

Bednaříková, Jarmila; Petrovičová, Katarina

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JARMILA BEDNAŘÍKOVÁ – KATARINA PETROVIČOVÁ (MASARYK UNIVERSITY)¹

MARTIANUS CAPELLA'S QUESTIONABLE RELATION TO THE VANDALS

The work De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii by Martianus Capella has raised a number of controversial questions in the scientific discourse. The author, the evaluation of whom ranges from a denunciation of his strangeness – reflected in the thoughtlessness and disproportionate diversity of his work and corresponding to the decline of the Roman empire – to the recognition of his irreplaceable role in transmitting the ancient heritage to the Middle Ages, gave his primarily educational work the frame of a narrative about the marriage of the learned earthwoman Philology and the Roman god Mercury. In this narrative, the author combined an allegory with the witty Menippean Satire, whereby he eased the seriousness of his textbook, following the principle docere et delectare, but also made his text difficult to interpret. One way to interpreting the large-scale “fable” is examining the situation, in which it was composed, and searching for its actual addressee.

In the presented paper, following the approach mentioned above, we examine the challenging assumption that Martianus was not only a mediator of the model of septem artes liberales acknowledged by the Middle Ages scholars, but perhaps also a mediator between the Roman and Vandal worlds. Our considerations are based on the assumption that Martianus' work was written later than it is traditionally acknowledged: in Carthago reigned already by Vandals (i.e. after the interval 410–439 AD). We consider whether the shift in dating can give us the reason to believe that Martianus wrote his work intentionally for Vandals, or at least for the Afro-Roman and Vandal students in the common schools of the Vandal state. Validation of this assumption might enable us to explain some exceptional or incomprehensible features of the plot (such as the contrast between the relative simplicity of the encyclopedic texts and the elaborate introductory passages in them, or the impressive defile of gods confronted with human weaknesses, which “consume” them gradually in course of the narrative).

Our analysis also focuses on additional indirect sources of comparison: Fulgentius, and Draconitius.

It was the conquests rather than a foederati relation to the Roman Empire that helped to establish the Vandal Kingdom in North Africa in 429 AD² as part of the

¹ This paper was written under the auspices of MSM 0021622435 “Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of Ancient Languages and Old Phases of Modern Languages”, at Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Czech Republic.

² Their invasion is sometimes mentioned as religiously motivated: Salvian. *De gub. Dei* 7,13; Jord. *Get.* 169; Procop. *BV* 1,5. All Latin texts present in the article have been taken from the databases available at <http://litterae.phil.muni.cz>: i.e. from the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana Lati-*

Western Roman Empire. The foederati treaties signed later in 435 and 442 were only of formal significance and prestige to the Romans.³ In 439, the Vandals took Carthage⁴ and thus enjoyed greater advantages among other barbarian tribes of the Empire since they managed a port from which African grain was being loaded for onward distribution to Italy and Rome. The Vandal Kingdom also became a counterpart to the Ostrogothic Kingdom, established in Italy in 493. While Theodoric the Great, the king of the Ostrogoths, sought to assimilate the Roman and barbarian inhabitants of his kingdom as quickly as possible, the Vandals kept differentiating between the two ethnic groups in their kingdom.

The greatest conflict of the Vandal Kingdom thus lies in the religion – the local Catholicism and the Vandal Arianism. As suggested by Salvianus of Massilia, Prosper Tiro Aquitanus, Aurelius Augustinus, Victor of Vita, Procopius and many others, religion played an important role in the establishment and existence of the Vandal state.⁵ This fact is worth bearing in mind when interpreting the role of ancient education and mythology in this state. However, Procopius also documented a high level of Romanization among the Vandals,⁶ a fact supported by archaeological finds as well. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to evaluate how extensive this Romanization may have been, that is, what role ancient type of education could play in the Vandal society, and specifically, to discuss whether the work *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (further *De Nuptiis*) by Martianus Capella might have been intended for the readership of the Vandals.

Should the reader be guided by what C. S. Lewis wrote about Martianus in his otherwise brilliant *The Allegory of Love*, i.e. that Martianus must have suffered from poor mental health given that he was able to mix all kinds of knowledge within one piece of work,⁷ they would probably never feel like reading his encyclopaedia at all. Nevertheless, numerous recent publications on the didactic

na (BTL Editio 2–2002, K. G. Saur, Brepols; further *BTL*), the *Patrologia Latina Database* (Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*; further *PL*), the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (The electronic MGH, Release 8–2008, Brepols Publishers; further *MGH*), the *Library of Latin Texts* (CLCLT 7th release 2008, Brepols; here esp. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum: CSEL*).

³ Prosper 1347f.; Val. III *Nov.* 13 a 34; Victor. Vit. 1,13; cf. GÜNTHER, RIGOBERT – KORSUNSKIJ, ALEKSANDR R. 1986. *Germanen erobern Rom: der Untergang des Weströmischen Reiches und die Entstehung germanischer Königreiche bis zur Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Akad.-Verl., 84.

