turn wishes to castigate her for her gossipmongering. This in itself is one of this first important additions which Dracontius makes to the Hylas myth, for the name Clymene is not found in any other version of this story and the fact that she is named at all, as opposed to being a generic nymph, is equally significant. Indeed, it will be seen that the Clymene presented here is a confection of several other Clymenes in Latin literature, as well as other characters who find themselves in similar situations.

Cazzaniga's (1950) short article identified several other poetic strands which contribute to Dracontius' treatment of the story with special regard to the characters of Clymene and Hylas, chiefly taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Most obvious is the Clymene who was the Sun's lover and mother to Phaëthon. Cazzaniga (1950: 98) further suggests that another Ovidian character, Leuconoe, is also referenced here. In the *Metamorphoses* Leuconoe is the narrator of the story of Leucothoe and the Sun, where the latter, having angered Venus by revealing her adultery with Mars, is made to fall in love with and eventually rape the unsuspecting Leucothoe. Following Vollmer (1905), Wolff (2002: 249 n. 36) notes that this passage draws heavily on Virgil's *Georgics* both in content and expression. At *Georg.* 4.345ff, Clymene, again taking the form of a water nymph, is an attendant in the train of Cyrene, mother of the shepherd Aristaeus. Here again she recounts (*narrabat*) a catalogue of Venus' amorous affairs.

Dracontius' usage of other myths to create "Clymene" thus far appears to be a fairly straightforward reuse of similar situations for his purposes here. All the situations from comparable texts deal with characters who had hubristically gone against the gods and had therefore been punished for their insolence. Even where this does not directly involve the Clymene in question, as in the story of Phaëthon, the idea of going beyond one's capabilities and not knowing one's place are still present in the background. But Dracontius' Clymene is more than just a reflection of previous texts, as we shall see further.

It is particularly significant to note that almost all the characters upon which our Clymene is ostensibly based take on the role of some kind of narrator: thus, Virgil's Clymene is given the verb *narrare,* whereas Ovid makes use of *dicere* for Leuconoe. Dracontius, on the other hand, chooses *cantare* and makes his Clymene sing. Aside from the basic meaning of 'sing', the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* reports several other meanings for *cantare*. Of these, two are most relevant to our interpretation of this passage: simply to announce or, more convincingly, to compose, or celebrate someone/something in poetry (*ThLL* s.v. *canto* 3.0.290.35-6; 54;70-71). This choice of words can be interpreted in several ways. In the first instance, *cantare* can refer to the seductive nature of the nymphs' song – that they should be considered as equivalents to sirens, for example. Secondly, it can be taken as a kind of *variatio* on the existing tropes provided by Virgil and Ovid. And lastly, and the one which is most helpful to a historico-political reading of Dracontius: his Clymene goes beyond just a narrator and becomes a creator, with the corollary that she should be considered as a kind of poet-figure, who spreads her gossip by composing poetry for which she is then punished. The natural parallel with Dracontius' own situation as

presented in the *Satisfactio* is difficult to ignore. Likewise, during the account of her grievances, Venus also describes Clymene using the verb *cano*.[274] This is the perhaps the verb most prominently associated with poetic composition, being a staple of epic opening formulae. Indeed, besides the famous opening of the *Aeneid*, *cano* is used in this way in *Romul.* 2 itself.[275]

The poetic aspect of the Nymphs' pond is further underscored by Dracontius' manipulation of geography. As in the other texts, eccentric geographies feed into subversive readings of the text. In *Romul.* 2, the only indication as to where the story is set is given with reference to the Nymphs' spring: "*Nympharum… chorus dum pensa revolvit |Penei sub fonte sui*, *Romul.* 2.53-4, 'While the chorus of Nymphs turn over their spinning in the spring of their own River Peneus'", and later "*O faciles Penei numina Nymphae*, *Romul.* 2.102, 'O easy divinities, Nymphs of the Peneus'". Procacci (1913: 443), Malamud (1993: 164) and Murgatroyd (1992: 85) all take *Peneus* to be moving the setting from the traditional Mysia to Greece, without further comment. However, there is a further, intertextual and encyclopaedic implication of this connection which brings it into line with the other texts in the *Romulea*. In Lucan's *Bellum Civile,* the area is associated with Iolcus, Jason's home town (Lucan. 3. 191-197). The passage refers to the inhabitants of Oricos, and forms part of a list describing the soldiers coming to Pompey's aid from various parts of Greece. There, the Oricians are connected both to Thebes (as descendants of Athamas) and Colchis. The importance of these associations is twofold. Firstly, it confirms Hercules and Hylas as part of the Argonautic expedition, and thus links this poem thematically to *Romul.* 10 in particular. Secondly, the association with

