

Dracontius and the Wider World

Cultural and Intellectual Interconnectedness in Late Fifth-Century Vandal North Africa

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The traditional image of Vandal North Africa is one of oppression, persecution, military aggression, and, ultimately, societal decay: the antagonistic thassalocracy of Gaiseric, the Arian strong-arming of Huneric, and the weak decadence described by Procopius. This viewpoint has, ever increasingly, been shattered under the weight of modern scholarly investigation. In recent years, scholars from various fields have come together to greatly enhance, and fundamentally alter, our understanding of the Vandal Kingdom of North Africa.¹ One facet of this research has been the investigation of Vandal North Africa's place in the wider history of the Late Antique world. This work geared at contextualizing Vandal North Africa has centred especially upon Mediterranean interconnectedness

¹ The roots of the modern understanding of the Vandal kingdom of North Africa are to be found firstly in the seminal works of Christian Courtois and, more recently, in the works of Frank M. Clover, many of which are conveniently collected in his *The Late Roman West and the Vandals* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993). The twenty-first century upsurge in Vandal scholarship really begins with the crucial collection edited by A.H. Merrills, *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), and follows the subsequent work of the scholars featured within it. Three of the most recent, and most important, works published by the vibrant academic community working on the Vandals are *Das Reich der Vandalen und seine (Vor-) Geschichten*, ed. by Guido M. Berndt and Roland Steinacher, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 13 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), A.H. Merrills and R. Miles, *The Vandals* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) and J. Conant, *Staying Roman: conquest and identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

as witnessed in political, economic, and theological issues.² A crucial aspect of this interconnectedness, however, has largely been overlooked: literary and intellectual culture flourished in fifth-century North Africa, and the Vandal Kingdom produced one of the most important and prominent poets of Late Antiquity, alongside a number of other lesser figures.³ This key figure was Blossius Aemilius Dracontius. Dracontius himself provides us with an interesting case-study: a Catholic Afro-Roman Senator (by birth, leastwise), an illustrious member of the Carthaginian intelligentsia, a court poet ultimately imprisoned by his ruler, and a master of the Late Antique art of poetry. Dracontius is also of vital importance for the investigation of cultural and intellectual interconnectedness in the late-fifth-century Latin West, and it is with this that we are here concerned. The central question of the current paper, then, is this: what can the works of Dracontius tell us regarding the nature and depth of the cultural and intellectual connections between North Africa and Europe during the period of Vandal rule in Carthage?

In seeking an answer, the present investigation will centre upon an analysis of Dracontius' use of contemporary and near-contemporary source material. The strict methodologies practiced by the poets of Classical and Late Antiquity provide the modern scholar with a superb opportunity to study cultural influence and interconnectedness. A study of Dracontius' *loci similes* (points of similarity with other texts) shows us that the poet had a wide, deep, and pervasive knowledge and understanding of the cultural inheritance of the late-fifth century.⁴ Going far beyond the Classical inheritance, Dracontius knew the literature (stretching from poetry to theology) of the fourth and early-fifth centuries: but this, of course, only shows us that the works that had been translated to Africa (or written there) before the Vandal conquest were preserved. This, indeed, is an important piece of information, but it should not be terribly surprising and forms only a backdrop for the matter at hand. Of particular importance for the present study is the relationship between the works of Dracontius and the works of the two great fifth-century poets working in Gaul: Sidonius Apollinaris in the middle of the century and Avitus of Vienne at the century's end. The answer to our question lies in this relationship.

The principal works of Dracontius, the *Satisfactio* and the *De Laudibus Dei*, were written sometime between Dracontius' imprisonment during the reign of the Vandal king Gunthamund and that

² Central to this discussion is Conant's *Staying Roman*.

³ While the literary output of the so-called 'Vandal Renaissance' has indeed been the focus of a substantial amount of high-calibre scholarly attention, much of this has revolved around either the purely literary study of the texts (D.J. Niles being the most prominent here) or their purely historical aspects (such as in A.H. Merrills, 'The Perils of Panegyric: The Lost Poem of Dracontius and its Consequences', in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers*, pp. 145-62).

⁴ M.L. Tizzoni, 'The Poems of Dracontius in their Vandalic and Visigothic Contexts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2012), pp. 28-31 for use of *loci similes* as cultural indicators, pp. 103-5 for summary of Dracontius' relationship to the Late Antique cultural heritage. Included in the Appendix of this thesis is a comprehensive list of Dracontius' *loci similes*.

king's death in 496, most likely between 489 and 492.⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris flourished in the decades just prior to the composition of Dracontius' works with the bulk of his poetry published in 469. Parallels with his work, therefore, bear witness to cultural and intellectual interchange in the period stretching roughly from the 460s to the late 480s.⁶ Avitus, on the other hand, was slightly younger than Dracontius: his *De spiritalis historiae gestis* must be dated to sometime before 506/7, and could possibly have been composed sometime in the 490s.⁷ Any relationship between the works of Dracontius and Avitus, consequently, allow us to track Dracontius' early transmission.⁸ Although it will need to be returned to, this basic chronological framework allows us now to enter upon the analysis of the textual interconnectedness in earnest.

Several parallels, of varying strengths, exist between the works of Dracontius and those of Sidonius. All told, the works of Dracontius contain seven such generally attributed *loci similes*; four in the *Carmina profana*, two in the *De Laudibus Dei*, and one in the *Satisfactio*. The *locus similis* between Dracontius, *Carmen* 6, 60–66 and Sidonius, *Carmen* 5, 41–50 affirms the strong stylistic similarities between the two authors. Both passages contain 'catalogues' listing a number of related items. For example, Dracontius pens a list of what one might refer to as emotional states and the implications of following them, whereas Sidonius created a list of geographical areas and their most noted products.⁹ While the lists themselves have very little in common at first glance, both the reasoning

⁵ D.F. Bright, 'The Chronology of the Poems of Dracontius', *Classica et Mediaevalia: Revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire*, 50 (1999), pp. 193–206, at pp. 199–200.

⁶ Sidonius published the bulk of his verse in 469 upon his entry to priesthood, although several of his panegyrics were likely published earlier. Sidonius published the first seven books of his epistles in around 477, and books eight and nine in the years following. The dating of Sidonius is discussed in detail by J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407–485* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 3–10.

⁷ Dedicatory letter for the *De spiritalis historiae gestis* and introduction, in *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose*, trans. by D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood, *Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians*, 38 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002). See also I.N. Wood, 'Avitus of Vienne, The Augustinian Poet', in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources*, ed. by R.W. Mathisen and D. Shanzer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 263–277, at p. 275.

⁸ While the possibility does exist that Avitus' works could be older than Dracontius' it is very unlikely and the evidence of the texts, discussed below, strongly indicates otherwise.

⁹ The passage in Dracontius (*Carmen* 6, 60–6) reads:

'ibat in obsequium Risus, Amplexibus haerens
iusta Libido coit, uenit et moderata Voluptas,
candida legitimas accendens Gratia taedas
occurrit, uenit alma Fides, Petulantia simplex,
casta Pudicitia procedit mente quita,
Sobrietas per cuncta uigil deuota cucurrit
et quidquid iustos solite comitatur amores.'