⁴ See Prosper 1327; 1329; 1339; 1342; Victor. Vit. 1,9; 1,12; 1,14–16; 1,19ff.; 1,22; 1,24; 1,29; 1,33; 1,35–37; 1,37–38; 1,39; 1,40; 1,41–42; 1,43–44; 1,50; Hydat. 118; 120; 129; 132; 144; Marcell. Com. *Ad a.* 435; Pseudo-Gennadius *De viris illustribus* 96; *Laterculus regum Vandalorum et Alanorum* 16; *Chron. min.* III, pag. 459. Victor Vit. *Liber II a III*; *Passio septem monachorum*; Procop. *BV* 1,5; *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae* etc.

⁵ Victor. Vit. 1,10; Prosper 1327.

⁶ Procop. *BV* 2,5.

⁷ LEWIS, CLIVE S. 1938². *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (1st edition 1936), 78f.

text have shown that Lewis' judgement was too harsh.⁸ Any interpretation of Martianus' text may indeed be challenging. *De Nuptiis* combines several ancient genres: the core of the text is formed by the compendium of the so called seven Liberal Arts, inspired by a lost writing *De Disciplinis Libri Novem* by Terentius Varro and drawn from diverse didactic texts.⁹ Further, the encyclopaedic work is "wrapped up" in a fairy-tale story about a search for a suitable bride for the God of Mercury, about the bride's journey towards immortality, and finally about a wedding feast. However, the work does not only comprise the literary principles of peripatetic systematic didacticism and of Apuleius' fairy novel (as acknowledged by Martianus himself: Mart. Cap. §7), but also motifs from Plato's symposial dialogue (indicated by the frame of a mediated narrative¹⁰ and followed by a symposial "agon" of the maids). Finally, this form is flavoured by the allegory and humour typical of Lucian's Menippean satire, formally manifested by alternating prose and verse in the text. Hence there exists a level of disagreement over the interpretation of the work, arising probably from the fact that different writers have chosen and highlighted different characteristic features of the writing and interpreted them as the only main characteristics. To date Martianus' book has been viewed as:

- a hodge-podge of late Antiquity;¹¹
- a compendium – handbook, in which dry content is decorated by a story without any serious message;¹²
- an allegoric defence of the ancient cult and culture, hiding a serious confrontation with early Christianity and threatening Barbarians: "crypto-pagan mystagogic compendium";¹³

⁸ Let us now mention just one of the brilliant analyses – an elaborate and systematically laid out dissertation by Sabine Grebe from 1999 (GREBE, SABINE. 1999. *Martianus Capella, De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii. Darstellung der Sieben Freien Künste und ihrer Beziehungen zueinander*. Stuttgart – Leipzig: B. G. Teubner).

⁹ Their overview was newly presented by Ilaria Ramelli in 2001 (RAMELLI, ILARIA. 2001. *Le nozze di Filologia e Mercurio: Testo latino a fronte. Introduzione, traduzione, commento e appendici*. Milano: Bompiani), note also Willis' editions in *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* from 1983 (WILLIS, JAMES [ED.]. 1983. *Martianus Capella*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner).

¹⁰ Martianus brings in a dialogue with his son in which he promises to mediate a story that Satire was telling him during long nights. Such an introduction into the plot was used by Plato as well, who employed it as an indicator of the fiction of the story. Plutarchos called this form a diegetic narrative: Plut. *Symp.* 7,8,1 (711b10–c1).

¹¹ Such an opinion can be found in LEMOINE, FANNY. 1972. *Martianus Capella. A Literary Re-evaluation*. München: Ardeo-Gesellschaft, 7, where Martianus' text is seen as "Buntschriftstelleri".

¹² The main aim is to attract the reader in order for him/her to access and appreciate other writings; see original interpreters, and esp. STAHL, WILLIAM HARRIS – JOHNSON, RICHARD – BURGE, E. L. 1971. *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹³ SHANZER, DANUTA. 1986. *A Philosophical and Literary Commentary on Martianus Capella's De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Book 1. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 43.

- Menippean satire in its own sense, ridiculing unrealistic demands on systematic knowledge: “an ironic encyclopedia, a literary and scholastic game”.¹⁴

To attempt and agree on the question of interpretation is important not only from the point of view of genre, but mainly because it can help to locate the target reader and to see the main aim of the work. Also, the related historical circumstances under which the work was written can be uncovered, which might not be directly possible from other historical sources.

The major problem in terms of interpretation of Martianus’ work seems to lie in the combination of a rational explanation with a narrative taking place in an imaginary but vividly depicted heaven in which an individual ancient deity is presented as part of a structured system. Is it perhaps feasible to find a key to the question of interpretation in the text itself? We believe that this is indeed possible since Martianus follows Plato’s distinction between argumentation and myth¹⁵ and clearly distinguishes the individual layers of the text.