[274] Drac. *Romul.* 2.55: *Solis amata canit Clymene mea crimina Nymphis*
[275] Vir. *Aen.* 1.1: *arma virumque cano…* 'I sing of arms and a man…'; Drac. *Romul.* 2.1: *fata canam pueri…* 'I shall sing of the fate of a boy…'

Iolcus, and Lucan's explicit acknowledgement of Jason as the first to dare to cross the sea, could be taken in the context of Dracontius' poem to reinforce the poetic overtones of the Nymphs, particularly given the symbolism of the Argo when referring to poetic endeavour.

And the stakes are indeed as high for Dracontius' Clymene as they were for himself: whereas in Virgil Clymene's catalogue of Venus' peccadilloes is playful and frivolous (*curam… inanem*) and emphasises Venus' propensity for deception (*dolos, dulcia furta*) without any real harm being committed, Dracontius takes a more serious view of these actions. As in *Romul.* 10, we once again find Dracontius importing traditionally elegiac imagery into the epic context, a new take on the idea of *militia amoris*. But whereas there we only had Cupid as *triumphator*, here Venus too is drawn into the military milieu. Indeed, while Cupid remains the triumphal hero, Venus' role is more ambiguous, more dangerous, and more devastating: Dracontius has her refer to the subject of Clymene's gossip as *crimina*, the same kind of wording as we find in reference to Medea, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus.[276] This is followed with the more martial *nostra clade*. Whereas in *Romul.* 10, Juno's insistence that the marriage between Medea and Jason was the only way in which the latter's life could be saved (though it turns out just to delay the inevitable), and that Venus and Cupid's actions should be seen as somewhat salutary, Venus in particular is here presented in a more overtly imperialistic way. Even though her actions do not amount to the same kind of empire-building which Johnson (2005) discusses in her article, the sense of love and marriage being used to neutralise the

[276] A few examples include: Clytemnestra: *Orest.* 124-5: *ast ubi non vidit descendere puppe tyrannum, | impunita putans sua* ***crimina*** *posse manere*; Aegisthus: *Orest.* 453: *dum regnaret iners Parcarum* ***crimina*** *pastor;* Medea: *Romul.* 10.417-20: *mereor pro* ***crimine*** *poenam, | te feriente tamen, non ut mendicus Iason | sit vindex, regina, tuus, qui* ***criminis*** *auctor | ipse fuit*.

power of the virginal remains, and here with the added nuance of complete and total destruction expressed through words such as *clade*. Indeed, when Venus suggests other, more suitable topics for the nymph to discuss, she compares (using the co-ordinating *vel*) the Judgement of Paris with her other unspecified triumphs.[277] As we would expect, and not least from Dracontius' own version of the aftermath of this event presented in *Romul.* 8, this is hardly the most benign of acts on Venus' part. Indeed, this is not by any measure a glowing reflection of her "triumphs": in her willingness to be portrayed as the winner of the popularity contest, she equally damns herself as the root cause of the destruction of Troy, thereby unveiling herself as just another in the line of inept figures which populate Dracontius' poetry.

The way Dracontius establishes the 'political' context for his story by having Venus set out her rationale strongly resembles Dracontius' own situation as set out in the *Satisfactio*. As pointed out above, the poet's choice of *cano* as the verb to describe the nymphs' gossip can, apart from their basic nature, also be construed as the nymphs being "poets" in their own way, and thus as proxies for the poet himself. There are further parallels between the two texts. Venus explicitly complains of the fact that the nymphs are discussing the negative facets of her exploits, her *crimina* (Drac. *Romul.* 2.59-61). She would much rather that they discussed her triumphs. This passage is very similar to another at Drac. *Satisf.* 93-4: *culpa mihi fuerat dominos reticere modestos | ignotumque mihi scribere vel dominum,* "my fault was to turn my back on those modest lords and for me to write about an unknown lord". This picks up Dracontius' hope that God will make Gunthamund see sense and