Sidonius, *Carmen* 5, 41–50, reads:

'Ergo ut se mediam solio dedit, aduolat omnis
terra simul. tum quaeque suos provincial fructus
exposuit: fert Indus ebur, Chaldaeus amomum,
Assyrius gemmas, Ser vellera, tura Sabaeus,
Atthis mel, Phoenix palmas, Lacedaemon oliuum,
Arcas equos, Epirus equas, pecuaria Gallus,
arma Chalybs, frumenta Libys, Campanus Iacchum,

and the aesthetic behind them have the same impetus, and catalogues such as these are an important part of the Late Latin poetic method. The stylistic similarity here (and elsewhere) asserts a shared cultural heritage, and shared cultural practice, in the minds of both authors. Yet, no other Late Latin authors employ the catalogue so vigorously as Sidonius and Dracontius, thus suggesting close ties between the two authors. The same is true of the looser resonance between Dracontius, *Carmen* 7, 147 and Sidonius, *Epistle* 4, 8, 5. Stylistic resonances, however, only suggest interconnectedness: stronger evidence for cultural interaction indicated by shared style lies in verbal parallels. One such verbal parallel in the *Carmina profana* is located between Dracontius, *Carmen* 8, 477 and Sidonius, *Carmen* 2, 307.¹⁰ This lexical *locus similis* revolves around an atypical use of the already uncommon adjective *obuncus*.¹¹ Generally, the word *obuncus* is used to refer to curvature in a beak, whether in the possession of a bird, a ship, or otherwise (Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6, 597, in regards to the beak of a vulture, being the principle example).¹² Yet, in both of these Late Antique passages, *obuncus* is used synecdochically and qualifies the relevant creature itself, as opposed to the creature's beak as in the Vergilian passage: all three uses, it should be noted, are in a mythological context.¹³ Additionally, in both the Sidonius and Dracontius passages the word *obuncus* occurs in the plural at the end of a hexameter line with the qualified construction preceding it, whereas Vergil has the singular at the end, with the qualified noun placed earlier. Thus, while both Sidonius and Dracontius are referencing Vergil, Dracontius himself is more closely paralleling Sidonius and this use of *obuncus* should also be seen as a Sidonian resonance. The strongest Sidonian parallel in the *Carmina profana*, however, is between *Carmen* 8, 381 and Sidonius, *Epistle* 8, 6, 15.¹⁴ The passage from Dracontius' *De raptu Helenae* (*Carmen* 8), lines 381-382 reads: '*subducitur ancora mordax, uela leuant nautae.*' The relevant passage from Sidonius reads: '*priusquam de continenti in patriam uela laxantes hostico mordaces anchoras uado uellant.*' As is often the case, underneath both of these passages lays a Vergilian reference. In this case, the parallel is with *Aeneid* 1, 169, which along with part of the previous line, reads '*hic fessas non uincula nauis/ ulla tenent, unco non alligat ancora morsu.*' The line from Dracontius comes in a passage dealing directly with Aeneas, and this makes the Vergilian parallel all the stronger. The Sidonius passage, on the other hand, describes the Saxon practice of human sacrifice prior to weighing anchor. The resonance between Dracontius and Vergil is unmistakably clear. Nevertheless, at least one element in Dracontius' passage points specifically to a link with Sidonius.

aurum Lydus, Arabs guttam, Panchaia myrrham,
Pontus castorea, blattam Tyrus, aera Corinthus;
Sardinia argentums, naves Hispania defert
fulminis et lapidem; [...]

¹⁰ Dracontius' line reads: Martis et inferni uolucres raptoris obuncas. Sidonius' line reads: Nun cades, o Paeon, lauro cui grypas obuncos.

¹¹ Dracontius: *Œuvres*, 4 vols (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002) IV, 161 note 287.

¹² The line in Vergil, which is relevant here, reads: porrigitur, rostroque immanis uultur obunco.

¹³ Despite the mythological nature of all three passages, the parallel is purely lexical and the passages within which they appear are not particularly relevant to each other.

¹⁴ The official publication of this letter took place sometime between 477 and 481. Harries, Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, p. 8.

This element is the combination of anchor and sail. The passage in Vergil mentions only anchors and anchor chains, the latter of which is absent in the other two authors. It should also be noted that, despite the difference in subject matter, the Late Antique passages share another difference with the Vergilian: Vergil was describing a calm harbour (no need for anchors) whereas both Sidonius and Dracontius are describing ships departing. Although the contexts themselves differ somewhat, the verbal parallel between *ancora mordax uela* and *uela... mordaces anchoras* is unmistakably clear. While both passages do possess a Vergilian resonance, the similarity between the two Late Antique passages is rather too great to be coincidental and argues for Dracontius' familiarity with Sidonius' work.

The *Satisfactio* and *De Laudibus Dei* provide further evidence for Dracontius' knowledge of the works of Sidonius. The *locus similis* in the *Satisfactio*, although somewhat problematic, is also reasonably strong. This parallel occurs at line thirty-nine of the text, in a section of the poem particularly heavy with Classical, Late Antique, and Biblical resonances. Indeed, the passage in question is itself also a Biblical parallel. The difficulty with the resonance in question, however, is that it depends upon a textual emendation.¹⁵ This notwithstanding, the emendation can reasonably be upheld when its contexts are fully evaluated and the nature of the change examined. The parallel comes at a point when Dracontius is attempting to excuse his wrongdoing, the praise of an *ignotum dominum* and his failure to praise the current king, as something which God had driven him to, and to insert it into a framework of people whom God had changed in some way.¹⁶ He starts with Nebuchadnezzar (in a passage laden with Vergilian and Ovidian resonances) and then moves to Zacharias, the father of St John the Baptist.¹⁷ Dracontius writes '*liquit et antistes serus pater ille Iohannis/ elinguisque fuit uoce tacente silens*'.¹⁸ Sidonius, in his poem '*Euchariston ad Faustum Episcopum*', written sometime between 460 and 469, when speaking of the great deeds of the Holy Spirit, refers to Zacharias by name, and, also describing the binding of his speech, calls him *serum patrem*.¹⁹ Underneath both of these passages is a reference to Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, 2 which uses the formula *serus pater* to refer to Abraham. The verbal resonance, between all three passages, is clear, but needs to be contextually rooted in order to establish the validity of the *loci similes* proper.²⁰

¹⁵ Even if one does not accept the emendation, and thus the *locus similis*, it is, nevertheless, worth discussing.

¹⁶ No mean amount of ink has been expended upon this topic. Andy Merrills provides the fullest modern discussion: A.H. Merrills, 'The Perils of Panegyric: The Lost Poem of Dracontius and its Consequences', in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, ed. by A.H. Merrills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 145-62, at p. 146.

¹⁷ The full passage has two resonances with the *Aeneid* (1,11 and 2,471) and three with the works of Ovid (*Heroides*, 14,86; *Fasti* 5,620; *Metamorphoses* 1,741-742). Additionally, the passage includes references to Cyprianus Gallus, Arator, Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*, Gellius, Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and *Apotheosis*, Horace's *Satirae*, Livy, Tacitus, and Statius' *Thebaid*. Line details can be found in Tizzoni, 'The Poems of Dracontius', p. 280.