At the very beginning, Martianus makes his standpoint clear with regard to his own narrative. In a fictional dialogue with his son, he establishes that he is going to tell him a tall story: *fabellam tibi... explicabo* (Mart. Cap. §2). He further confirms this at two more important places: at the turn of Book Two and Book Three, i.e. at the turn of a narrative and explanatory parts, when he appeals to the reader: *transcursa, lector parte magna fabulae...*, and states that: *nunc ergo mythos terminatur; infiunt / artes libelli qui sequentes asserent. / Nam fruge vera omne fictum dimovent / et disciplinas annotabunt sobrias* (Mart. Cap. §219f.; Camena, who he is here speaking to, will not allow him to fully realize this plan, but the importance lies in the awareness of the difference). The other place can be found towards the end, when he reveals to his son that: *disciplinas cyclicas / garrire agresti cruda finxit plasmate* (Mart. Cap. §998).¹⁶

The constant presence and significance of the deity in the plot may imply that Martianus prefers pagan religion to Christianity.¹⁷ Such an interpretation could be supported by certain parts of the text itself because Martianus does disclose a significant influence of Neo-Platonism, Iamblichus’ system in particular.¹⁸ Despite

¹⁴ RELIHAN, JOEL C. 1987. „Martianus Capella, the good teacher.“ *Pacific Coast Philology*, 22, 61.

¹⁵ That is he shares Plato’s idea of accessing truth via ratio: see RELIHAN 1987, 64.

¹⁶ In this connection, it may be noteworthy to highlight another part of the text, where Philology is afraid of having to give up the stories of the mortals (Mart. Cap. §100: *Nam certe mythos, poeticae etiam diversitatis delicias Milesias historiasque mortalium, ..., se penitus amissuram non cassa opinione formidat.*). As a metatext, this part obviously relates to Martianus’ text as well.

¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, this interpretation is advanced by SHANZER 1986, 43, and also by SCHIEVENIN, ROMEO. 2005–2006. „Il prologo di Marziano Capella.“ *Incontri triestini di filologia classica*, 5, 149.

¹⁸ As proved by TURCAN, ROBERT. 1958. „Martianus Capella et Jamblique.“ *REL*, 36, 235–254; cf. also LENAZ, LUCIANO. 1975. *Martiani Capellae De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii liber secundus: introduzione, traduzione e commento*. Padova: Liviana Editrice.

this reference, however, we do not believe that he was either deeply influenced by or even belonged to the school of Neo-Platonism. Rather, Martianus may be viewed as a typical recipient and mediator of the intellectual atmosphere of Late Neoplatonism. In a fairly typical “Iamblichean” passage (§202–206), Philology, having travelled through the whole of heaven and having met all the deity, moves beyond the celestial sky and kneeling, she prays to an unknown deity – a true essence of the world. The moment she faces the “truth”, Philology also understands that she has deserved her apotheosis. Despite having reached the absolute, however, she rejoins the Gods and continues her journey towards marriage.¹⁹ In addition, Martianus leads Astronomy, a science whose subject matter partially overlaps with the second part of Book Two, i.e. with the bride’s journey to her groom, to state that: *fabulosisque commentis Grai complevere caelum, ego praecepta potius edisseram disciplinae* (§817), but then he does not even make a mention of the highest level of heaven, as if it belonged to the afore-mentioned *fabulosa commenta*. Undoubtedly, the only and uniform principle of the world had become a point of departure for all mathematical sciences²⁰ by the end of Antiquity, however, Martianus’ interpretation does not include any characteristics which fundamentally go beyond a rational framework towards mysticism and contemplation, although the sciences do indeed move up an inner hierarchy to the levels transcending the Gods.²¹

Most importantly, Martianus’ focus is on the didactic dimension of his work. For instance, when Mercury together with Virtue set off to search for Apollo so that he could help him with the choice of bride, Mercury does not miss out on the opportunity to enlighten his companion with a talk on the spheres of seven plan-

¹⁹ In contrast to RELIHAN 1987, 63f., we do not believe that Philology’s return among the “common” inhabitants of the Olympus represents a satirical indicator of the limits of rational knowledge. Although Philology completed her journey only after abandoning her knowledge (i.e. vomiting it: Mart. Cap. §135–138; RELIHAN 1987, 62, finds inspiration for this passage in Lucian’s satire *Lexiphanes*, 21), this was not because her knowledge was seen as poor, but rather because it lacked systematization worth immortality (in the hands of Apotheosis: Mart. Cap. §140).

