



Imperial Authority and the Providence of Monotheism in  
Orosius's *Historiae adversus paganos*

Victoria Leonard

B.A. (Cardiff); M.A. (Cardiff)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of  
Philosophy

School of History, Archaeology, and Religion  
Cardiff University  
August 2014

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## Cover Illustration

An image of an initial 'P' with a man, thought to be Orosius, holding a book. Acanthus leaves extend into the margins. On the same original manuscript page (f. 7) there is an image of a roundel enclosing arms in the lower margin.

Taken from the British Library's Collection of illuminated manuscripts, Harley 2765. The manuscript dates from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, perhaps from Italy. The manuscript is in Latin with a Gothic script. The scribes are thought to be multiple. Besides Orosius's *Historiae*, within the same manuscript are also contained Florus's *Epitome*, the *Periochae* based on Livy, letters of Caesar, and an oration by Zenobius of Florence.

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## Acknowledgements

This doctoral thesis was supported financially by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Brenda Deen Schildgen, Peter Van Nuffelen, and Celia Schultz all generously sent me their illuminating work before publication. With the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University, I was able to present my work at the North American Patristics Society Annual Meeting in Chicago and attend a German language course in München in the summer of 2012. Alf, Ursul, and Phil Hunger were warm and welcoming hosts in Augsburg. The Society of Roman Studies generously supported my attendance at the Postgraduate Latin Summer School at the University of Reading in 2011. Thanks to Laurence Totelin, Guy Bradley and Max Deeg for the opportunity to present my work in a familiar setting, and to Neil McLynn and Brian Ward-Perkins for a warm reception in Oxford. To Suzanne Hathaway, Vicky Stallard and Helen Price Saunders at Cardiff's Arts and Social Studies Library for their leniency and generosity in often making an exception.

Responsibility for the realisation of the project goes to the unfailing support, generosity and kindness of numerous people. First thanks go to my parents for their strength and enthusiasm over many years. I owe a personal as well as an intellectual debt to my principal supervisor, Nic Baker-Brian, who originally conceived the project ('What about Orosius?') and accompanied the venture from the start. He saw my enthusiasm at an early stage and helped it to grow, investing hours of conversation about late antique religion, and ancient Greek lessons. His inspiration and encouragement were invaluable. To my second supervisor Josef Lössl, again for his generosity of time and the many inspiring conversations, as well as the positive reception of my work. To Naomi Appleton, a fantastic role model and mentor who gave abidingly sensible advice. To Simon, for his unbending faith in me, his support, and his spirited scrupulousness. To Alice, on our shared journey beyond the egg; long may it continue. And to Katie who inspired me with her work ethic and unceasing professionalism.

## Summary

This doctoral thesis concentrates exclusively on the *Historiae adversus paganos*, an apologetic history in seven books written by the presbyter Paulus Orosius in the early fifth century AD. This thesis is ultimately an exposition of Orosius's philosophy of history, within which the themes of divine providence, monotheism, and imperial authority are central. This thesis has endeavoured to establish what the *Historiae* is in terms of content, purpose, and genre, a more complex task than this simple statement suggests. At every stage of analysis this research has worked to uncover the ideology and apologetic underlying Orosius's historical narrative, in particular the significance behind Orosius's stylistic habit of rhetorical comparison. This thesis consists of six chapters, unified in methodology but encompassing a broad diversity of subject matter. Chapter One examines the constructed text and its genre, as well as issues of opponent, audience and self-representation. Chapter Two provides a philosophical and technical treatment of time. Chapters Three and Four explore the representations of monotheism and imperial authority in the emperors Augustus and Theodosius. Chapter Five is concerned with Orosius's representation of warfare, and Chapter Six considers the retributive and redemptive aspect of the sack of Rome.

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## Introduction

### 0.1 What is the *Historiae*?

Orosius and Augustine both wrote to counter pagan critics and their accusations that Christian worship was responsible for recent catastrophe, the sack of Rome.<sup>1</sup> Augustine subtly reframed the debate; it was no longer a question of determining whose religious failures were responsible, but coming to understand that divine providence would ultimately unfold in a different sphere entirely and according to a different set of principles.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Orosius's response, prompted by the request of Augustine, was to develop a practical rather than a theological philosophy of history, cataloguing the calamities of the pagan past to prove that human suffering was much worse in pre-Christian times than the troubled Christian present.<sup>3</sup> The *Historiae* is a work of Christian apologetic in seven books, a defensive treatise literally 'against the pagans' and the allegation that Christianity, at the expense of traditional pagan worship, had brought about the fall of Rome. The identity of the pugnacious pagans can only be partially reconstructed through their Christian representation; some critics have concluded that Augustine and Orosius wrote to refute specific arguments against Christianity made by Roman and Italian refugees arriving in Africa and Sicily having fled the invading Goths.<sup>4</sup> But it is equally possible that the Christian authors wrote to

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<sup>1</sup> References where no author is specified are to Orosius's *Historiarum adversum paganos*, edited by M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose. Histoires. Contre les Païens*, 3 vols., (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990). Page numbers and volume numbers accompanying Latin quotations are to this edition. English translation by R. J. Deferrari, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* in *The Fathers of the Church* series (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964). Page numbers accompanying English quotations are to this edition. On occasion the English translation has been slightly improved or adjusted.

<sup>2</sup> Wessel, (2008), p. 350, citing de Bruyn, (1990).

<sup>3</sup> In the Prologue to the *Historiae* Orosius sets out his methodology in accordance with Augustine's instruction for composition. Prologue.10-11, p. 4: '...accordingly you bade me set forth from all the records available of histories and annals whatever instances I have found recorded from the past of the burdens of war or ravages of disease or sorrows of famine or horrors of earthquakes or of unusual floods or dreadful outbreaks of fire or cruel strokes of lightning and storms of hail or even the miseries caused by parricides and shameful deeds, and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.' Prologue.10-11, vol. 1, p. 8: *praeceperas ergo ut, ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis, quaecumque aut bellis grauias aut corrupta morbis aut fame tristia aut terrarum motibus terribilia aut inundationibus aquarum insolita aut eruptionibus ignium metuenda aut ictibus fulminum plagisque grandinum saeva uel etiam parricidiis flagitiisque misera per transacta retro saecula repperissem, ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem*. Orosius's apologetic approach to compare pagan and Christian time is also made explicit in the Prologue, 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> Pocock, (2003), p. 79; Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 16.

counter a more general anti-Christian sentiment in the early fifth century.<sup>5</sup> Orosius's approach was to reverse the pagan attack to demonstrate that actually human sin from the Creation and the wilful ignorance of humanity with regard to the Scriptures was responsible, a just punishment from the Christian God for persistent ignorance and the refusal to acknowledge the truth of His existence. The Orosian philosophy of history was ultimately intended to vindicate Christianity especially from recent history by demonstrating that the Roman world had not declined but had improved since the appearance of Christ, and was set on a course of constant improvement.