¹⁸ Dracontius, *Satisfactio*, 39-40.

¹⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems, Letters: Books I-II*, trans. by W.B. Anderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), I, 16.37.

²⁰ While the shared *serus pater* is the crux of the parallel, the *locus similis* itself has much wider scope than these two words,

The Biblical account referenced by both Sidonius and Dracontius provides the most logical starting point. Luke 1, 5-25 gives the story of Zacharias and the birth of John the Baptist. In the Vulgate version of the passage, Zacharias and his wife are described as *'processissent in diebus suis'*, 'having advanced in their days', and Zacharias declares himself a *'senex'*.²¹ Nowhere in the Biblical passage, whether in the Vulgate or the *Vetus Latina*, does one find the formula *serus pater*, although this formula does indeed represent the sense of the original perfectly well. The absence of *serus* from the Biblical text helps to affirm the relationship between Dracontius' text and Sidonius', but one could still argue for its being coincidental, as variation in vocabulary is indeed one of the traits of the Late Antique style.

The contexts of the passages within the works in which they occur shed further light. A few lines above his use of *serus* for 'old', Sidonius uses *senex* to refer to the prophet Elijah.²² Therefore, his use of *serus* can be explained by a desire to avoid repetition with the previous *senex* and solidify the reference to Prudentius. Dracontius' use, however, cannot be explained in such a way. Neither *senex*, nor any other word meaning 'old', occurs in the vicinity of line thirty-nine, and so there is no need to choose *serus* in order to avoid repetition. While the desire for lexical diversity could explain his choice here, it stands as a weaker answer. The passage already possesses a substantial amount of variation, as is shown by his use of the word *antistes* for priest, instead of the more common *sacerdos*. Additionally, *serus* is a fairly standard Classical Latin usage, and would not really contribute to the lexical variation of the passage. Therefore, Sidonius' use of *serus* is explained by his need to avoid repetition, but no such reason can be found for Dracontius. Indeed, the only reason for the employment of this phrase is that it fits the metre. While *serus* is a clever way to convey both of the phrases referring to Zacharias' age used in Luke, it is precisely this double use that would have allowed Dracontius to use multiple adjectives, as is often his wont. Yet he did not. Instead, he chose to employ exactly the same phrase as used by Sidonius of exactly the same person, and while doing so include a reference to Prudentius. This certainly suggests more than mere coincidence.

More light can be shed on this if we look at Eugenius II of Toledo's redaction of Dracontius' text.²³ This passage is indeed one which Eugenius changes. The only real change Eugenius makes to this passage is, in fact, to *serus*, which he replaces with a rather weak *verus*. This seems a somewhat odd

as the following argument will bear out. It should not be dismissed too readily.

²¹ Luke 1, 7, 18. *Senex* is also the reading found in the *Vetus Latina*, excepting one reading of *senior*, found in Itala Codex d. The *Vetus Latina* is most readily available through Vetus Latina Database, the online version of the texts supported by Brepols.

²² Sidonius, *Carmina*, 16, 32. The proximity of *senex* and *serus* strengthen the parallel between Sidonius and Prudentius.

²³ The text of the *Satisfactio* and *De Laudibus Dei* Book 1 were redacted in mid-seventh-century Visigothic Spain by Bishop Eugenius II of Toledo. In his redaction, Eugenius altered the texts more-or-less regularly and his 'corrections' fit basic patterns. The only comprehensive modern study of Eugenius' redaction, and its methods, is Tizzoni, 'The Poems of Dracontius', pp. 173-232 and throughout. The traditional work on the redaction, written from a very different viewpoint from my cultural historical/socio-rhetorical stance, is K. Reinwald, *Die Ausgabe des ersten Buches der Laudes dei und der Satisfactio des Dracontius durch Eugenius von Toledo* (Speyer: Jäger, 1913).

change. Certainly, the reference to Zacharias' old age finds its source in the Bible, and, while the allusion to his age is not strictly necessary either for the sense of the passage or the Biblical reference, it does make the latter somewhat stronger. If Eugenius had retained *serus*, the Biblical reference would have been clearer. This is interesting, because in the surrounding lines Eugenius alters Dracontius' text to make the Nebuchadnezzar reference stronger. Perhaps Eugenius simply wished to emphasize Zacharias' 'genuineness', or 'rightness', or simply that he was John the Baptist's real father, over the fact that he was old. Perhaps he wished to delete the link between Zacharias and Abraham suggested by the Prudentius resonance. He may have been trying to improve the overall sense of the passage, and this most probably represents the best answer, as the main idea behind this section of the *Satisfactio* is a rather unorthodox statement, in that Dracontius is essentially attempting to pass the blame for his actions on to God. Eugenius does, of course, remove this idea from his redaction and replaces it with a more theologically acceptable one.²⁴ The other possibility is that Eugenius was trying to make sense of a corrupted text. Eugenius' modification tells us something. If he read *serus* only as a clever rendition of the Biblical description of Zacharias, why would he have changed it? Generally, Eugenius' amendments on Biblical matters tend either to clarify, or to correct, Dracontius' use. Thus, if Eugenius viewed it solely as a Biblical reference, it would be out of character for him to change it. However, if Eugenius viewed this as a resonance with Sidonius and Prudentius, and felt as though he could improve Dracontius' text by removing it, he certainly would have done so, as he does elsewhere. Because he changed it, we can reasonably assume that Eugenius viewed the use of *serus pater* for Zacharias as a literary resonance. Eugenius' discomfort with the Sidonius parallel is further supported by the nature of Sidonius' poem.²⁵ It contains inaccurate Christian material, and the works of Faustus, to whom it was addressed, were later condemned as heresy. While this condemnation of Faustus of Riez occurred long after Dracontius' composition, and long before Eugenius', it deserves mention, as Eugenius himself was very much concerned with heterodoxy.²⁶ One can see why Eugenius, an orthodox bishop in the former Arian kingdom of the Visigoths, might wish to remove such a reference.²⁷ Yet,

²⁴ The theological correction of the text was a crucial part of Eugenius' redaction. For a study of Eugenius' methods, see Tizzoni, 'The Poems of Dracontius', pp. 196-216. The *verus* itself, however, does very little to achieve this goal.

²⁵ Eugenius knew the works of Prudentius and referenced them frequently in his own writings. A summary of Eugenius' *loci similes* with Prudentius can be found on pp. 432-3 of P. F. Alberto, ed. *Eugenii Toletani Opera Omnia*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina CXIV (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005) within Alberto's comprehensive *Index Fontium* (which runs from pp. 413-438).

²⁶ Faustus of Riez, a native Briton serving as a bishop in Riez in Provence, was condemned for his affinity with Pelagianism. He was not really 'finalised' as a heretic until Caesarius of Arles in the early-sixth century. The fight to define orthodoxy in the fourth and fifth centuries was a very close-run thing, and the definitions of orthodoxy were still very much up for grabs in the fifth, and even the sixth, centuries. It should also be noted that Sidonius is absent from Isidore of Seville's *De viris illustribus* (the modern edition of which is Carmen Codoñer Merino, ed., *El 'De viris illustribus' de Isidoro de Sevilla: Estudio y edición crítica, Theses et studia philologia Salmanticensia*, 12 (Salamanca: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto 'Antonio de Nebrija', Colegio Trilingüe de la Universidad, 1964).