[277] On *vel* as equivalent to *et* and other idiosyncracies of Mediaeval Latin, see for example Rosenblum (1961: 59-63).

restore him to his previous status in order that he can rectify his error and write laudatory things about the Hasdings:

> *ipse meo domino Deus imperat atque iubebit*
> *ut me restituat respiciatque pius,*
> *servet, avi ut laudes dicam patriasque suasque*
> *perque suas proles regia vota canam.*
> Drac. *Satisf.* 49-52
> God himself orders and will command my lord to piously reinstate me and to look upon me with pity, let him save me, so that I may speak the praises of his grandfather and his country and his own, and that I may sing my wishes for the king by means of his offspring.

In the context of Venus' justification, *clade* deserves closer inspection. The *ThLL* reports in its lists of examples for *clades* that Dracontius uses it in almost all of its nuances, whether in a strict sense of destruction and violation, or in a more metaphorical sense of a general calamity. In this latter category, the *ThLL* makes a further subdivision by linking the sense of *calamitas* to a more strictly legal and moral origin, explaining it in the sense of *peccatum*.[278] This brings us back to a very general connection with Dracontius' autobiographical *Satisfactio*. For here too, *peccatum* is the author's word of choice to describe his misdeeds.

Although, as we have established, the name Clymene is often used for a Nereid,[279] the association in *Romul.* 2 of a so-named *water-nymph* with the Sun is unusual. Indeed, Clymene is *Solis amata* and it is said that her information comes *indice Sole*. The only instance of a link between a Clymene and the Sun in extant Latin mythography is, as we have also established, Clymene the mother of Phaëthon and beloved of the Sun, and Kossatz-Deissmann (1999: 69-70) reports in *LIMC* that she was an Oceanid rather than a Nereid. This story is recounted in Ovid, *Met.* 1 as well

[278] The *ThLL* (3.0.1243.68-9) takes its example from Drac. *laud. Dei* 2.117: *mentibus obsessis insana clade furoris*.
[279] The nymphs of the spring here are referred to as Nereids at least once in the course of the poem.

as in Hyginus. While there does not appear to be a symbolic link between the stories of Phaëthon and the way in which Dracontius treats the Hylas myth besides the general flavour of hubris which has already been discussed, the prominence of the Sun in Clymene's narrative is nevertheless important. In Late Antiquity, the Sun is the natural allegorical symbol for the emperor or a king,[280] which could indicate that this Clymene is representative of one favoured by the king, who thus had access to inside information at court.

The Sun's position as *index* is also important in the context of the mélange of mythographic sources which Dracontius draws on in this passage. By having Venus referencing Clymene's informant as her lover the Sun, Dracontius is indirectly revealing at least two underlying texts. The first is Ovid, *ars* 2.561 ff., and the second Hyginus, *fab.* 148. Both of these relate the story which offends Venus, in which she has an affair with Mars. Usually, the Sun takes on the role of *index*