²⁰ Mart. Cap. §707: (Geometry:) “... *incorporeum invisibileque primordium commune mihi cum Arithmetica reperitur ... monas...*”; §971: (Harmony:) “*Primum igitur tempus est, quod in morem atomi nec partes nec momenta recisionis admittit, ut est in geometricis punctum, in arithmetice monas, id est singularis quaedam ac se ipsa natura contenta.*”

²¹ Geometry is viewed as a teacher of other sciences (Mart. Cap. §586: *...cum omnibus reverenda venerabili dignitate et magistra ceterarum, quae notae divis sunt, Artium diceretur...*; §724: *et doctissima cunctarum et benignissima comprobatur*). Arithmetic is successful in gaining respect among the Gods as their mother (§730: *...nec despicabilem vestrum omnium matrem honorandam... suae multitudinis* – i.e. *astrorum populi* – *genetricem*; §803: *...senatus... admiratur anfractus, ipsamque feminam quadam venerabilis excellentiae celsitudine reverendam non cassum parentem superum creditam recognoscit*). Astronomy gains a privileged position by the amazed Gods (§810: *quo miraculo stupefacti aeri... locum consessionis honoratissime praebuere*). Harmony gains the highest respect among the Gods: §910: *ipse tunc Iuppiter caelestesque divi superioris melodiae agnita granditate, quae in honorem cuiusdam ignis arcani ac flammae insopibilis fundebatur, reveriti intimum patriumque carmen paululum in venerationem extramundanae omnes intelligentiae surrexerunt.*

ets (streams: Mart. Cap. §14); upon calling the Gods, sixteen celestial spheres and their inhabitants are described (Mart. Cap. §41–61); while the Gods are discussing the marriage, the reader comes to learn their names, roles and positions within the pantheon (Mart. Cap. §70–89); when the Muses arrive to greet Philology, they introduce themselves through poems that characterize them (although these characteristics are different from those that are well-known; Mart. Cap. §118–126); and finally, when Philology has to displace her disorganized knowledge which prevents her from apotheosis, a special attention is paid to what types of books exist and how they differ (Mart. Cap. §136–138). The journey up to heaven is then seen as an opportunity to present bits and pieces from what Astronomy will later elaborate on, and also, to point to the hierarchy of the celestial world again (Mart. Cap. §150–207). In short, the majority of deity and allegoric characters are present in the plot in order to educate the reader (explicitly or through their performance) about an aspect of ancient reality. The perfect illustration of this strategy comes with an introduction of individual Arts who are described in a playful and riddle-like manner, complemented by an explicit explanation.²² It may be noteworthy to mention that this didacticism is never overshadowed by the use of humour and satire in the work, as also suggested by other writers (see above),²³ but per contra, they add to the attractiveness of the plot and help the reader to take a rest, which is explicitly expressed by Martianus in one of his compositional steps into the plot when speaking to Satire (Mart. Cap. §809: “*ergone figmenta dimoveam, et nihil leporis iocique permixti taedium auscultantium recreabit?*”).

It is therefore obvious that the main aim of the work is to encourage education. The information included in the text is meant to offer a balanced and universal portrait of the ancient world, a portrait which is so plain to a citizen of the Roman Empire that it seems to be almost impossible to assume that this citizen is not to be the main recipient. How can this assumption be supported? The Arts uniformly mediate “only the basics”, which some of them do not like and strive to add a more complex subject matter to their explanations. The Gods discourage them from this perspective, though.²⁴ It is these numerous cautionary notes that actually lead us to believe that to an extent Martianus defends himself against a possibility of being

²² A good example is given in the presentation of Rhetoric (Mart. Cap. §426–437).

²³ Pabst also concludes that the main feature of the text is the seriousness of the content and that humour and satire are used for entertainment purposes. (PABST, BERNHARD. 1994. *Prosimetrum. Tradition und Wandel einer Literaturform zwischen Spätantike und Spätmittelalter*. Teil 1. Köln – Weimar – Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 123.)

²⁴ Grammar: Mart. Cap. §262: *rationis regula primae...*; §263: *proposito igitur per compendiosos calles festina perfungar*. Grammar’s explanation is interrupted at the moment she wants to speak about exceptions (§326). Dialectic: §327: *primordia fandi advehit...*; §423: *...ad quaedam non minus inextricabilia quam caligosa*. Rhetoric: §436: *invita compellor scholarium iuvenilium monitus et exilia decantatae artis praecepta memorare...*; §437: *inchoamentorum primordia*. Geometry: §586: *...exquisitum est, eruditionis arcanum ut ab ipsis praeceptionis cunabulis auspicata depromeret*. Arithmetic: §730: *arcae sortis originisque primordiale vobis studeam comprobare*.

accused of presenting knowledge that may be viewed as too trivial, and therefore he addresses an advanced reader who he can present a different cultural context to, a kind of “Greco-Roman World in a Nutshell”. This is in line with the narrative passages that can be fully and correctly understood only if the reader follows the word play, wit²⁵ and the topos of different genres.²⁶ The most prominent feature of the work, i.e. the blend of the human and the celestial world, can therefore be interpreted as a celebration of the ancient didactic tradition. In the end, the most welcome allegoric character is Harmony – between the heavenly and the rational, or perhaps between the African Romans and the Vandals?²⁷

In the next part of the study, we would like to look at similarities and differences that can be found in some other texts of the era. Our equation with two unknowns (when Martianus’ work was written and who it was aimed at) must be completed with some known factors as well in order to draw any comparison. First, we will be discussing works written by Dracontius, a poet who was in correspondence with a Vandal king Gunthamund (484–496). What we know about the poet’s life today is largely based on what we can read from his work. He was imprisoned under Gunthamund probably for political, rather than religious reasons after having expressed praise for the Byzantine emperor. Second, we will be comparing his and Martianus’ work to that of bishop Fulgentius of Ruspa.