²⁷ While Sidonius is no heretic, this particular poem does exhibit a lack of Biblical knowledge (for example, he gets the story of the taking up of Elijah wrong), and the poem is addressed in friendship to a man condemned as a heretic. Eugenius could logically have possessed a desire to distance himself from this particular work, without casting aspersion on the

the very fact that Eugenius was operating in a post-Arian kingdom might also explain a certain amount of accommodation. Either way, his treatment of this passage is in line with his treatment of other literary passages, and suggests that he viewed it in the same way as he viewed Vergil or Sedulius.²⁸ As Eugenius almost certainly had the same evidence to hand as we do here, his decision serves to confirm the validity of this passage as a genuine Sidonian resonance.

Yet, if this *serus pater* does represent a genuine parallel with Sidonius, why are there no others in the *Satisfactio*? The answer to this question is fairly simple. The lack of Sidonian resonances and parallels in the *Satisfactio* owes itself to the separate natures of the works. Sidonius wrote several shorter pieces, mainly *epigrammata*, along with several longer works, in addition to a number of letters. His longer works, while essentially the same length as the *Satisfactio*, are of a much different nature. Three of these are imperial panegyrics, addressed to Anthemius, Majorian and Avitus. The rest are either *epithalamia* or somewhat flattering pieces addressed to important personages. Dracontius engaged with his sources, and selected them not only because they were good literary pieces, but because they bore a relevance to his own work. This is seen most clearly in his use of Ovid's poems of exile for his *Satisfactio*, which is in essence his own poem of exile. He focused more heavily on them, rather than on the more well known and celebrated *Metamorphoses*.²⁹ The same process of selection is at work here. Sidonius' poetry is largely of a secular nature, even if imbued with Sidonius' own Christianity.³⁰ The *Satisfactio*, while in a way secular in nature, is really a Christian poem, as it often argues its points in terms of Christian ideas or concepts. This is why Dracontius used several overtly Christian Late Antique sources for the work, such as the Biblical epics of Sedulius and Prudentius. The parallel in question, however, is a place where the work of Sidonius and that of Dracontius touch. The same is true of the resonances in the *Carmina profana* discussed above.

As mentioned above, however, there is one problem. The line in question, that is, line thirty-nine of the *Satisfactio*, appears corrupted in the more important of the two manuscripts which contain the poem, namely Vaticanus Reginensis Latinus 1267, dating from the ninth century. This manuscript appears to have '*senis*', or possibly '*senex*' written in the first hand, and '*senior*' written in the second where the present study, following Vollmer's *MGH* and the *Budé* edition, has read '*serus*'. The third

works of Sidonius as a whole. Then again, it may not have mattered to him at all. For Sidonius, see Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome* and P. Rousseau, 'In search of Sidonius the bishop', *Historia* 25 (1976), 356-77.

²⁸ Depending upon his preference, Eugenius frequently either adds or removes literary resonances (usually the latter).

²⁹ Dracontius references the much shorter poems of exile ten times (the *Tristia* accounts for six of these), and the *Metamorphoses* six times. A list of known *loci similes* can be found in the appendix to Tizzoni, 'The Poems of Dracontius', pp. 280-98. Additional lists appear in the *apparti critici* of most editions of Dracontius.

³⁰ Though the 'pagan' aspects of Sidonius' culture have often been emphasised, Sidonius was always solidly a Christian. W.M. Daly, 'Christianitas Eclipses Romanitas in the Life of Sidonius Apollinaris', in *Religion, Culture, and Society in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Thomas F. X. Noble and John J. Contreni (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1987), pp. 7-26, see esp. pp. 7, 17-18.

modern editor, Speranza, has chosen to read *'sancti'*, following a similar passage in Dracontius' *De Laudibus Dei* (2, 686), but with seemingly no other merit, except a barely legible marginal note.³¹ The second manuscript of the *Satisfactio*, Darmstadensis 3303, also from the ninth century, and, at parts, rather damaged, has the reading *'senex'*. *'Senex'* and *'senior'* both possess Biblical parallels, the former Vulgate and the latter *Vetus Latina*. Yet none of the three function according to the scansion of the line, which is in dactylic hexameter, being the first line in an elegiac couplet. *'Serus'* does, although it is rather spondaic. *'Senis'*, which is the original reading in the Vatican manuscript, does not make any sense in the line, as it would have to agree with *'Iohannis'*. While it may not necessarily be the case, it is even possible that Vollmer actually derived his *'serus'* from the Sidonius poem, which would, of course, make the argument for it being a parallel circular. Yet, as is often the case with various hands, *'senis'* and *'serus'* can potentially look very similar, if not identical, on the page, as both contain the same number of minims, and a minuscule 'ru' can easily be turned into an 'ni' if the scribe is not careful and the hand is a confusing one. While the Beneventan hand in which this manuscript is written is a generally neat hand, the level of dissension on this word (as all three editors actually disagree on what the first hand wrote), suggests that something of a scribal error may well have taken place. Additionally, we do not know what type of manuscript the existing copies were made from, nor what hand that original was written in. A similar difficulty is to be found with the work of Zosimus, pointed out by Philip Bartholomew in relation to Romano-British studies, where the misreading of his Greek has led to a misreading of Late Antique British history that lasted for many years.³² The further parallel with Prudentius also lends weight to the reading of *'serus'*.

According to Vollmer, both of our extant manuscripts, along with the three Eugenius manuscripts which agree rather better with each other, form distinct stemmata from a lost manuscript somewhat removed from Dracontius.³³ This leads us to the other piece of evidence we have at our disposal in determining the correct reading: the redaction of Eugenius. Now, it is dangerous to build too much from this redaction, as Eugenius' expressed goal is to change the original.³⁴ However, in this circumstance, it is very useful. We must recall that Eugenius emended *'serus'*, or whatever word might have been in its place, to *'verus'*.³⁵ Eugenius' standard practice is to correct any place where Dracontius' Biblical quotations are sloppy or inaccurate. If Dracontius' original reading was *'senex'*, as the Darmstadt manuscript suggests, then there would be no reason for Eugenius to change it. It would mean his removing an actual solid Biblical quotation, and replacing it with something that is,

³¹ F. Speranza, ed., *Blossii Aemili Draconti Satisfactio una cum Eugeni recensione* (Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 1978).

³² P. Bartholomew, 'Fifth-Century Facts', *Britannia*, 13 (1982), pp. 261-70.

³³ F. Vollmer, 'Praefatio: De Draconti Carminibus Codicibus Editionibus', in *Fl. Merobaudis Reliquiae, Blossii Aemilii Dracontii Carmina, Eugenii Toletani Episcopi Carmina et Epistulae*, ed. by F. Vollmer, *MGH, Auctores Antiquissimi*, 14 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905), pp. v-xxxvii (p. xxviii-xxix).

³⁴ For this, see the prose *incipit* of Eugenius' recension of the *De Laudibus Dei*. It should be noted, however, that Eugenius only changed certain parts of the text, and the redaction and the original are actually quite close.