[280] Corippus, for instance, refers to Justin II and his empress Sophia as *lumina,* implying that besides the emperor as the Sun, the Moon is associated with the empress (Coripp. *Iust.* 2.170-2: *mille canunt laudes vocum discrimina mille.* | *Iustinum Sophiamque pares duo lumina mundi* | *esse ferunt*. "A thousand separate voices sang a thousand praises. They related that Justin and Sophia were in equal measure the two luminaries of the world.") This appears to show the influence of Hellenistic astrological philosophy, where the Sun and Moon are referred to as luminaries rather than planets, given their natural function as sources of light, and that, unlike planets, they do not exhibit retrograde motion. The astrological associations of the Sun and Moon also point to ideas of royalty, cf. Vett. Val. 1.5-8: "<Ὁ> μὲν οὖν παντεπόπτες Ἥλιος πυρώδης ὑπάρχων καὶ φῶς νοερόν, ψυχικῆς αἰσθήσεος ὄργανον, σεμαίνει μὲν ἐπὶ γενέσεως βασιλείαν, ἡγεμονίαν, νοῦν, φρόνησιν, μορφήν, κίνεσιν, ὕψος τύχης, θεῶν χρηματισμόν, κρίσιν, δημόσιωσιν, πρᾶξιν, προστασίαν ὀχλικήν, πατέρα, δεσπότην, φιλίαν, ἔνδοξα προσώπα, τιμάς εικόνων, ανδριάντων, στέματτων, ἀρχιερατείας πατρίδος…" (Therefore the all-seeing fiery Sun being the intellectual light, the means of observing the spirit/life force, signifies kingship in the nativity, sovreignty, intelligence and cleverness, outward appearance, movements, the summit of his good fortune, divine injunctions of the gods, disputes, registrations of contracts, deeds, leadership of the people, … mastery, lordship, friendship,); "<Ἡ> δὲ Σέλενη γενομένη μὲν ἐκ τῆς ἀνταναϰλάσεως τοῦ ἡλιακοῦ φωτὸς καὶ νοθόν φῶς κεκτημένη σεμαίνει…" (The moon, existing from the reflection of the light of the Sun and thus holding a counterfeit light indicates…). Cf. also conflation of panegyrical and astrological language in e.g. Firmicius Maternus *Math.*1.10.14: *Sol Optime Maxime, qui mediam caeli possides partem, mens mundi atque temperies,* ***dux omnium atque princeps****, qui ceterarum stellarum ignes flammifera[rum] luminis tui moderatione perpetuas, tuque, Luna, quae … Solis* ***augusta radiatione*** *fulgescis…* (Greatest and best Sun, who rules part of the midheaven, the mind and temper of the world, leader and first of all, who perpetuates the fires of other stars with the moderation of your light. And you, Moon, who shines with the Sun's august radiance…). For an overview of Dracontius' knowledge of astrology, though dated, see Housman (1910).

towards Vulcan, when he informs him at the moment of congress that Venus and Mars are together, leading Vulcan to expose to all the gods the two adulterers *in flagrante delicto*.

Two further pieces of information are useful in understanding the nuances of Dracontius' version from these two texts. Ovid goes to pains to paint the Sun as being morally unimpeachable (*quis Solem fallere possit?,* Ov. *ars* 2.573), and Hyginus ends his account by noting that because of this incident, Venus has hated the Sun and his offspring ever since (*Soli autem Venus ob indicium ad progeniem eius semper fuit inimica,* Hyg. *fab.* 148.3). From this, it would appear that Dracontius again wishes to set up a dichotomy between those of upstanding and those of reprehensible moral character, as he does elsewhere in the *Romulea.*[281] This finds expression on two levels: one outside of the action of the epic, i.e. Venus (with the assistence of Cupid) vs. the Sun (via Clymene); and a second on a more mundane level between the Nymphs (having been infiltrated by Cupid) and Hercules (via Hylas). Hyginus in particular relates that Harmonia was the product of this adulterous union, and that Vulcan and Minerva provided her with a garment impregnated with crimes (*vestem sceleribus tinctam,* Hyg. *fab.* 148.3) which gives rise to the crime-riddled Theban dynasty, a fact which once again provides a tacit link between *Romul.* 2 and *Romul.* 10.

In short, if we are to interpret Clymene as standing in for Dracontius, the Sun can represent the *ignotus dominus* who, at the time of writing the lost poem, seemed to Dracontius to hold the moral high ground.

[281] E.g. in *Romul.* 8, the opposition between the legally correct actions of Telamon, and Priam's unreasonable demands during the embassy scenes ; so too Paris and Hector ; in *Orest.* the legitimacy of Orestes compared with the usurper Aegisthus.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I considered the role which the female characters play in Dracontius' expression of unease towards the stability and endurance of society. In particular I looked at the figures of Medea, Clytemnestra, and Venus, who are our poet gives the greatest attention. While they are not numerous, they nevertheless contribute significantly to shaping the tone and trajectory of the epics' narratives. Across the texts, three broad trends are observable which were comparable to the Dracontian archetype explored in Chapter 3. The source and nature of the threat which the major female characters pose towards the world in general varied. In the first instance, the women had intrinsic characteristics which pointed to their basically duplicitous, untrustworthy, and unsavoury nature. Following from this was a sense of selfishness, such that in pursuing their own goals, society at large always suffered. Secondly, these women displayed a tendency to be totalising characters, which was augmented by the presence of supernatural elements. Their evil natures thus had the potential to affect the stability of the whole universe, a variation on the typically epic theme of gigantomachy. Thirdly, I examined the way in which marriage and prevention of marriage (or indeed preservation of real or pretended virginity) was used as a means of control and punishment. Manipulation of these two states by the figures who had been shown to be self-interested led to significant damage to the well-being of the state and indeed the world in the extreme case of Medea. As a final counterpoint, I discussed the case of Venus and Clymene. While the former does not show any of the hellish features which characterised the other female characters in this chapter, the interaction between them nevertheless reveals

a threatening situation which is more personal, by drawing parallels with Dracontius' own poetic career.