But the *Historiae* ultimately achieved much more than a localised defence of Christianity; Orosius created a new frame for world history by synchronising the classical and the Christian, bringing a unique perspective to the un-improved past, the opposite approach of those who glorified former empires.<sup>6</sup> The author found meaning in history, specifically a Christian theological meaning, that necessitated a revisionist re-writing of past, present and future events. The Orosian vision of history is the ultimate grand narrative; macro and universal, related through empires and rulers, with the world created and governed by the omniscient Christian God who is wrathful and merciful in equal measure, but who most significantly is the author of all human experience. The intervention of divine providence in human affairs is perhaps the most prominent feature of Orosius's philosophy. A consequence of this scheme is arguably the initiation of the dialogue of Christian historicism; Orosius's ideal of a Holy Roman empire, both Christian and universal, was handed down to the Byzantine and Medieval European worlds, with great historical consequence.<sup>7</sup> Orosius's *Historiae* became the main point of reference for the history of antiquity, and gave later writers who looked back to the past the framework to situate and interpret their present and future.

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<sup>5</sup> The difficult question of opponent and audience will be dealt with in Chapter One, 1.2.5 'Audience and the *Historiae*' and 1.2.6 'The Language of Opposition: 'Pagan' and 'Paganism''.

<sup>6</sup> For more general discussion of the encounter between sacred and secular, Christian and classical, in late antiquity, see Lepelley, (2010) and Humphries, (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Chesnut, (1986), p. 257. Without explicit articulation of the term, in his construct of a Christian commonwealth and a sustained emphasis on the *Christiana tempora*, Orosius anticipated the concept of Christendom at this relatively early historical point. It seems that the translator of the *Historiae* into Anglo-Saxon drew a similar conclusion, as what is likely to be the very earliest reference to the term is found in the translation made in the ninth century (2.4): 'Ac heo for hie cristendome nugiet is gescild.' See Le Van Baumer, (1945), who makes no mention of Orosius but connects the idea of Christendom with Dante, who was likely influenced by Orosius in this as in many other ways. This topic constitutes an area of future research.

## 0.2 The Historical Figure of Orosius

Paulus Orosius was an active and prominent participant in the ecclesiastical affairs of the first half of the fifth century, and yet our knowledge of his life is almost entirely limited to the period between AD 415 and 418.<sup>8</sup> Described as one of Augustine's 'most active and ardent disciples', Orosius was in this short time able to produce three works, involve himself in the Pelagian, Priscillianist and Origenist controversies, participate in the case against Pelagius himself, and travel the length of the Mediterranean, bearing letters and translating sacred relics.<sup>9</sup> In spite of this, very little that is known of Orosius can be stated with any certitude; even the name traditionally attributed to him is possibly inauthentic.<sup>10</sup> Only a vague outline of his life can be assembled from the scant material available.<sup>11</sup> He is referred to most commonly as a presbyter from the Iberian peninsula, but even these simple facts can be disputed.<sup>12</sup> Orosius arrived at Hippo in North Africa around AD 414, in his own words inspired 'by God', 'not by choice, not by necessity, and not by common agreement'.<sup>13</sup> Augustine adds that he came to him 'prompted only by burning zeal in regard to the Holy Scriptures'.<sup>14</sup> However, it is usually argued that Orosius's flight was instigated less by holy inspiration than the

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<sup>8</sup> The prosopography of Orosius will be outlined here in the Introduction but will not receive especial focus later in the thesis as this research has been repeatedly undertaken elsewhere. For example, see Fear, (2010); Vilella, (2000); and Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), pp. xv-xx.

<sup>9</sup> Coffin, (1935), p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xiii. The name 'Paulus' is first mentioned in the mid-sixth century *Getica* of Jordanes (9.58); earlier sources such as Jerome and Augustine do not use the first name.

<sup>11</sup> For contemporary references to Orosius, see Augustine, *Epistula* 166 to Jerome; Augustine, *Epistula* 169 to Evodius; Augustine, *Epistula* 80 to Oceanus; Augustine, *Epistula* 19 to Jerome; Augustine, *Epistula* 202 to Opatius; Augustine, *Epistula* 228 to Orosius; Augustine, *Ad Orosium contra Priscillianistas et Origenistas*; Augustine, *Retractiones*. Jerome, *Epistula* 134 to Augustine. Avitus de Braga, *Epistula Auiti, ad Palchonium*. Severus, *Epistula Seucri ad omnem ecclesiam*.

<sup>12</sup> Orosius's Hispanic derivation is conjectural, based on Augustine's mention that Orosius journeyed to him from Hispania, and the preferential treatment given to Hispania in the *Historiae*. Augustine, *Epistula* 169. See Frend, (1989) p. 22; Trompf, (2000), p. 292. The various hypothetical possibilities of Orosius's ethnic origin are discussed by Fear, (2010), pp. 2-3. Arnaud-Lindet deviates from convention by suggesting a Breton origin for Orosius. Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xii. Gennadius refers to Orosius as 'the priest Orosius, of Spanish origins' (39), but not until the end of the fifth century. Gennadius, *De viri illustribus*, 39: *Orosius presbyter, Hispanus genere...* Writing in the seventh century Braulio of Saragossa describes Orosius as among the 'most eloquent and learned' products of Galicia. Braulio, *Epistula* 44, *ad Fructuosum*: *Prouincia namque quam incolitis et Graecam sibi originem defendit quae magistra et litterarum et ingenii; et ex ea ortos fuisse recordamini elegantissimos et doctissimos uiros (ut aliquos dicam), Orosium presbyterum...*

<sup>13</sup> Orosius, *Commonitorium*, 1: *Ad te per deum missus sum; de te per eum spero, dum considero qualiter actum est, quod huc ueni. Agnosco, cur uenerim: sine uoluntate, sine necessitate, sine consensu de patria egressus sum, occulta quadam ui actus, donec in istius terrae litus allatus sum*. Arnaud-Lindet gives serious consideration to the theoretical biography of Orosius interpolated from his writings. Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, pp. ix-xiii.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Epistula* 169: *...solo sanctorum Scripturarum ardore inflammatus aduenit...*

necessity of reality, in the barbarian invasion of the Iberian peninsula.<sup>15</sup> Augustine emphasises Orosius's youth, styling him as 'a pious young man', 'keen-spirited, swift to speak, and full of zeal', a description which is in some senses corroborated by Orosius's surviving works and activities whilst in the Holy Land.<sup>16</sup>

Orosius wrote the *Commonitorium* to Augustine against the followers of Priscillian and Origen, to which Augustine replied with his own *Liber ad Orosium contra Priscillianistas et Origenistas*, both of which survive.<sup>17</sup> From North Africa Orosius was sent by Augustine to Jerome in Palestine with letters in hand, where in AD 415 he attended a synod concerned with the Pelagian controversy.<sup>18</sup> Neither Augustine nor Jerome attended the synod, and Orosius appears to have acted as a representative in some capacity for both Christian authorities.<sup>19</sup> However Orosius's participation was not altogether successful; he was subsequently accused of blasphemy by Bishop John and composed his *Liber Apologeticus* in defence of his views.<sup>20</sup> Throughout this period, Augustine regards Orosius with what has been described as a 'paternal fondness', praising the intelligence and fervour of his pupil, and his piety and studiousness.<sup>21</sup> In AD 416 Orosius returned to Africa with letters for Augustine, works of Jerome for his pupil Oceanus, a letter from Heros and Lazarus for Aurelius, the bishop of Carthage,

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<sup>15</sup> This assumption is based upon the 'biographical' passages in the *Historiae*: 3.20.6-7 and 5.2.1. See Fear, (2010), pp. 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *Epistula* 166, 1.2: *Ecce uenit ad me religiosus iuuenis, catholica pace frater, aetate filius, honore compresbyter noster Orosius, uigil ingenio, promptus eloqui, flagrans studio...* See Hunt, (1982a), p. 119: '...as elsewhere around the Mediterranean, the presence of Orosius spelt the end of religious peace.'