A number of works by Blossius Aemilius Dracontius have been preserved. The most significant ones are *De laudibus Dei* and *Satisfactio ad Gunthamundum regem*, but there are also some parts of his collection of nine pieces entitled *Romulea* that are of particular importance in the following argumentation. In a comprehensive poem *De laudibus Dei (Laud.)*,²⁸ Dracontius attempts to mediate

²⁵ For example, Iuno’s pressure onto Mercury to choose a bride (Mart. Cap. §5), grounded by her worry about Mercury’s renewed hanky with Venus (§34); emphasis on Mercury’s attractive body built by hours spent in the gymnasium (§5; again §100); Philology’s rational view of the marriage followed by a sudden irrational panic seen in her own incompetence (§101–110); daunting of the Gods by Dialectic (§424); the horror triggered by noise produced by Rhetoric (§425); Jupiter’s curiosity about the Earth given by his desire for women (§589); etc.

²⁶ Especially in terms of symposial digressions in spirit of the saying “wine, women and singing” (see previous Note): most obvious at the beginning of Book Eight when drunk Silenos is on stage (Mart. Cap. §804f.), or when Mercury is being lured away from the Arts into marriage games by Voluptas (§725ff.).

²⁷ We do not share LeBoeuffle’s view (LE BŒUFFLE, ANDRÉ. 1998. *Un précurseur de Copernic et Galilée Martianus Capella: Astronomie*. Vannes: Burillier, 103, Note 1), that Martianus changes the order of presentation of the Arts because of the wedding theme. In contrast, we believe that he purposefully chooses the topic of the marriage to be able to present the Arts in a well thought-out form.

²⁸ The text of this poem was published as a part of: *Fl. Merobaudis reliquiae, Blossii Aemilii Dracontii carmina, Eugenii Toletani episcopi carmina et epistolae: cum appendicula carminum spuriorum*. 1905. Edidit FRIDERICUS VOLLMER. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi*. Tomus 14. Berolini: Weidmann (further *MGH AA 14*); and also as a part of *Patrologia Latina*. 1862. (*Dracontii Carmen de Deo*.) Edidit J. P. MIGNE. Tomus 60.

biblical and ancient knowledge, as well as ethical values. Biblical and mythical depictions blend here, which is suggested by the very denotation of the Christian God with the attribute *'Tonans'*. This attribute would be inscribed to Jupiter, but also to the German Donnar. Having a religious aim, the poem emphasizes the importance of knowledge – understanding. Namely, to understand the God-Creator, it is necessary to apprehend the system of the Universe, which is seen as a created world order (*Rerum causa Deus tetrum chaos igne resolvens...: Laud. 1,23*). This reminds one of certain philosophical elements that can be traced further in the text (*Limitibus contenta suis elementa morantur... servant sub lege tenorem incorrupta suum, nec impugnata vicissim, nec discreta quidem, sed ne permixta morantur: Laud. 1,142–146*; the expression *semina rerum: 1,602* etc.; roundness of the Earth; a human as a part of godly Reason.²⁹ Also, mythology helps here to understand the picture of the Universe and the advancement of humankind, as well as some Christian maxims. Planets and their roles are personified (*mater humus: Laud. 1,156 / 2,184; parens tellus: 1,174; Sol oculus coeli: 1,674*) and the picture of every-day sunsets and sunrises illuminates one of the main questions of Christian belief: *tot simul exemplis moniti, defuncta renasci / credamus virtute Dei... (Laud. 1,683f.)*. In a philosophical or rather a rational manner, the originally mythological portrait of the Sun is painted as that of a cart man (*auriga: Laud. 2,15/18*). According to Dracontius, this is not because the Sun drives a four-wheeled cart towed by horses, but because it consists of four elements, and alternates in four colours and four seasons.

It is typical of Dracontius to blend biblical and mythical themes, an approach that does not appear to interfere with his aim to write a poem to the praise of the only God. Heaven is painted with classical pictures of the golden age, and expulsion from Heaven with a typical description of the iron age (*Vomere non tellus, non rastro jussa domari, / quaerere nec sudor fructus quocunque labore / cogitur aut campos aliquo de fonte rigare...: Laud. 1,449–451*; this picture can be found in another barbarian state, of the Visigoths, in the work of the bishop Eugenius of Toledo).³⁰

In terms of the didactic dimension of the poem, at the beginning of Book Two, the explication of Book One is well summarized when the God's qualities are enlisted: *inventor, genitor, nutritor, rector, amator*.