³⁵ It should also be noted that *serus* and *verus* can often be visually similar in earlier manuscript hands.

essentially, rather meaningless. The same would be true for 'senior'; it would simply be out of character for Eugenius, and contrary to his intent, to replace either of these words. Metre should not be the reason: Eugenius routinely ignores metre, and his lines often do not scan. If, however, the manuscript of Dracontius from which Eugenius wrote read '*serus*' or '*senis*', then it would not be out of character for Eugenius to change it, as he would either be deleting a Sidonius quotation, or correcting something which made no sense.

Further evidence can be gathered when one compares the greater context of both passages. Sidonius' reference to Zacharias takes its place within a list of various Biblical figures through whom the Holy Spirit worked the will of God, including Miriam during the flight from Egypt and the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace, among others.³⁶ The purpose of the series in Sidonius is to ask God for the aid of the Holy Spirit to help him (Sidonius) write the praises of Faustus, in such a way as he inspired and helped these other great figures. In the *Satisfactio*, Dracontius includes the story of Zacharias within the framework of a series of examples set to show how God has worked his will upon people to make them act in a harsh or demeaning way. His list contains three figures: Pharaoh (of the Exodus story), Nebuchadnezzar, and Dracontius himself.³⁷ The similarities (and contrasts) in the context are thus striking.³⁸

Firstly, while the themes of the passages are different, Dracontius explaining his misbehaviour as God 'hardening his heart' and Sidonius asking for God to inspire him to write as he inspired others to great action, the point of them is the same: both are pleading that God do for them what he has already done for others. While one is a request and the other an excuse, the thought behind both passages is identical. Secondly, the topics of the stories themselves are parallels. Although it is true that Sidonius' list of figures is more extensive than Dracontius', the two Biblical figures which Dracontius did use are indirectly, but specifically, mentioned by Sidonius. Firstly, Pharaoh: Sidonius relates the flight of Miriam from Egypt and the dry passage of the Red Sea. While Sidonius focuses on Miriam and does not mention the other two, the reader's mind would, upon mention of the parting of the Red Sea, think of both Moses and Pharaoh. Dracontius, in his passage, mentions both Moses and Pharaoh by name, telling of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart at the words of Moses. As he would expect his audience to know, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart led to his pursuit of the Israelites with an army, which was subsequently swallowed up in the Red Sea, attempting to follow the Israelites in their dry passage. Dracontius' lines, then, serve as a direct complement to those of Sidonius, referencing, but not overlapping: that key method to the art of Latin poetry. Dracontius'

³⁶ This section of Sidonius' poem runs from lines 5-67, and goes chronologically through Old Testament stories, but ends with Christ, theologically speaking the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and an appropriately chosen end to the series. Other figures included, but less relevant to the present inquiry, are Judith, Gideon, David, Jonah, and Elisha.

³⁷ This series runs from lines 11-48.

³⁸ The contextual analysis strongly implies that the Prudentius reference is not the sole literary parallel underneath Dracontius' use of *serus pater*.

second passage, deals with the transformation of Nebuchadnezzar into a bellowing ox and back again. This likewise provides strong resonance to the reading, but carefully avoids any overlap. Sidonius mentions the three youths placed into the Chaldean furnace who were miraculously saved by God. This story, regarding Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (the names of the three youths, although not used by Sidonius), comes from chapter three of the book of Daniel. While Sidonius narrates the story well, what he does not name is the one who placed the youths in the furnace, that is, King Nebuchadnezzar. Dracontius takes up the story of Nebuchadnezzar found in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel: the transformation of the reigning king into a beast, and back again. Just as before, Dracontius gives the perfect complement to Sidonius' passage. Taken with the Prudentius resonance, this contextual evidence strongly suggests that Vollmer's emendation to '*serus*' is correct, and that Dracontius had Sidonius' poem at the forefront of his mind when writing this passage.

The resonances in the *De Laudibus Dei* are both much stronger, and much more complex and multi-layered. Both parallels occur in a passage which appears during Dracontius' description of the Garden of Eden before the fall, found at line 180 and line 199. These *loci similes* also link us to the next author with whom we are concerned: Avitus of Vienne. This passage in Dracontius is densely packed with resonances and needs to be carefully unwound. The passage begins in a way relatively typical of descriptions of Paradise after Vergil. In Book III of the *Aeneid*, Vergil begins a description of Hesperia, that is Italy, as it were a 'paradise for the Trojans', with the words '*est locus*'.³⁹ So too begins Dracontius' passage.⁴⁰ Sidonius, in his panegyric on Anthemius, gives a description of a paradise in the farthest East, '*proximus Indis*', in which dwells Aurora, dawn personified.⁴¹ He too begins with the same words.⁴² So too with these words does Avitus of Vienne open his description of Paradise found in his poem, which begins at Book I, line 183.⁴³ Others could be named. The phrase *est locus*, however, represents a rather stock method of beginning such descriptions of paradises, and, as such, cannot be distinguished from a genuine *locus similis*, except perhaps with Vergil, and so, on

³⁹ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.163. Lines 163-5 in Vergil read:

'Est locus, Hesperiam Grai cognomine dicunt,
terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glabrae.'

⁴⁰ The first four lines of the passage read:

'Est locus interea diffundens quattuor amnes
floribus ambrosiis gemmato caespite pictus,
plenus odoriferis numquam marcentibus herbis,
hortus in orbe Dei cunctis felicior hortis.'

⁴¹ Sidonius, 2.407-23. The description of the place is followed by a description of Aurora herself.

⁴² The beginning of Sidonius' passage, lines 407-11, reads as follows:

'Est locus Oceani, longinquis proximus Indis,
axe sub Eoo, Nabataeum tensus in Eurum:
ver ibi continuum est, interpellata nec ullis
frigoribus pallescit humus, sed flore perenni
picta peregrinos ignorant arva rigors.'

⁴³ This is of importance, and will be returned to later on.

its own, does not tell us much. If accompanied with further parallels in the same passage, however, it can take on deeper meaning. Such is, in fact, the case with Dracontius' passage here in question when compared to both the Sidonius and Avitus passages. Lines 199 and 200 in Dracontius' passage constitute the principal parallel needed to prove the case. They read: '*ver ibi perpetuum communes temperat auras/ ne laedant frondes et ut omnia poma coquantur*'.⁴⁴ Line 199 contains a rather good selection of resonances and parallels. Vollmer, in his *MGH* edition, suggests one solid, and four other probable references, whereas Colette Camus, the editor of Book I in the *Budé* edition, lists three.⁴⁵ The first given by both, and the only Classical one, is a link to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1,107, where, in his description of the Golden Age, Ovid uses the phrase '*ver erat aeternum*', to describe the blessed state of mankind in that primeval age.⁴⁶ The second parallel they assert is with Prudentius' *Liber Cathemerinon*, which occurs at line 3,103 of that work, where Prudentius writes, also in a description of the Garden of Eden, '*ver ubi perpetuum redolet*'.⁴⁷ The third parallel mentioned by both occurs in Claudius Marius Victorius' *Aletheia*, in a passage highly reminiscent of Ovid's regarding the Golden Age, and again describing the Garden of Eden. Regarding the familiar eternal spring, he writes: '*aeternum paribus uer temperat horis*'.⁴⁸ The two parallels which only Vollmer mentions, are the ones most relevant here, issuing as they do from Sidonius Apollinaris and Avitus of Vienne. Sidonius' passage, already discussed above, uses, to describe the climate in the Garden of Eden, the following words: '*ver ibi continuum est*'.⁴⁹ Avitus of Vienne, in his own Biblical epic, uses the words '*hic ver adsiduum caeli clementia servat*' to describe this Ovidian springtime in the Garden of Eden.⁵⁰

With all these various resonances in mind, then, we can move to discuss which among them are the strongest, and, therefore most able to sustain the burden of argument. Dracontius' debt to Ovid is both clear and unsurprising. Indeed all of these accounts are indebted to Ovid not only in language, but in the concept of the eternal spring. Firstly, looking simply at Dracontius' basic word choice, '*ver ibi perpetuum*', the most obvious parallel is with Prudentius, whose wording is '*ver ubi perpetuum*'.