<sup>17</sup> See Bibliography for full details of both works.

<sup>18</sup> The letter Orosius was carrying to Jerome from Augustine was *Epistula* 166. See Augustine, *Epistula* 172 for Jerome's reply. This thesis is concerned principally with the *Historiae* as a product of Christian conflict with non-Christians as opposed to intra-Christian tension. The thesis, therefore, will not examine Orosius's involvement in the Pelagian controversy. For a discussion of Pelagius and Augustine, see Ebbeler, (2011); for Pelagius and Jerome, see Kelly, (1975).

<sup>19</sup> Orosius was called as a witness by Bishop John at the synod to give details of the influence of Pelagius and Caecilius's influence in Africa, and Orosius read aloud a letter from Augustine to Hilary, Bishop of Syracuse (*Epistula* 157). According to his *Liber apologeticus*, Orosius gave details to the synod of Augustine and Jerome's opinions and writings against heterodox ideas. Kelly describes Orosius as 'aggressive and tactless', and as soon having Jerusalem in 'a fever of excitement'. Kelly understands Orosius's journey to the Holy Land as an integral part of the Pelagian controversy: 'Augustine's sending of Orosius 'to sit at Jerome's feet' was thus a deliberate move in the controversy; we need not doubt that he was anxious to alert the church at Jerusalem, where Pelagius was being hospitably entertained, and Jerome in particular to the dangers of the new movement.' Kelly, (1975), p. 318. For a full description of Orosius's involvement in the synod of Jerusalem, see Hanson, (1999), pp. 97-111.

<sup>20</sup> For Jerome, these are 'most difficult times'. Jerome, *Epistula* 134 *ad Augustinum*: *Sed incidit tempus difficillimum quando mihi tacere melius fuit quam loqui...*

<sup>21</sup> Merrills, (2005), p. 39; Augustine, *Epistula* 166; Jerome, *Epistula* 131; Augustine, *Epistula* 169.

and the relics of St Stephen, recently discovered in the Holy Land.<sup>22</sup> He set off to return to Spain, but was unable to continue with his journey presumably because of barbarian incursions. He was forced to return to Africa and abandon most of the relics at Minorca.<sup>23</sup> In AD 417 at Hippo he wrote the *Historiarum adversum paganos* and is not heard of again after its completion in AD 418. Criticism has traditionally perceived Augustine's dissatisfaction with Orosius's researches and speculations.<sup>24</sup> Whether or not this is an accurate surmise of their relationship, excepting the description of Orosius as 'a certain Spanish priest' in the *Retractiones*, there are no more references to Orosius in the later writings and correspondence of Augustine.<sup>25</sup> In spite of this, the incomplete narrative of the historical figure of Orosius and the enigmatic relationship he had with Augustine has attracted much scholarly attention; there is no shortage of critics who want to supplement Orosius's biography with their own hypotheses or read discontent in Augustine's silence following the completion of the *Historiae*.<sup>26</sup>

### 0.3 Reception: Ancient to Modern

The traditional critical perception of Augustine's condemnation of the *Historiae* has a modern resonance: unhelpful value judgements about the quality of Orosius's work are common and often spectacular.<sup>27</sup> In a recent review Orosius was regarded as 'a tendentious hack who tried to shoe-horn the world and especially Roman history into a pre-conceived theological interpretation.'<sup>28</sup> For J. B. Bury, the *Historiae* 'deserves more than any other book to be described as the first attempt at a universal history, and it was

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<sup>22</sup> See Fear, (2010), p. 5. For an ancient account of the findings of the relics of St Stephen, see Lucian, *Revelatio sancti stephani*. On the discovery, see Hunt, (1981); (1982a); (1982b); Gauge (1998). For more recent critical research see Burnett, (2006).

<sup>23</sup> See Hunt, (1982a).

<sup>24</sup> For Augustine's disapproval of the *Historiae*, see Brown, (1979), p. 296; Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. x; Mommsen, (1959b), pp. 346-8; Markus, (1970), pp. 161-2; Markus, (1963), pp. 352-3; Corsini, (1968); Marrou, (1970), p. 75; Frend, (1989), p. 23; Paschoud, (1967), pp. 277-8.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine, *Retractiones*, 2.44. Augustine seemingly contradicts Orosius in *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.52; 20.23.

<sup>26</sup> For the continuation of Orosius's biography, see the *Chronicon* of Dexter, which contains detailed information about Orosius and his family. Arnaud-Lindet speculates that Orosius died in a shipwreck, and similarly Fear suggests Orosius's disappearance from the historical record is most likely explained by his early death. Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xx; Fear, (2010), p. 6. See Mörner, (1844), pp. 27-8 and Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. ix fn. 2 for spurious works attributed to Orosius.

<sup>27</sup> See Corsini, (1968), pp. 50-1; Marrou, (1970), p. 83; Alonso-Núñez, (1993), p. 208; Inglebert, (1996), p. 58; Spät, (1998), p. 359; Marcone, (2002), p. 864; and Cesa, (2003), p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Burgess, (2004).

probably the worst.<sup>29</sup> John Matthews indexes Orosius as an ‘alleged historian’, and notes ‘with frustration’,

the manuscripts, numbered in hundreds, of the fifth-century Christian apologetic historian Orosius, of which a round [sic] twenty precede the tenth century - such representation of a writer whose qualities as a historian, when compared with those of Ammianus (and even when not compared with them), are an embarrassment to the profession.<sup>30</sup>

Matthews rarely misses an opportunity to deride Orosius, observing the author as ‘an unusually potent example of what is true of other ancient authors, in acquiring nearly all his prominence by reflected light’.<sup>31</sup>

#### 0.4 Augustine and Orosius Compared

The critical inclination to compare Augustinian and Orosian thought most frequently results in the conclusion that Orosius’s stupidity is particularly evident in contrast to Augustine’s intellect.<sup>32</sup> For W. H. C. Frend Augustine’s ‘majestic’ *De ciuitate Dei* is ‘incomparably deeper in theological conception’ than the *Historiae*.<sup>33</sup> This view is echoed by Pocock, who considers Augustine’s to be ‘by far the greatest work’, whilst the success of the *Historiae* is debateable.<sup>34</sup> In the entirety of Robert Markus’s long career as a patristic historian, Orosius and the *Historiae* were not taken seriously as a subject worthy of research. Markus’s limited engagement recognised the *Historiae* only as evidence that Orosius had ‘wholly failed to understand his master’s mind’, and he criticised Orosius’s ‘monumental shallowness of mind’.<sup>35</sup> Similarly dismissive judgements personally attacking Orosius’s perceived stupidity are to be found even amongst those who have devoted serious attention to the work: François Paschoud has described Orosius as ‘un épigone stérile qui suit avec des oeillères la voie que lui a

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<sup>29</sup> Bury, (1953), p. 306.