CONCLUSION

The poems of Dracontius were written at a time when elsewhere other authors rejected classical culture in favour of Christian literature (cf. for example Augustine, Sidonius Apollinaris, and Ennodius).[282] That our poet was writing both Christian and secular themed works is often seen to embody the same spirit: the secular works representing a (misguided?) youth, further reinforced by the overtly rhetorical and "scholastic" tenor of the *Romulea* collection, which is then supplanted by the seemingly more mature work of the *Satisfactio* and *Laudes Dei*. Historically, interpretation of Dracontius has also seen the secular works reflecting an underlying Christianising morality, taking the radical changes in the stories to be inspired chiefly by the poet's understanding of the stories through a Christian lens. This is evidently not the case, as we have seen in this thesis. Dracontius is instead more clearly interested in the overtly political implications of the stories, even where moral exempla may play a part in the construction of a particular poem. Our poet also does not seem to be concerned with any disjunction which might occur in writing both Christian and secular poetry. This is in large part due to the milieu in which he finds himself. The Hasding Vandals, having to firstly prove their legitimacy as rulers over Carthage and North Africa, are forced to adopt Roman culture wholesale. This can be seen in the relative lack of clearly identifiable "Vandal" archaeological materials. The subsequent dynastic associations with the women of the Theodosian house is further confirmation of this, for not only is a connection with the now-deposed Theodosian house a statement of the legitimacy of

[282] Particularly Aug. *conf.* 1.13.22; Sidon. *Epist.* 4.12 on balance between episcopal duty and classical cultural pursuits; Ennod. *Epist.* 9.1, 9.9 specifically refer to a rejection of the liberal arts.

the Vandals, but also represents a continuation of Roman (classical) culture, particularly given that the other provinces had been steadily lost, and displaying their own sense of regional identity, and eventually when Italy falls to Odoacer, Vandal Africa's royal pedigree is most clearly Roman. For our poet, it is within the realm of rhetorical learning that this emphasised secularity plays out. Taking the subscription to *Romul.* 5 as our guide to one possible performance context, each of the four epic texts under consideration here is a product of the rhetorical and grammatical world. This means that the underlying source of Dracontius' aesthetic comes from a milieu which is naturally concerned with the skills of argumentation, stylistic manipulation, and crucially, experimentation and variation as a means of practicing these skills.

The thesis began with the assertion that the Latin epic tradition was intrinsically and ideologically tied up with issues of socio-political import. I consequently outlined the techniques which constitute the key points of Dracontius' epic artistry. These were primarily a product of the superlative rhetorical grounding which was still available in Carthage throughout the century. Through case studies, I showed that the poet is able not only to distil and harness varied mythographic traditions in the pursuit of his thematic goals, but is also very much at ease with making sweeping changes to his myths. The sound rhetorical training influenced the way that Dracontius articulated questions of genre, which in turn affected the way he intended his texts to operate on an interpretive level, with style informing meaning. A knowledge of genre also implied an inherent understanding of the structure of preceding epic poetry, and the potential of this for manipulation of themes and meaning. I showed here how parallelism is the key to the architecture of Dracontian

epic, such that it serves to underline particular themes or offer contrasting exempla of moral issues (e.g. positive or negative characters and how they react to certain situations).

We then saw how these techniques, coming out of the rhetorical context, were a particular exponent of Carthaginian society. The city had been a place of great learning for a long time, but was taken to new heights with the presumed influence of the imperial women who came to the Vandal court in the middle of the century. This is seen particularly in the person of Felicianus, who was a powerful influence on Dracontius. The stimulus provided by the advent of a significant portion of the Roman imperial court naturally suggests a heightened interest in the qualities which Romanness could provide a 'barbaric' regime. One of the basic functions of rhetorical training through progymnasmata is to inculcate moral values (and here it is particularly Roman moral values) into those who practice those exercises. I thus showed how the poet articulates his position with regard to the Roman past.