Paris (further *PL 60*). Both the quoted editions are available at: <http://litterae.phil.muni.cz>; the text followed in the article was taken from *PL 60*.

²⁹ Cf. Cic. *Leg. 1,23: Est igitur, quoniam nihil est ratione melius eaque est et in homine et in deo, prima homini cum deo rationis societas. Inter quos autem ratio, inter eosdem etiam recta ratio et communis est: quae cum sit lex, lege quoque consociati homines cum dis putandi sumus. Inter quos porro est communio legis, inter eos communio iuris est. Quibus autem haec sunt inter eos communia, ei civitatis eiusdem habendi sunt. Si vero isdem imperiis et potestatibus parent, multo iam magis parent autem huic caelesti discriptioni mentique divinae et praepotenti deo, ut iam universus sit hic mundus una civitas communis deorum atque hominum existimanda.*

³⁰ Eugenius of Toledo corrected this particular poem by Dracontius, titled it *Dracontii de fabrica mundi* and sent it to the king of the Visigoths Chindasvinth (642–643 AD).

Next, the biblical idea of creation (its more recent version in particular) does not accentuate the overpowering of Chaos here. Dracontius prefers a mythological understanding, and in line with ancient thinking, he allows for a cyclical view of events, namely that God can cause Chaos to return. The example pictures of Chaos are as follows: *sine luce tenebrae* (Laud. 2,12). After Christ's fall into Hades: *Stygii tremuere ministri* (Laud. 2,527), the following expressions are used regarding Hades: *Erebus, Tartarus, Hecate* etc. The image of Paradise is basically ancient as well: *Inter odoratos flores et amoena virecta ad nemus aeternum veniam, sedesque beatas* (Laud. 3,679f.). Finally, the old ancient deity is treated critically when Saturn and Diana are deprived from being called the right Gods since they love cruel offerings and human blood.

Dracontius also joins the dispute over the Good and the Evil in pre-Christian and Christian history as opened by the pagans and the Christians from the fifth and sixth centuries. He uses examples from Ancient Greek and Roman history; in fact, initially from the history of mythology. He assumes a knowledgeable reader and therefore, he introduces the examples rather briefly. For instance, a story of the Philen brothers is told in one sentence: *Ara Philenorum Lybicas possedit arenas* (Laud. 3,291). In a similar manner, the Battle of Thermopylae and various examples from Livy (*Brutus, Virginius, Scaevola, M. Atilius Regulus* etc.: Laud. 3, passim) are mentioned. Dracontius' brief notes assume a good knowledge of Roman history – at least in the case of Livy, as well as knowledge of the Bible (in the case of the other examples listed after the historical ones).

The main aim of the poem is to gain pardon of God and consequently, the pardon of the Vandal king. It is therefore possible that the poem and its maxims were addressed to the Vandals. There are some more indicators that possibly relate to the customs and thoughts of the Germans: in terms of Hades: *niger umbrarum... exercitus* (Laud. 1,72),³¹ he address to God: *Rex pie, bellantum comitata potentia* (Laud. 3,534) and especially regarding the content and means of expression of the other poem, *Satisfactio ad Gunthamundum regem*,³² in which Dracontius asks king Gunthamund for pardon.

At the beginning, he briefly characterizes God, in a similar fashion to that of the previous poem. This information about godly work, universe and its order was certainly addressed to the barbarians. The philosophical motif of elements is also repeated. When depicting the world order, again very briefly and efficiently, and especially the time alternations of anger and forgiveness in the world, the same illustrations and even similar expressions are used. For instance, the influence of the Moon on high and low tides is described and the Sun is portrayed as an eye of Heaven. Also, biblical examples of the kings who spared their enemies are mentioned. Ancient Greece history is omitted this time, but Roman examples

³¹ Cf. Tac. *Germ.* 43 (*feralis exercitus* – concerning Harudes).

³² In *PL* 60, used in this article, the name of the king in the title of the poem is corrupt: *Satisfactio ad Guntharium*.

of mercy to the enemies are given. Thus knowledge of the Roman history – Roman Empire era in particular, is again assumed here.

In terms of the motifs related to barbarian thinking, the idea of the king's happiness, addressing of the king *inclytus armipotens* (*Satisfactio* 299), as well as his wisdom (being called *doctus: Satisfactio* 300/302) stand out. Latin language is simpler in this poem, however, one unique aspect uncommon in Latin poetry reappears in both the poems, and that is the use of rhyming.

Another Dracontius' work *De mensibus*³³ also utilizes a fairly simple form. It includes reminders of some of the office-related events of a Roman family, as well as nature-related events taking place in individual months, for example: in February: *Sol hiemis glacies solvit, iam vertere nives, cortice turgidulo rumpunt in palmite gemmae* (*De mensibus* 3f.: in *MGH AA* 14, p. 227). And in March: *Martia iura movet, signis ferra bella minatur, excitet ut turmas et truncet falce novellas* (*ibid.* 5f.: in *MGH AA* 14, p. 227).