<sup>30</sup> Matthews, (1989), p. 597; p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Matthews, (1967) p.168. By contrast, Marrou argues that it was principally through Orosius and Isidore of Seville that Augustine was ‘a particularly effective agent for the transmission of history from antiquity into the middle ages.’ Marrou, (1970), p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> To clarify, this thesis is only derivative when necessary; in particular, it will not compare the philosophies of Augustine and Orosius, or investigate Augustine’s inclination or disinclination towards Orosius and the *Historiae*. This topic has been covered by Paul Onica’s thesis awarded in 1987, supervised by T. D. Barnes and examined by R. A. Markus, which systematically compares the Augustinian and Orosian theologies of history. This endless debate receives a reasonable amount of critical attention, often without consideration of Jerome’s influence on Orosius.

<sup>33</sup> Frend, (1989), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Pocock, (2003), pp. 80-1.

<sup>35</sup> Markus, (1963), p. 352; (1970), p. 161.



indiquée la maître, sans se rendre compte des contradictions dans lesquelles il s'empêtre', and his work as 'l'oeuvre d'un petit esprit.'<sup>36</sup> Alan Cameron has written of Orosius's 'shallowness and stupidity', and A. H. M. Jones dismisses Orosius's argument satirically as 'too perverse to carry conviction to any reasonable man'.<sup>37</sup> For C. G. Starr the *Historiae* was 'one of the feeblest in the Greco-Roman tradition of history', and J. H. Robinson argues that '[t]he most reckless and sensational sermon of a professional revivalist of the present would be as reliable a source of objective truth as he [Orosius]'.<sup>38</sup> Comparison with authors beyond Augustine have not produced enlightened views on the *Historiae*. Denys Hay finds that when '[c]ompared with Eusebius (on whose *Chronicle* and *Canons* he [Orosius] relies heavily) he is a repetitive bore, grinding out his *apologia* for Christianity with complete conviction and a total lack of fire, save perhaps towards the end.'<sup>39</sup> The effect of such negative criticism is undoubtedly damaging, encouraging successive prejudice and deliberate disavowal, with many scholars of the ancient world ignoring the existence of the text entirely.

## 0.5 Understanding Critical Neglect

It has been noted recently that in the field of Byzantine studies the literary analysis of Byzantine historical texts is progressing towards consideration as an independent and distinct field of research, with the 'old prejudices' such as allegations of plagiarism, distortion, bias, and unoriginality, subsiding gradually.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the discipline of late antiquity. The polarisation between ecclesiastical Christianity and theology on the one hand, with secular Classical history on the other, is increasingly perpetuated in modern critical thinking.<sup>41</sup> Few works with a Christian agenda from the period of late antiquity have been valued as literary products of the past, with most studied either for their content of Christian dogma and theology, or to facilitate the task of recreating and documenting the past.<sup>42</sup> This is one contributing factor to the general critical neglect of the *Historiae*. Another originates from the

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<sup>36</sup> Paschoud, (1967), p. 277; p. 291.

<sup>37</sup> Al. Cameron, (1977), p. 12; Jones, (1964), vol. 2, p. 1025.

<sup>38</sup> Starr, (1966), p. 28; Robinson, (1912), pp. 165-6.

<sup>39</sup> Hay, (1977), p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Simpson, (2013), p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> For example, this division dominates the argument in a recent article by Mark Vessey. See particularly Vessey, (2010), p. 269, quoting Walsh (1982), p. 686. The divide is briefly recognised by Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> See Marrou's valuation of the *Historiae* as an example of the latter. Marrou, (1970), p. 64.

scientific, technical assessment of the text by traditional historians who perceive only the flawed inaccuracies of the *Historiae*. Connected to this tendency is the generic misunderstanding of the work, which generates scholarly misinterpretation and contempt about the true nature and value of the *Historiae*. Peter Van Nuffelen suggests that the *Historiae* is stigmatised as an inadequate assessment of contemporary time; the optimism of the text jars with a conventional view of the Roman west in the fifth century: 'It is the tragedy of Orosius that the green shoots of the stabilization of Roman power, which lend his vision some credibility, were soon swept away, leaving his optimism destitute.'<sup>43</sup> Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet observes that just as access to the *Historiae* was improved with Karl Zangemeister's edition in 1882, so interest in the text diminished. He argues that Orosius was a victim of history in that the *Historiae* abbreviated sources that were almost all transmitted in their complete state, and Orosius's ideas suffered from systematic comparison with Augustine, from which Orosius emerges as a less intelligent and unfaithful disciple. Arnaud-Lindet also notes the complex and difficult nature of the text as a deterrent to valuable research.<sup>44</sup>

## 0.6 Orosius's Legacy

The problematic critical approach is paradoxically exacerbated by the significance of the *Historiae* and the impact of the legacy left by Orosius; tracing the influence back through time and texts is an enormous and intimidating task that crosses the geographic and periodic boundaries of disciplines, from ancient and classical history, to late antiquity, to the middle ages and through the early modern period. It is therefore unsurprising that so few academics have engaged with this reception history. The topic is far too large and important to be treated properly in this Introduction; many PhD theses could be devoted to the subject. Briefly, the *Historiae* became a standard reference work on antiquity for the medieval world.<sup>45</sup> The authority of the text was established by Pope Gelasius in AD 494, who describes the *Historiae* as an 'indispensable text', and by Gennadius in his continuation of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, who depicts Orosius as 'a man most eloquent and learned in history.'<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>45</sup> Recognised by Fear, (2010), p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> Gelasius, 4: ...Item Orosium uirum eruditissimum collaudamus quia ualde nobis necessariam aduersus paganorum calumnias dignam ordinauit historiam miraque breuitate contexuit... Gennadius, *De viri illustribus*: Orosius presbyter, Hispanus genere, uir eloquens et historiarum cognitor...

textual influence of the *Historiae* begins in the same century with Fulgentius the mythographer and grammarian, a near contemporary of Orosius, who relied heavily on the *Historiae*.<sup>47</sup> Although the date of composition is debated, the anonymous *Origo constantini* relied heavily on the *Historiae*, inserting quotations from the text to make Christian what was otherwise pagan history.<sup>48</sup> Orosius's impact is discernible in Jordanes, writing in the sixth century, and extends to Gregory of Tours, Gildas, Isidore of Seville, Bede, Paul the Deacon, Otto of Freising, Peter Abelard, Honorius of Autun, John of Salisbury, Ranulf Higden, and Petrarch.<sup>49</sup> According to Arnaud-Lindet, at least two hundred and seventy-five manuscripts of the *Historiae* survive, the oldest dating from the sixth century.<sup>50</sup> The text was translated into Old English in the ninth century, into Arabic in the tenth century, and eventually Aragonese and Castilian.<sup>51</sup> The geographical description of the world which opens the *Historiae* was circulated separately, and was considered to be authoritative throughout the middle ages.<sup>52</sup> Orosius's name appears on the mappa mundi at Hereford Cathedral, and the influence of the *Historiae* can be discerned within the early twelfth century *De imagine mundi*. Orosius is given a starring role in Dante's *Paradiso*, and his influence is traceable within the writings of Machiavelli. Even the great work of Edward Gibbon betrays more than a hint of Orosius's philosophy, a connection which has previously passed unrecognised.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See Whitbread, (1971). On Fulgentius, see Hays, (2000), (2001), (2002), (2003), (2007).