From this, it was clear that Dracontius was invested in the society in which he participated. Consequently I explored his concern for the well-being of this society in the final two chapters. The first of these looked at the way in which the poet articulated what ought to constitute good and bad kingship, and, by extension, the successful management of the state. Again this had its inspiration in the rhetorical practices of the time, using an archetypal figure which recurred in almost all texts, on which an audience could either model themselves. This archetype could also be held up as a counterexample, showing that they did not behave in such a way. Characters such as Paris and Aegisthus were shown to be undesirable as rulers on

account of their ineptitude, as well as the negative effects they have on the respective states they inhabit as a result of their action. Jason, as a pirate, was held up as an example of how one's actions have undesirable repercussions if taken in haste and expediency. This was particularly relevant for the Vandals, who were also considered pirates both in their own time and in subsequent historiography. Conversely, Hylas was the model to which everyone ought to aspire. The poet nevertheless expressed ambiguity about this taking place, given Hylas' premature demise.

Accompanying the examination of male characters was an exploration of how the few female characters were also a threat to the stability of the state. Chiefly this fell back on the supernatural conventions of Roman epic, dealing with questions of gigantomachy, hellish apparitions, and how they were harmful. This chapter also highlighted thematic concerns such as the prominent tension between the states of virginity and marriage which underpins the plot of *Medea*, which could be easily read through a Vandal lens given the dynastic concerns of the kingdom. Though not explicitly the product of rhetoric as in the previous chapter, and showing more the influence of the generic awareness which I highlighted in Chapter 1, they nevertheless act as warnings regarding undesirable matches. An exception here was the story of Clymene, which represented the rhetorical context by reworking Dracontius' own perilous situation.

When taken together, the texts do not show any significant consistency in their evaluation of the socio-political topics highlighted. For example, in *Romul.* 8 Paris and the destruction of Troy was read as an indictment on the self-destructive nature

of the Romans, and that the Greeks, as representative of the Vandals, were on higher moral and legal standing. Again in *Romul.* 10, the Greeks were made to be the victims of an utterly destructive foreign force in the person of Medea. On the other hand, in *Orest.* the threat to the well-being of the city comes from within its own walls, and Orestes, similarly a foreigner given his absence for so many years, is shown to be its saviour. Still more different is *Romul.* 2, where it is the idea of a loss of Romanness which pervades the relationship between Hercules and Hylas. This is directly related to the rhetorical milieu of the *Romulea*.

We have already seen how the texts display stylistic features which might categorise them as broadly imitating the affect of a particular author — *Romul.* 8 as Homeric/Virgilian, *Romul.* 10 as Statian, *Orest.* as Senecan and Lucanian, and *Romul.* 2 as Ovidian. We might also thus consider the subject matter of the texts to be treated in a similar experimental manner. The subscription to *Romul.* 5 suggests that the poem in question, a versified *controversia*, was performed in public in the presence of the proconsul Pacideius. If this indicates a coterie, where literature (i.e. the fact that the piece in question is versified) and rhetoric (that it is explicitly a rhetorical form) are practised in equal measure, then the remaining epics might be considered as having been conceived with the same idea in mind. Thus, the texts' literary aesthetic works together with the content of the poem — which has in every case adapted according to the poet's needs — in order to provide a coherent viewpoint on a particular issue.

It should thus not come as a surprise that Dracontius' viewpoint and allegiance shifts from poem to poem, from expressions of doubt regarding the future of Roman

revival and classical culture, to the destruction of his own city. This reading of the purpose and genesis of the *Romulea* and *Orest*. is echoed in the way that Dracontius describes the cause of his imprisonment in the *Satisfactio*: by referring to the unspecified *dominus* as *ignotus* and likewise not speaking about the *domini modesti,* he was effectively offering a non-sanctioned viewpoint on the given situation.

Beyond this, this thesis shows how adept Dracontius is at his craft. The poet demonstrates that he is capable of effectively marshalling an impressive array of sources, styles, and narrative idiosyncracies to his needs. And, given that one possible side-effect is to make his audience be more critical of the subject matter in the same manner as Brecht intended the viewers of his plays to be, our author is in this endeavour immensely successful.

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