Let us now turn to the afore-mentioned work entitled *Romulea*.³⁴ Its preserved introduction, written in trochaic verse, celebrates Dracontius' teacher, grammarian Felicius. It starts with a story about the power of Orfeus' lyra, which is a comparison typical of the relation between the Romans and the barbarians of the time. Theodoric the Great was supposed to use the same metaphor as well when sending citharoedus to Chlodowic, the king of the Franks.³⁵ *Condordia rerum naturae* is celebrated here and thus when compared to Martianus' passage glorifying Harmony, both seem to especially suit the atmosphere of the time when a harsh persecution of the Catholics was at its end, and a certain level of reconciliation between the Vandals and the Romans in North Africa was established.

Dracontius' main aim is to glorify Felicius, though: (*...artifex natura rerum quis negat concordiam, / hos chelys Musea totos Orpheusque miscuit*): */ 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* (*Romulea*, praefatio: 1,10–16, in *MGH AA* 14, p. 132.). With him, education comes back to Carthage, and is utilized both by the Romans and the barbarians; in other words, education is addressed to both groups of inhabitants of the Vandal kingdom.

After the introduction, the work named *Hylas* (*Romulea* 2) follows, where ancient mythological characters are depicted and a great power of love is celebrated. Next, another introduction includes the eulogy of education again, opening a piece called: *Verba Herculis cum videret Hydrae / serpentis capita pullare post caedes* (*Romulea* 4). The address of Jupiter: *Iuppiter omnipotens, celsi moderator Olympi, cur mihi viperei fetus mala fata minantur* (*Romulea* 4,1, in *MGH AA* 14,

³³ Published only as a part of *MGH AA* 14.

³⁴ See note 33.

³⁵ Cass. *Var.* 2,40: *...citharoedum, quem a nobis diximus postulatam, sapientia vestra eligit praesenti tempore meliorem, facturus aliquid Orphei, cum dulci sono gentilium corda domuerit.*

p. 138) and some other similar reproaches here can be related to relatively sweeping changes in the destiny of some of the significant Afro-Romans under the rule of Gunthamund or Thrasamund.³⁶

The city of Carthage is called *alma Karthago* at the end of another speech of Dracontius' (*Romulea* 5,330, in *MGH AA* 14, p. 148). The theme develops around the rich and the poor, civil wars, but also around the behaviour of the victor towards the conquered, as was also the case in the letter to Gunthamund. A striking and rather provocative for the time is the motif of freedom for the Roman people: *Quid, plebs nostra, taces? Dives praeiudicat urbi / et pariter tua iura negat; praescriptio surgit, / quae populo vitam libertatemque negabit* (*Romulea* 5,249ff., in *MGH AA* 14, p. 146). Among the barbarian enemies, the Vandals are not mentioned, as opposed to many others who were viewed as such: the Suevi, the Sarmats, the Persians, the Goths (theoretically these tribes should not be mentioned after the year of 439, but this is not adhered to by writers), the Alamans, Franks, and even Alans, who were part of the Hun Empire and in alliance with the Vandals from 406 on.³⁷

Epithalamium in fratribus dictum is a wedding composition, where Venus is called *docta, facunda, perita*. Like in Martianus, personified characteristics are used: *Risus, Libido, Voluptas, Fides, Petulantia, Sobrietas, etc.*, which also applies to a wedding song for Ioannus and Vitulus: *Gratia, Perditia, Fides, Voluptas*.

The piece *De raptu Helenae* may have been written for a presentation because questions, even though sporadically asked, appear within the traditional mythological theme here.

Medea represents a traditional elaboration of mythos and does not include any questions. In general terms, the mythological themes that Dracontius deals with are well-known and relatively "scholastic".

In comparison with Dracontius, who in his works mediates various kinds of classical scholarship (mythology, history, philosophical thought), rather than knowledge of God only, the bishop of Ruspa, Fulgentius, leads a theological dispute with Gunthamund's successor Thrasamund (496–523) in his work *Libri ad Trasimundum*.³⁸ The emphasis on education and its role in cohabitation between the barbarians and the Romans is also present here. Fulgentius speaks about the king's *triumphales sensus*, and in Chapter Two – like a refrain of the Roman writers' works in barbarian states –, the idea of education refining the character of the barbarians reappears. The reading of the Word thus does not seem to be the only ambition here.³⁹

³⁶ BEDNAŘÍKOVÁ, JARMILA. 2007². *Stěhování národů*. Praha: Vyšehrad, 155ff.

³⁷ Hieron. *Ep.* 123,15,2–3; cf. SCHMIDT, LUDWIG. 1942². *Geschichte der Wandalen*. (Zweite, umgearb. Auflage.) München: Beck, 17; GÜNTHER – KORSUNSKIJ 1986, 79f.