<sup>48</sup> Lieu and Monserrat suggest the interpolation of Orosius's work into the *Origo constantini* as taking place directly following the completion (and publication?) of the *Historiae*: 'There is little doubt that the parallel passages are taken from Orosius' work by a later redactor to give what was a pagan work the much needed Christian garb, probably in the reign of Constantius III (417–421) at a time when there was much anti-pagan polemic.' Lieu and Monserrat, citing Barnes, suggest a date close to the death of Constantine in AD 337 for the composition of the original work. Barnes, (1989), p. 161. Lieu and Monserrat, (1996), p. 40. Zecchini is inclined to date the composition of the *Origo* immediately following the composition of Orosius's *Historiae* during the reign of Constantius III in AD 421. Zecchini, (1993), p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> See Marrou, (1970), pp. 86-7 for a brief discussion of Otto's use of Orosius.

<sup>50</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), p. lxxvii; p. lxx. See also Ross, (1955); Bately and Ross, (1961).

<sup>51</sup> See Roberts and Nelson, (1997); Bately, (1980); Smyth, (1995). For the *Historiae* in the Arabic tradition, see Penelas, (2001a), (2001b); Christys, (2002); Sahner, (2013); Daiber, (1986). Bernard Lewis has argued that it was the first and only translation of a western European work into Arabic until the sixteenth century. Lewis, (1957), p. 415; (1961), p. 34. Franz Rosenthal understands that it was the only piece of ancient historiography to have appeared completely in Arabic. Rosenthal, (1952) p. 72. For the Castilian and Aragonese translations, see Léglu, (2010), p. 78.

<sup>52</sup> See Merrills, (2005), pp. 35-99.

<sup>53</sup> For explicit recourse to Orosius within his defence against the accusation of plagiarism, see Gibbon, (1961).

## 0.7 The Orosian Renaissance

Despite the sporadic critical recognition of the significance of the *Historiae*, as Peter Van Nuffelen has recently observed, the *Historiae* is a text in need of continual revision.<sup>54</sup> Although there have been periodic revivals in scholarly interest in the *Historiae*, a comprehensive and sustained rehabilitation of the text and its place within ancient historiography has not yet been achieved. But with the recent renaissance in Orosian studies, it is hoped that the text will once again be brought back to the attention of sensible research and given meaningful consideration.<sup>55</sup> The resurgence of critical attention began in the early 1990's with the publication of a critical edition of the *Historiae* in three volumes by Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet.<sup>56</sup> The Latin text and French translation is annotated with footnotes, and the Introduction provides a good foundation for understanding the *Historiae*, discussing the biography of Orosius, Augustine's instruction for composition, the sources used, and the structure of the text, as well as the manuscript transmission. Useful appendices collect other works by Orosius, contemporary textual mention of him, and the earliest textual reception of the *Historiae*, as well as collating in table-form the sources Orosius used. A. T. Fear's translation of the *Historiae* published in 2010 follows in the tradition of Arnaud-Lindet and Roy Deferrari, producing an updated translation with a solid and useful introduction.<sup>57</sup> Peter Van Nuffelen's monograph, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History*, published in 2012, is a valuable contribution to the study of Orosius. Van Nuffelen engages seriously with the text, and re-contextualises it within late antique historiography, a tradition which Van Nuffelen perceives as fully continuous with that of 'classical' antiquity.<sup>58</sup> Finally Brenda Deen Schildgen's work of comparative analysis brings together research on the Bible, Virgil, Orosius, Augustine and Dante within the theme of divine providence. Deen Schildgen acknowledges Orosius as the creator of the theory of divine providence

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<sup>54</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 1. In contrast to the stinging critical proscriptions already noted, Merrills has recommended that Orosius should be regarded not only alongside Sallust, Eusebius and Jerome, but should be viewed together with Holy Scripture as 'a cornerstone of medieval Christian historiography.' Merrills, (2005), p. 35. Croke understands that Orosius is 'no longer seen as a desperate compiler but as a clear-minded and skilful scholar who extended the achievement of Eusebius by connecting the Romans into Christianity and wider history.' Croke, (2007), p. 575. Lacroix describes Orosius as a pioneer of the philosophy of the history of the west in the fifth century. Lacroix, (1965), p. 189.

<sup>55</sup> See Lippold, (1976), p. xlvii, who sees a renaissance in an earlier period of history.

<sup>56</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990).

<sup>57</sup> See Leonard, (2010), for a more detailed review. See also Fear, (2005); (2010) for more research on Orosius.

<sup>58</sup> See Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 1; p. 24. See Leonard, (2014) for a more detailed review.

in human history.<sup>59</sup> She explores the idea of providential history in a variety of texts and authors, focusing attention on Orosius, Augustine, and Dante. For Deen Schildgen Orosius and Augustine adopt conflicting approaches to the intervention of the divine in history, whilst Dante subscribes directly to Orosius's philosophy. Whereas Van Nuffelen's monograph is succinct and detailed, Deen Schildgen's work broadens out the study of Orosius, giving constructive consideration to ideas originating with Orosius and their later reception.

The recent dynamism within Orosian scholarship should not suggest a complete lack or negation of research conducted in the twentieth century; German, Spanish, French and Italian scholarship all have strong traditions of research on Orosius and the *Historiae*. But somehow the field lacks cohesiveness and focus. Scholars seem unaware of relevant research, perhaps because of problems of access or language, leading to the repetition of material, with few works of sustained research produced and little progression made. Nevertheless there is a considerable modern bibliography on Orosius and the *Historiae*, encompassing many different angles of approach, the comprehension of which is a daunting task for any scholar embarking on the topic. Important contributions in German were made by Hans-Werner Goetz in the 1980s, as well as Reinhart Herzog.<sup>60</sup> Adolf Lippold's Italian edition and translation of the *Historiae*, first published in 1976 and now in its fourth edition, is comparable in significance to Arnaud-Lindet's translation.<sup>61</sup> Eugenio Corsini, Fabrizio Fabbrini, and Antonio Marchetta all produced lengthy volumes in Italian from the late sixties to the late eighties, works which are occasionally referenced but not used to their full potential.<sup>62</sup> This critical approach is echoed within Spanish and French scholarship, with Casimiro Torres Rodríguez and Benoît Lacroix cited with most frequency, but Yves Janvier's exploration of Orosius's geography rarely used.<sup>63</sup> François Paschoud's research on Orosius within his *Roma*

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<sup>59</sup> Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Goetz, (1980a) (1980b); Herzog, (1980). See also Diesner, (1963); Werner, (1987); Lippold, (1969) (1971); Daiber, (1986); Alonso-Núñez, (1993) (2005); Meier, (2011); Cobet, (2009); Tanz, (1983); and Brandt, (2009).

<sup>61</sup> Lippold, (1976). See also Lippold, (1969); (1971). See Sánchez Salor, (1982), for the most recent Spanish translation.

<sup>62</sup> Corsini, (1968); Fabbrini, (1979); and Marchetta, (1987). For more research in the Italian tradition, see Polichetti, (1999); Bartalucci, (1976); Santini, (1978); Sordi, (1990), (2003); Martelli, (1982); Cesa, (2003); Cobellini, (1984); Firpo, (1983); and Marcone, (2002).