⁴⁴ Trans: 'In that place perpetual spring moderates the shared breezes/ lest it damage the foliage and that all the fruits may ripen.'

This passage is also discussed in D.J. Nodes, *Doctrine and Exegesis in Biblical Latin Poetry*, ARCA, 31 (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1993), pp. 124-7. Nodes' discussion, however, is limited solely to Dracontius and mainly focuses on exegetical and cosmological matters, and does not touch upon the matters in discussion.

⁴⁵ For Vollmer, see the note for line 199 on page 32 of his edition. He additionally lists a later parallel with the work of Boethius. For Camus, see *Dracontius: Œuvres*, 4 vols (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), p. 274 n. 199, and the list of *loci similes*, p. 378.

⁴⁶ It should be noted that, all the descriptions of the Biblical Garden of Eden discussed here, owe a substantial debt to, principally, Ovid's account of the Golden Age. The actual passage in Genesis, 2: 8-16, is very brief, and mainly describes the four rivers; there is not any perpetual spring mentioned. When one reads these Late Antique passages, one's mind is instantly called back to Ovid.

⁴⁷ Trans: 'Where spring perpetually emits its scent.'

⁴⁸ *Aletheia*, 1,228.

⁴⁹ Sidonius, 2,407.

⁵⁰ Avitus, 1,222. The passage in Avitus, which runs from 1.193-298, conflates the accounts of the paradise of India, rich in its cinnamon, spices, et cetera, with the Biblical Garden of Eden. The use of Ovid in poetic accounts of the Garden of Eden is, as can be seen in the previous examples, both widespread and well attested.

The echo in the word choice is obvious. Sidonius' *'ver ibi continuum est'* also represents a close parallel, as *continuus* and *perpetuus* have very similar meanings, being very near to synonyms and as both passages contain *ibi*, 'there', which is not a synonym with *ubi*, 'where'. The parallel with the *Aletheia* has merit, but is not as strong as the others. The Avitus quotation, on the surface, seems rather weak. This, however, is not the case when one investigates more closely. Prudentius' passage mainly refers to the *smell* of spring (*'ver redolet'*), and not to the temperature. Claudius Marius Victorius largely refers to the daylight hours of spring (*'ver paribus horis'*), again differing from what Dracontius actually says. The two closest in meaning to Dracontius are indeed Sidonius and Avitus.

The Sidonius passage in which this second *locus similis* is found reads: 'There spring is continuous, the ground does not grow pale, having been disturbed by any cold weather, but painted with everlasting blossom the ploughlands know not foreign coldness'.⁵¹ This idea of temperature as critical to the eternal spring is much more in keeping with Dracontius' passage than Prudentius' concerned with smell. While Dracontius does not specifically mention the threat of cold, his word choice hedges the issue and refers to problems which could be caused by weather both too hot, or too cold. This similarity serves to confirm the verbal parallel.

Much stronger, however, is the parallel with Avitus. The passage in question in Avitus reads as follows:

*Non hic alterni succedit temporis umquam
 Bruma nec aestivi redeunt post frigora soles,
 Sic celsus calidum cum reddit circulus annum,
 Vel densente gelu canescunt arva pruinis.
 Hic ver adsidium caeli clementia servat;
 Turbidus auster abest semperque sub aere sudo
 Nubila diffugiunt iugi cessura sereno.*⁵²

In this description we find material more in line with Dracontius' description. Avitus' image is of a springtime manifest not in the scent of flowers but in the temperateness of heaven, of the air, which is, of course, where Dracontius' breezes must lie. The latter part of this passage deals, again, with

⁵¹ Sidonius, 2.409-11. The Latin reads: 'ver ibi continuum est, interpellata nec ullis frigoribus pallescit humus, sed flore perenni picta peregrinos ignorant arva rigores.'

⁵² Avitus, 1.218-224. Trans: 'Not here ever does the winter of changing time advance nor here ever do the summer suns return after the cold weather, as when the lofty orbit brings back the warm part of the year, or as when the ploughlands grow hoary from the frosts as the snow grows thick. Here the mercy of Heaven preserves a constant spring; the stormy south wind is absent and always beneath the clear, bright air the clouds disperse so as to give way to continual fair weather.'

weather patterns, which more closely links it with Dracontius'. The beginning of the passage, however, shows a likeness to Sidonius, and it is likely that Avitus had both authors in mind when he wrote his own account. While Avitus' word choice does differ somewhat from Dracontius', most notably in the use of *hic* and *adsiduus*, the conception remains very much the same, and the inclusion of *caelum* complementing Dracontius' *aura* really drives home the parallel. Dracontius' line may be layered well beneath Avitus', but it certainly appears present. This passage, highlights several important aspects of the present investigation. Firstly, taken with the Sidonian resonances from the *Carmina profana* and the *Satisfactio*, it clearly displays Dracontius' knowledge of, and interaction with, the works of Sidonius. Secondly, and combined again with the parallels in the *Carmina profana*, it shows the full range and inner workings of the *locus similis* itself. Indeed, Dracontius' use of Sidonius' *corpus* spans the whole gambit of how *loci similes* were used and constructed. Stylistically, Sidonius and Dracontius are very close, and employ many of the same literary techniques. Lexical parallels exist between the two texts, which further suggest close contact. Thirdly, the presence of outright parallels with Sidonius in the *De raptu Helenae* and the *De Laudibus Dei* demonstrate Dracontius' knowledge of his Gallic predecessor from the previous generation. That there are only very few *loci similes* is also not as suggestive as it appears. The works of Dracontius and Sidonius are of very different characters. Dracontius, like the more skilled of his predecessors, confined himself to relevant sources: Sidonius only appears when convenient and logical. The same is true of Vergil and Ovid. Finally, this *locus similis* leads us to the next author with which we are here concerned.