³⁸ Included in *PL* 65.

³⁹ *Libri ad Trasimundum* 1,2: ... *sed quod rarum hactenus habeatur barbari regis animum numerosis regni curis jugiter occupatum tam ferventi cognoscendae sapientiae delectatione*

The theological questions to be solved are presented as complicated and requiring the king's knowledge of the Word, intellectual maturity and philosophical methods of analysis (*Temporalis Christi nativitas ducit in cognitionem aeternae. Immensa Christi majestas, quia sempiterna nativitas. Non fuit locus ante Filium Dei in quo nasceretur. Nec fuit ullus locus Verbo coaequaevus.: Libri ad Trasimundum 2,7 caput*). Mythology is not obviously given any space because here it is not dealt with a general didactic text, but rather with a dispute between the Arians and the Catholics.

To conclude, Roman confidence at the time of the so called "Migration of the Nations" was nourished mainly via an emphasis on the Roman dominance in regard to education and culture. It is thus natural that the significance of education was highlighted in a state in which the position of the original inhabitants was less favourable than for instance in the Kingdoms of the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Burgunds or the Franks.

At the time when *proconsules Africae* did not stay in Carthage any more, when the Catholics were not persecuted severely, and when the first steps for reconciliation between the Vandal kings and the Catholic Church as well as attempts to collaborate with Afro-Romans (including clerics) were made, the time arrived for an intensive activity in terms of ancient and Christian education being mediated to the barbarians.

Mythology and ancient philosophy, "pagan" Roman history and other aspects did not interfere even when themes purely Christian were being discussed (see the first two works of Dracontius). It is thus perfectly possible that Martianus' work came into being for common and general needs of the Vandal state, highly likely between the years of 484–523 AD. Even though religion and politics in the state of the Vandals cannot be treated separately, there is evidence especially in the Dracontius' letter to Gunthamund that the continuation of the synthesis of the ancient and Christian thought of Late Antiquity did not agitate the Vandals and may have been felt natural as, for example, for the Cappadocian Fathers the fourth century was.

Like in Dracontius, thoughts on God were framed broadly then. Martianus presented a lower level of education than theology offered. Therefore comic images could be used in his work. The frame was of a world order nature. However, not the real one, but the one that formed a "divine background" to the education in ancient schools was utilised. In the highly religion-oriented Vandal state,

flammari, cum hujuscemodi (al. hujusmodi) semper infatigabiles nisis non nisi vel otiosus quis habere soleat, vel Romanus. Per te, clementissime rex, per te, inquam, disciplinae studia moliuntur jura barbaricae gentis invadere, quae sibi velut vernacula proprietate sole inscitiam vindicare. Inventus es qui te ipso potior exstitisses, dum sic Africano praesides moderando regimini, ut magis desideres animae spatia dilatare quam regni. Nosti, venerabilis rex, et (ut non ambigo) firma tenes sententia comprobatum quanto melioribus inhaereat commodis qui veritatem desiderat nosse, quam qui, subactis gentibus, temporalis fines regni cupit latius propagare.

such a distinction between human education (that completes with respect and humbleness towards *monas*) and understanding of the revelation may have been perceived as highly significant.

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RESUMÉ

Dílo Martiana Capelly *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* vyvolává v odborné literatuře mnoho nejasností a otázek. Jednou z cest vedoucích k interpretaci pestrého obsahu díla, a tedy i k pochopení Martianova autorského záměru je zkoumání okolností vzniku i hledání skutečného adresáta díla. V příspěvku autorky prověřují hypotézu, že Martianus nebyl za zprostředkovatele modelu sedmi svobodných umění označen pouze středověkými učenici, ale dost možná byl prostředníkem skutečným, a to mezi světem Římanů a Vandalů, a že dílo vzniklo později, než se tradičně předpokládá (tj. až po 410–439 po Kr.), v Kartágu ovládaném již Vandaly. Autorky posuzují, zda s posunem datace nesouvisí možnost, že by dílo mohlo být určeno pro Vandaly, nebo přinejmenším pro žáky škol na území vandalského státu, navštěvované Afrořímany i Vandaly, což by vysvětlilo mnohé zvláštní či

nepochopitelné rysy díla (jako např. kontrast základních encyklopedických poznatků s důmyslnými vstupními pasážemi plnými učených mytologických narážek, impozantní defilé božského aparátu konfrontované s lidskými slabostmi, které bohy v průběhu děje stále více pohlcují). Současně se analýza soustředí na doplňková a nepřímá srovnání, zejména na způsob argumentace vůči Vandálům v zachovaných spisech Fulgentia z Ruspe a na podobu alegorií a metafor u Dracontia, básníka působícího na vandalském území.

Klíčová slova: vandalský stát, romanizace barbarů, Martianus Capella, Dracontius, Fulgentius.

Keywords: Vandal State, Romanization of Barbarians, Martianus Capella, Dracontius, Fulgentius.