<sup>63</sup> Torres Rodríguez, (1955) (1971) (1985); Lacroix, (1965); Janvier, (1982). For further research in Spanish, see Escribano Paño, (1996), (2007); Mir, (1978); Salvo, (2008); Rábade Navarro, (1991); Martínez Caverio, (1994), (2002).

*Aeterna* is similarly significant but not seemingly made full use of.<sup>64</sup> Smaller pockets of research in English have again made important contributions but have not participated in an international dialogue on Orosius which transgresses boundaries of language, genre, and approach: Mommsen's important articles published in the 1950s have not been adequately integrated into subsequent research, and recent work on the geographical aspect of the *Historiae* which takes a broad and dynamic approach like Alfred Hiatt, Andy Merrills, Natalia Lozovsky and Mark Humphries has again seemingly reached its conclusion without transforming the field of Orosian studies.<sup>65</sup> Similarly isolated pockets of brilliance like Susan Wessel's analysis of the *Historiae* within her monograph on Leo the Great, J. G. A. Pocock's sensible discussion of Orosius and Augustine, and Donald Wilcox's exploration of the temporal element in the *Historiae* are intellectually significant but have lacked critical impact.<sup>66</sup>

### 0.8 Existing Criticism and Current Research

This thesis cannot hope individually to reverse the trend of critical fragmentation in the field of Orosian studies. The protracted and laborious process to challenge and transform embedded scholarly stereotypes can only be achieved by systematic, reliable and quality research conducted over a sustained period. But this thesis can contribute to the process, most importantly through serious engagement with the *Historiae* as a valuable and meaningful object of research, avoiding value judgements and moving away from the negativity of past criticism which felt obliged to articulate the success or failure of the work. This doctoral research began with an increased awareness of and the necessity for critical objectivity, and to question conventional 'truths' about Orosius and the *Historiae*; the recycling of secondary criticism without independent research has undoubtedly damaged the field. Mistakes and misconceptions have arisen from taking material out of context, disregarding authorial purpose, or simply ignoring the conceptual approaches, methods and techniques which lay beneath Orosius's representation of historical reality. It is endlessly disappointing to encounter new (or old) critical works of literature with fresh anticipation, only to discover a gaping

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<sup>64</sup> Paschoud, (1967). See also Paschoud, (1980).

<sup>65</sup> Hiatt, (2005); Merrills, (2005); Lozovsky, (2000); Humphries (2007).

<sup>66</sup> Wessel, (2008); Pocock, (2003); Wilcox, (1987).

absence where the chapter, section or even paragraph on Orosius should be.<sup>67</sup>

Disregarding the contents page, and turning instead to the index, it is invariable to search in vain in between ‘Origen’ and ‘Orpheus’ for Orosius’s name. This thesis is not an attempt to subvert the canon and squeeze Orosius in between the pillars of the Patristic canon; it is about ignorance and absence, of poor-quality scholarship that, in eliding the existence of the *Historiae*, does not adequately comprehend the literary context of the late fourth and early fifth centuries.

## 0.9 Introducing the Thesis

In every stage of composition the thesis was directed by close textual analysis of the *Historiae*. The lack of a research agenda, at least in the initial stages of research, allowed my findings and conclusions about the text to direct my argument and ideas. The direction and argument of the thesis was in some senses self-generating, evolving spontaneously from recurrent reading of the *Historiae*. The themes of divine providence and imperial authority which dominate the text shifted into the foreground through the process of analysis, allowing the composition of the thesis driven by the content of the work rather than existing assumptions about what the *Historiae* is or what I expected to find. This thesis asks fundamental questions about Orosius's most (in)famous work: what is the text? How can it be explained? Where does it belong? What is it trying to do? My analysis attempted to comprehend the text, to grasp its themes and contours, to find the original authorial purpose, and analyse the result. This methodology produced a thesis in six chapters. The thesis can be most usefully thought of as divided into three simple sections: What it is, What it does, What it means. These questions refer to the text and reflect the broad interrogative impulse behind the research contained within the the respective sections. Part One approaches the *Historiae* from a general but intensely analytical perspective, deconstructing the more tangible aspects of the text such as the title, the system of dating, the reader, the opponent, and the narrative voice. The first two chapters are a result of the attempt to return to first principles, probing and scrutinizing at a level rarely reached by other critics. Chapter One most represents the initial impulse of deconstruction; the Chapter begins by exploring what the text is through the title, how Orosius perceived the *Historiae*, and the reception of the text

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<sup>67</sup> One example being G. R. Evans, *The First Christian Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Church* (2004). See Contents page, under Part V, ‘The Maturing of Early Christian Theology in the East and West’, where Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine all have chapters devoted to them.

from ancient to modern times through the title. The Chapter then examines the categorisation of the *Historiae* and gives the text consideration as a *breviarium*, especially following the example of Eutropius's *Breviarium* of Roman history. In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and function of the text the focus of the Chapter then expands to consider the audience written for and the opponent written against. The efforts of the text to enhance its own value through self-endorsement and claims of superiority are also examined. The final section studies the construction of the narrative voice and the self-assertions of the text and its methodology.

Chapter Two focuses on the temporal structure of the *Historiae*, examining how Orosius built a framework of time for his narrative in literal and figurative terms. Part One explores the philosophy of time developed in the text and how this facilitates the author's apologetic of the inexorable decline of empire with the exception of Rome, chosen as the ultimate Christian empire for the continuation of time. Part Two looks at the numerous dating systems the *Historiae* exploits which divide and structure the text, particularly *Ab urbe condita* ('from the founding of the City'). This Chapter explores the choice of dating systems and how each scheme is invested with its own ideology. The Chapter argues that Orosius's innovation in terms of time and dating foregrounded later systems developed in the Middle Ages.

Part Two shifts in focus from the methodological intricacies of the text to the construction of Orosius's ideology which favours Roman imperial power but sanitized and Christianised, as embodied in the emperors Augustus and Theodosius. Chapter Three explores the role of Augustus in the *Historiae* and his portrayal as a peaceful builder of empires whose reign reflects the events of the Incarnation of Christ. The divine coincidence of the birth of Christ and the rise of Rome's empire is the crucial turning point of the work, where the apologetic design shifts from the misery of the Roman pagan world to the harmony of the Christian commonwealth. The Chapter begins by examining the imagery associated with Augustus, particularly that of the deity Janus and his temple in Rome, a key signifier of the martial state of the empire, with the gates open in times of war and closed during peace. The Chapter systematically investigates the creation of synchronism between Augustus and Christ, the most significant being the rise of Augustus to sole power echoing the Epiphany of Christ. Augustus is transformed from a belligerent general into an unwitting Christian through



miracles associated with him, the coincidence of the Epiphany, the titling of Augustus, and the census on which, according to Orosius, Christ was enrolled. The Chapter argues that Augustus is a mirror of Christ, a convenient embodiment of divine authority on earth despite the historical reality of the Christian religion and the pagan affiliation of Augustus.