As one might expect, due to the very close nature of the texts, further parallels do indeed exist between the *De Laudibus Dei* and Avitus' own Biblical epic, the *De spiritalis historiae gestis*. One rather solid parallel occurs at Book I, line 412. This comes in a passage which sees Dracontius narrating God's speech to Adam, in which he granted to Adam dominion over all creatures of the land, sea, and air and licence over all things in the Garden, save only the one tree. Dracontius writes:

*sumere quidquid habent pomaria nostra licebit;
nam totum quod terra creat, quod pontus et aer
protulit, addictum vestro sub iure manebit
deliciaeque fluent vobis et honesta voluptas:
arboris unius tantum nescite saporem.*⁵³

This poetic passage elaborates rather nicely on the well-known story of the licence and dominion given to Adam, with the notable exception of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

⁵³ Dracontius, *De Laudibus Dei*, 1.411-15. Trans: 'It will be possible for you to take whatever my orchard contains; for everything that the Earth brings into being, all that sea and air advance, that which has been awarded to you shall remain under your rule and joys and honorable delight shall flow for you. Only know not the taste of the one tree.'

Dracontius places these words in the mouth of God, as instructions to the newly created man. Subsequently to this passage, Dracontius elaborates, for almost forty more lines, upon the blessed and shameless life of Adam and Eve in the Garden, before the Fall.

Avitus' passage both parallels and contrasts with Dracontius'. The passage in question lies in Book II of Avitus' epic, which deals with the introduction of original sin. His passage reads as follows:

*Quod caelum, quod terra creat, quod gurgite magno
 Producit pelages, vestros confertur in usus.
 Nil natura negat, datur ecce in cuncta potestas.*⁵⁴

The strength of the verbal parallel between the two passages is striking. Both share the phrase, '*quod terra creat*' with no change in meaning, and, albeit with different wording, cover the sky and the sea, and do this using two verbs, the second of which is located in the following line in both passages. Additionally, the second verbs used in these passages, *proferre* and *producere*, bear a fairly strong resemblance to each other, and are quite close in meaning. Of equal importance to word choice in these lines, stands scansion. Both lines (which, as genre dictates, are in dactylic hexameter) scan identically, with two initial spondees followed by a dactyl, a spondee, and the customary dactyl and spondee ending. The phrase '*quod terra creat*' occupies the same exact place in both lines, further strengthening the parallel. Taken together, these factors give us a solid *locus similis*. When one looks at the two passages' contexts, however, there is also a great contrast, centred especially upon who in the narrative is delivering the words. Dracontius' passage, as we have already seen, represents the words of God to Adam. Avitus' passage, on the other hand, is spoken by the tempting serpent, so often identified with the Devil. Yet, again paralleling each other, both passages immediately progress from the bounty which is allowed Adam and Eve to the fruit of the one tree which they cannot have.⁵⁵ Indeed, while appearing at first to be in sharp contrast to each other, this contrast may, in itself, serve to solidify the parallel between the two texts. Avitus is known both to employ in his poetry exegetical material and to employ his poetic material in an exegetic fashion.⁵⁶ Indeed, Avitus' primary focus in writing his poetry is, in fact, exegetical, as his own dedicatory letters and his heavy debt to Augustine testify.⁵⁷ It is possible that Avitus used this Dracontian reference to convey the point that often the Devil, or a tempting spirit as it were, can use what is ostensibly good and true for evil purposes. In corrupting the logic of God's message to Adam in order to encourage

⁵⁴ Avitus, 2.154-6. Trans: 'That which the sky, which the earth creates, which the sea produces from its great surge, is bestowed upon you for your use. Nature denies you nothing, Behold, power over all things is granted to you.'

⁵⁵ At line 415 in Dracontius and lines 157-9 in Avitus.

⁵⁶ I.N. Wood, 'Avitus of Vienne, The Augustinian Poet', pp. 263-77 and D.J. Nides, *Doctrine and Exegesis in Biblical Latin Poetry* in the relevant chapters. See also M. Hoffmann, 'Principles of Structure and Unity in Latin Biblical Epic', in *Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity: The Encounter between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation*, ed. by W. Otten and K. Pollmann (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 139-45.

⁵⁷ I.N. Wood, 'Avitus of Vienne, The Augustinian Poet', p. 275.

Eve to commit the first sin, Avitus shows the Devil in his perhaps most frightening guise, that of the corrupt sweet-talker. The reminder that the Devil corrupts the word of God to his own ends is also a strong warning against heresy, as heresy itself depended upon a non-orthodox reading of the Scriptures, the Devil warping and misusing the Word of God, which is exactly what we see the serpent doing in this passage. Certainly, Avitus was very much concerned with heresy, as several of his letters attest.⁵⁸ This warning against heresy would be especially strong if Avitus' audience was familiar with the *De Laudibus Dei*, as they would see the word of God corrupted into a logic-based argument for sinning. Indeed, the warning partly depends upon previous knowledge of Dracontius. The strong exegetical possibilities of this reference, combined with Avitus' known employment of exegesis in his poetic works, serve to strongly confirm this as a genuine parallel.

While further resonances do exist between the *De Laudibus Dei* and the work of Avitus, none of them are terribly strong. Points of similarity do occur in various passages in all three books of the *De Laudibus Dei*, although this could potentially be explained at least partially by subject overlap. At several points Avitus describes something which Dracontius himself described, but using rather different word choice. While one could attribute this to a lack of exposure to Dracontius on the part of Avitus, this explanation is also something of an argument *ex nihilo*. This type of avoidance was a hallowed literary practice in the Classical canon: Latin literature contained an inborn struggle between tradition and innovation, and one way of innovating was avoidance. For Avitus, the writer of the last of a long series of Late Antique Biblical epics, the necessity to both reference the existing canon, like Dracontius' *De Laudibus Dei*, and write a poem that stood out from the others, hung upon a very delicate balance. Indeed, three such references actually make a fairly strong case for Avitus' knowledge of Dracontius' text. The other points of vague likeness between the texts, then, could indeed be a result of Avitus' desire not to show too much of debt to Dracontius, but at the same time display an awareness of his work.⁵⁹ This is the way in which Ovid treated the works of Vergil when writing his *Metamorphoses*. As both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Aeneid* dealt occasionally with the same material, Ovid, in a desire to remain original while still paying homage to Vergil, tended to skirt the latter's stories, and focused instead on peripheral matters. Avitus, on the other hand, could not skirt these stories, because they were all critical to his piece. Instead, he artfully navigated both through the Bible, and through the Biblical epics.

What, then, can the works of Dracontius tell us regarding the nature and depth of the cultural and intellectual connections between North Africa and Europe during the period of Vandal rule in Carthage? Taken together, Dracontius' *loci similes* paint a picture of close cultural and intellectual

⁵⁸ See, for example, *Epistles* 7, 26, 28.