Chapter Four is very much a continuation of the themes raised in Chapter Three, examining the consolidation of Roman imperial authority as divinely invested and governed by God in the emperor Theodosius. Theodosius represents the ideal of Christian rulership and is the ultimate hero of the *Historiae*. This Chapter argues that his reign functions as the consummation of the scheme which aligns Rome with Christianity, in the divinely-ordained emperor and his dynasty established in harmony with the Gothic barbarians settled within the fully Christian empire. Concentrating particularly on Book Seven, the Chapter begins by examining the inclusion and suppression of historical detail within the narrative of Theodosius. The Chapter then contrasts the Theodosian imperial model of authority with previous models of rulership such as Alexander the Great, and investigates how the portrayal of Theodosius builds upon earlier archetypes of Roman rule like Trajan. The Chapter considers Orosius's construction of legitimate authority, especially in relation to the usurper Maximus, before examining the idealised passivity of Theodosius which culminates in the trope of bloodless war. This Chapter concludes with a consideration of Theodosius and the place of the barbarian in the *Historiae* and the western Roman empire in the late fourth and early fifth century.

With Part Three the approach again changes to give close textual attention to the broad apologetic of the text, examining two topics that come closest to the visceral core of the *Historiae* in Orosius's response to attack and defence of Christianity: the contrast of the past with the present, and the sack of Rome. Chapter Five focuses on warfare and apologetics, exploring Orosius's subversion of the traditional value and glorification of warfare and the condemnation of the hegemony of empire which is always achieved through subordination of others. The Chapter begins by considering Orosius's apologetic comparison of the past with the present where human history in pre-Christian times was blighted by the affliction of war. Giving particularly analytic attention to Book Five, this Chapter investigates how Orosius presents a revisionist version of history where warfare and belligerence are not celebrated; instead the slaughter,

violence, enslavement, and tragedy of war is revealed, specifically through the statistics of the casualties of war. In the final section the Chapter seeks to demonstrate that the critique of war and empire was part of a developing and innovative post-colonial discourse in the *Historiae*, but one that was swiftly curtailed with the interweaving of Christianity with imperial authority in the Roman empire, reconciling the difficulty of empire in the creation of a universal and peaceful Christian commonwealth.

The final Chapter explores the sack of Rome, the catalyst and crucible that prompted the composition of the text, and the event that determines the treatment of all history. The Chapter begins by examining the theosophical system Orosius develops for rationalizing human sin which enables the location of the sack of Rome within that scheme.<sup>68</sup> The second half of the Chapter gives close investigation to the Gothic invasion as represented by Orosius and the various rhetorical strategies employed to reconcile the disaster within the text. The survival of Rome is emphasized, and the fate of the city avoiding destruction is attributed to Christianity. The mercy of God and the mildness of the sack are clear when the invasion is considered within a relative historical context that encompasses all disasters, and more specific comparison is made with the Gallic sack of 390 BC. The Chapter explores how Orosius attempts to minimize the catastrophe as well as shifting blame from Christian adherents to the pagan faithful. The Chapter deconstructs Orosius's version of the sack, disentangling the reworked narrative of Marcella taken from Jerome's *Epistula* 127. The Chapter investigates the function of the sack as a narrative tool and considers how Orosius transforms the event from a damaging episode in the history of the Christian west to a powerful moment of purification, altering the fateful course of Rome according to the divine favour of God. The Conclusion finally draws all the elements of thesis together and reiterates the main argument.

### **0.10 Thesis: Reasoning and Objective**

This study bears the title 'Imperial Authority and the Providence of Monotheism' for a number of reasons. The title indicates the extended focus on Orosius's conceptualisation and narration of history through secular government, from which finally evolves the unique authority of the Roman empire. The imperial authority of Rome is bound tightly

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<sup>68</sup> Theosophy here pertains broadly to the conception of humanity and the divine.

with Christianity, but a specific version of Christianity, characterised by a complete absence of doctrine, an institutionalised system of faith and worship, and the established authority of the Church. A concern with Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy arguably underlies the *Historiae*, but it is in broad terms that these issues are most evident, notably in the Christian imperative of complete devotion to Jesus Christ and God, and participation within the universal Christian commonwealth. Although the association between Christianity and the Roman empire is the fundamental imperative behind the *Historiae*, the synchronisation is presented as a consequence of the omnipotent power of God and divine providence which works ceaselessly throughout all time and space. This thesis addresses the critical gap in modern criticism that either disdainfully dismisses or superficially treats the Orosian synchronisation of imperial Rome with Christianity. The providential coincidence has been derided by Robert Markus as a 'ubiquitous' cliché, and even for a scholar like Erik Peterson where the idea forms the central point of his research, Orosius's contribution is given cursory attention.<sup>69</sup> Certainly it is true that the idea did not originate with Orosius; in this regard the historian can be seen as a direct successor of Eusebius.<sup>70</sup> Except that Eusebius's vision of Roman imperial authority was limited only to one holy and haloed emperor, Constantine. His vision of a Christian Roman empire was spatially and temporally static, beginning and ending with Constantine.<sup>71</sup> By contrast, Orosius envisions the entire genealogy of Rome's imperial leaders as Christian or with Christian intent, with notable exceptions such as Valens or Nero, spectacular anomalies in the divine grand narrative of time. The emperor Augustus is not explicitly represented as a Christian, but behaves as a devoted adherent to God and Christ. Following Eusebius and Jerome, Philip the Arab celebrates Rome's first millennium as a Christian. The thesis, specifically Part Two, explores Orosius's

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<sup>69</sup> Markus, (1986), p. 37; p. 38. Peterson, (2011), p. 102.

<sup>70</sup> Critical recognition for Orosius's sustained and complex development of the concept in the *Historiae* is most frequently removed in the description of the idea simply as 'Eusebian'. See Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 206, for a brief critique.

<sup>71</sup> In the opening and closing of his *Vita constantini* Eusebius advocates the continuation of Constantine's policies through his three sons, and depicts Constantine as ruling from heaven after his death through his chosen heirs. Similarly see 4.68 for the providential and peaceful succession of Constantine's sons and their assumption of the title Augustus. However at strategic points Eusebius's representation of Christian imperial authority is limited only to Constantine, for example *Vita constantini* 1.4: 'This is also what God himself, whom Constantine honoured, by standing at Constantine's side at the beginning, the middle and the end of his reign, confirmed by his manifest judgement, putting forward this man as a lesson in the pattern of godliness to the human race. As the only one of the widely renowned Emperors of all time whom God set up as a huge luminary and loud-voiced herald of unerring godliness, he is the only one to whom God gave convincing proofs of the religion he practised by the benefits of every kind which were accorded him'. In his panegyric Eusebius has to manage the difficult political reality of the unstable succession following Constantine's death, but in his rhetoric he wants to depict Constantine as a unique and uniquely-favoured ruler.

complex approach to imperial authority when combined with Christianity, as well as the treatment of imperial pre-existing 'pagan' affiliation. Orosius establishes a hierarchy of emperors, crowned by Theodosius, the natural successor to Augustus. Other Christian emperors and even Christian usurpers such as Magnus Maximus rank closely below, but Constantine is strangely obscure. Pagan emperors to whom Orosius is positively predisposed such as Trajan and Hadrian come next, with heretical Christian emperors like Valens fairing badly, and the abominable persecuting emperors like Decius and Nero languishing at the bottom.