⁵⁹ It should be noted here that three *loci similes* exist between Dracontius' *Orestis Tragoedia* and Avitus' verse. While none are incontrovertible, they do suggest Avitus' knowledge of the text, and serve to affirm his familiarity with Dracontius' works. The references are to be found between Avitus 1, 151 and *Orestis Tragoedia*, 396 and between Avitus 6, 302 and *Orestis Tragoedia* 514 and 670.

interaction between Vandal North Africa and the rest of the Latin world. On a basic level, the Sidonian *loci similes* show that Dracontius had access to at least a selection of the works of Sidonius Apollinaris. The verbal parallels with Sidonius are further confirmed by the strong similarity in style and usage between the two authors. This suggests, at the minimum, that some part of Sidonius' works, both prose and poetry, were transmitted to Vandal North Africa in the latter decades of the fifth century. Sidonius was born in Lyon either in 431 or 432 and died at some point in the 480s.⁶⁰ Sidonius, therefore, belongs to the generation directly preceding Dracontius, and the end of Sidonius' career most probably overlaps with the beginning of Dracontius'. The official dissemination of Sidonius' poetry occurred in 469 and of his epistles between 477 and 481. Sidonius' poetry was released directly into the Auvergne and southern Gaul and from thence into the wider world: a similar circulation should be assumed for the epistles.⁶¹ The initial spread of the *Carmina*, therefore, occurred during the reign of Gaiseric in Africa. Sidonius' eighth book of epistles was published sometime between 477 and 481, which places its dissemination in the early years of Gaiseric's successor Huneric.

Dracontius wrote the *Satisfactio* and the *De Laudibus Dei* during the reign of Gunthamund, most probably in the early 490s, as discussed above. Since his imprisonment, which was most probably a fairly comfortable house arrest, as witnessed by the authorship of two of his major works during this time, must have placed at least some restraints on him, it would seem most likely that he would have encountered Sidonius' poem before the accession of Gunthamund. This would mean that the work of Sidonius most probably reached Vandal-occupied North Africa in the decade or decade and a half following its composition. This is very important, for it would tell us that Vandal North Africa, even under two of its most feared monarchs, Gaiseric and Huneric, famed for their persecution of Catholics, was not at all culturally or intellectually isolated or separated from the rest of the West. Following Victor of Vita's narrative, it is probable that Sidonius' works arrived in Africa during the earlier years of the reign of Huneric, as, in those years, he was said to have been a tolerant ruler.⁶² Yet it need not be so. On several occasions Victor makes indirect reference to Imperial embassies, and one such embassy could have borne along literary material.⁶³ However long the transmission of this work did take, it could not have been that long, and it quickly became part of the cultural/intellectual canon of Vandal North Africa. If Dracontius had the poem, this would

⁶⁰ The best and most recent biography of Sidonius is J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*. Also useful for Sidonius is P. Rousseau, 'Sidonius and Majorian: The Censure in "Carmen" V', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, vol. 49.2 (2000), pp. 251-7.

⁶¹ Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, pp. 4-5.

⁶² Victor of Vita (Victor Episcopus Vitensis), *Historia persecutionis Africae Provinciae*, ed. by M. Petschenig, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 7 (Vienna: C. Gerold, 1881), 2, 1-8.

⁶³ Such references can be found, for example, at 1, 51 (under Gaiseric) and 2, 2 (under Huneric); both examples were sent by Zeno and dealt with the church in Carthage. It is evident in these, and other, passages that Zeno is well-informed in regards to the condition of the Catholic Church in Carthage, which strongly implies that there was some sort of interchange between Vandal North Africa and the Roman Empire.

mean that Vandal North Africa, in its supposedly most closed-off and isolated days, was nothing of the sort, leastwise not on a constant basis. It remained connected and in tune with the literary and cultural trends of the remainder of the West. The Sidonius references serve to confirm what Dracontius' poetry itself tells us: Dracontius fully belongs to the contemporary literary trends of the West of his own day. His style bears a strong resemblance to that of Sidonius not because they independently arrived at the same point as, for example, Newton and Leibniz in the invention of calculus, but because they are both part of an ongoing and interconnected aesthetic development, the same Late Antique movement or 'school'. Thus Dracontius, and the North African literary and intellectual culture of his day, was as much a part of the Latin West as Visigothic Spain or the Kingdom of the Burgundians.⁶⁴

This is further confirmed by the parallels with Avitus of Vienne, albeit in the opposite direction. If Avitus did indeed have access to a copy of Dracontius' *De Laudibus Dei* when writing his own Biblical epic, as the parallels argued above bear witness to, then the text must have had a rapid transmission to Burgundian Gaul. Avitus' efforts to avoid overlap with the piece, as well as a subtle warning against heresy dependant upon knowledge of Dracontius' text, further suggest a significant readership for Dracontius in Gaul, at least among the circles in which Avitus' own work travelled. The theological warning, after all, only functions if the poem's audience has already internalised Dracontius' verse. Certainly this genre still had currency in Gaul, as the composition of Avitus' own epic testifies. The world of the 490s, however, was not the world of the 460s. Gaiseric and Huneric were dead, and Gunthamund and then Thrasamund presided over the new Vandal order. This was the period of the Vandal renaissance, and North Africa saw a plethora of works, both prose and poetry, composed by various authors, including, of course, Dracontius. The transmission of Dracontius' work to Burgundian Gaul shows that the culture of Vandal Africa was not just confined to its own borders. It testifies to a wider cultural influence, to a more interconnected cultural and literary world, where authors could draw on sources, both Classical and contemporary, from all over the Latin-speaking world. Africa was not cut off from Europe economically or culturally. We know from Avitus' *Epistula* 26 that African Donatists were in Lyon in the early-sixth century. It could be that Donatists such as these brought the text of the *De Laudibus Dei* with them. This, in turn, would suggest not only that the Gallo-Roman intellectuals received the Donatists, along with the texts which they brought with them, but that the Donatists themselves were an active part in the culture of late-fifth-century North Africa, and not some form of counter-cultural group. The transmission also attests stronger connections between the two regions. Regardless of how it was transmitted, at the very least the presence of Dracontius' text in late-fifth-/early-sixth-century Gaul demonstrates the cultural and intellectual interconnectedness of Vandal North Africa and the European heart of Late Antique Latin literature and culture. The strong relationship also shows a Late Antique

⁶⁴ This cultural evidence supports J. Conant's conclusions, from very different evidence, found in his *Staying Roman*, pp. 67-129.

literary culture that continued to exist, to be shared, to be transmitted, and to be built upon by the heirs of the Classical tradition throughout the old provinces of the Western Empire.

This philological evidence for literary exchange between Vandal North Africa and the European continent confirms the conclusions coming from the more historical and archaeological investigations represented, among others, by J. P. Conant's *Staying Roman*. For many scholars studying the Vandal kingdom in North Africa, the issue of interconnectedness is something of a *fait accompli* in light of recent research. Likewise, many scholars of Late Antiquity have expanded their research to factor in developments in the Vandal kingdom.⁶⁵ Despite the overwhelming success in overturning the traditional viewpoint that North Africa was isolated, the Vandal kingdom centred on Carthage continues to be perceived by many scholars, whether intentionally or not, as the periphery of the Latin West.⁶⁶ The presence of literary resonances between Dracontius and his Gallic contemporaries argues that Vandal North Africa should hold a much more central position in the discourse on Late Antique intellectual culture. When studying the intellectual and cultural history of Late Antique Gaul, Italy, or Spain, one neglects Africa only at great peril.

⁶⁵ Examples of two such studies, from an historical viewpoint, would be G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). An example from a philological viewpoint would be Niles, *Doctrines and Exegesis in Biblical Latin Poetry*.

⁶⁶ Halsall's *Barbarian Migrations*, for example, spends more time discussing Britain and Ireland than it does North Africa.