Imperial authority is the construct through which history is told; divine providence is the process in which history happens; and monotheism is the progression, almost verb-like, from fractious political diversity and polytheism to a eventual reduction to the one, that is, one God, one (imperial) ruler; one Christian religion, and one Christian commonwealth, which is conveniently universal. With the accession of Augustus and the beginning of Rome's empire, the complexion of time shifts away from the disasters of the past, following an upward trajectory of progress and optimism that culminates with Theodosius and the sack of Rome, the event which effectively cleanses the city (and the empire) of the last remnants of paganism. Orosius's version of Christian monotheism is strongly providential; this constitutes the dominant theme of the *Historiae*. Monotheism is certainly a key concept, and yet it is treated explicitly by Orosius briefly and only within his argument against polytheism.<sup>72</sup> This thesis will therefore not explore the theological, philosophical, or doctrinal implications of monotheism in late antiquity, or even monotheism within paganism, in order to reflect Orosius's engagement with monotheism in the *Historiae*, which is limited to the religious and the political. Similarly my treatment of divine providence is not theological or comparative, exploring instead the practical implications of the influence of God on history, as presented by Orosius.<sup>73</sup> Although Part Two focuses on imperial authority examined through the emperors Augustus and Theodosius, this thesis has not dedicated individual chapters to divine providence or monotheism. Such chapters would risk stolidity and monotony; these themes pervade and direct the entire text, an approach reflected in the methodology of the thesis.

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<sup>72</sup> See the opening of Book Six, 6.1.1-13.

<sup>73</sup> For recent thinking on providence from a philosophical perspective, see Lloyd, (2008).

## 0.11 Methodological Considerations

The thesis has used Arnaud-Lindet's modern critical edition with French translation of the *Historiae*.<sup>74</sup> Arnaud-Lindet reproduces with some modification the first critical edition of the *Historiae* completed by Karl Zangemeister and published in 1882.<sup>75</sup> Latin quotations with accompanying page numbers and volume numbers contained in brackets within the main body of the thesis are to this edition. Quotations where no author is specified are to Orosius's *Historiae*. The thesis has used the English translation of the *Historiae* by R. J. Deferrari, and page numbers accompanying English quotations are to this edition.<sup>76</sup> On occasion the English translation has been slightly improved or adjusted. Where an alternative English translation has been preferred, such as A. T. Fear's, the exception is made evident and is discussed in the footnotes.<sup>77</sup> Both the Latin and English of all quotations is provided, either in the thesis proper or in the footnotes. Due to the heavy burden of the footnotes other ancient texts and translations are referred to by the author and ancient title in the main body of the thesis with full details of the edition and translation given in the Bibliography. Existing English translations of Latin and Greek texts have relied upon where possible, with exceptional own translations indicated in the footnotes. The thesis has not used abbreviations of any modern or ancient source. This decision was taken with two obstacles in mind: one, that a standardised list of abbreviations with full details does not exist. And two, modern scholarship, at least in the field of late antiquity, often uses abbreviations of ancient texts but neglects to provide the full details. This risks alienating the unfamiliar reader and restricting the accessibility of the research, both of which I am keen to avoid. On occasion a Latin quotation from the *Historiae* has been integrated directly into the body of the thesis. Where this has occurred an English translation has been given either preceding the Latin quotation or immediately following to clarify meaning as the Latin case has not been changed; the Latin quoted is always exactly as it appears in the *Historiae*.

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<sup>74</sup> M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose. Histoires (Contre les Païens)*, 3 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990).

<sup>75</sup> K. Zangemeister, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 5 (Vienna: C. Geroldi Filium Bibliopolam Academiae, 1882), reprinted by Teubner (1889). See Arnaud-Lindet's comment on the Latin text in his edition, vol. 1, pp. xcvi-xcvii, particularly p. xcvi. See vol. 1, pp. xciv-xcvi, for Arnaud-Lindet's discussion of Zangemeister's edition.

<sup>76</sup> R. J. Deferrari, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans, The Fathers of the Church*, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964).

<sup>77</sup> A. T. Fear, *Orosius. Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

## 0.12 Terminology

The terms BC ('Before Christ') and AD (*Anno domini*) have been used throughout, as opposed to BCE ('Before the Common Era') and CE ('Common Era'). Both terms are exact equivalents and to use BCE and CE continues to centralise the birth of Christ as a point of temporal reference but veiled in a cloak of secularity. This thesis has endeavoured to avoid entanglement in critical debates surrounding terminology relevant to the study of late antique religion and culture, such as 'pagan', 'Christian', 'barbarian', 'apology', 'history' and 'polemic'. My conception of apology especially is very broad.<sup>78</sup> Where I use the terms 'apologetic' or 'polemic', these are in the sense of Orosius's argument, in the attempt to discern the ideology behind his history. I have deliberately not engaged with either terms as genres, and I have not located the *Historiae* within an apologetical or polemical context, comparing the *Historiae* to earlier works of apologetic or polemic. Despite the consequence of occasional intellectual dissonance, this thesis has determined to reflect the original Orosian use of labels extended to various sections of society. Although modern critical sensibilities perceive difficulties with terms like 'pagan' and 'barbarian', to offer alternatives within the thesis would be beyond the scope of the critic rather than author, and would obscure Orosius's deliberate categorisation, pejorative or not.<sup>79</sup> But such reflection does not have to be unthinking; for example, this thesis has chosen to perpetuate the exclusive designation of 'mankind' rather than 'humankind', as it more accurately reflects Orosius's meaning – he did not mean to include women, demonstrated by his particular and separate representations of the female at specific points.<sup>80</sup> Retaining Orosius's original terminology assists in the critique of the constructs within the *Historiae*, but does not signify that the pejorative aspect of Orosius's categorisation has been overlooked. Where discussion moves away from the *Historiae* existing terminology is not always supplemented or replaced in a desire to avoid confusion: to start using 'polytheist' rather than 'pagan' could indicate to the reader two different types of religious adherents, rather than disparity in ancient and modern language preference. This approach also reflects that the *Historiae* and other texts in the same period saw the crystallisation of language, a language that has been inherited and has proved hard to

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<sup>78</sup> For a more detailed and systematic approach, see Edwards, Goodman, Price, and Rowland (1999).

<sup>79</sup> For the construction of paganism in the *Historiae*, see 1.6.1-4. For modern discussion, see Al. Cameron, (2011), pp. 14-33; O'Donnell, (1977).

<sup>80</sup> See 3.1.1.1, p. 122, fn. 461, of the thesis for further discussion.

improve or replace. An awareness that the terminology of ‘pagan’ and ‘paganism’ are loaded Christian terms and have been thoroughly deconstructed and derided critically does not automatically mean that ideologically neutral terminology is available as an alternative. The propagation of original language indicates the focus of the thesis, not to reconstruct ancient religious groups like pagans or polytheists, but to engage with Orosius’s apologetic, which is driven by a fundamentalist version of late ancient Christianity, and which constructs other religious groups only to facilitate this apologetic. The fact and fiction in Orosius’s depiction of non-Christian religious groups is for another thesis entirely.

## 1. Orosius as a Writer of History

### Part One: Titles and Texts

#### 1.1.1 Introduction

Originating from a fundamental curiosity about the *Historiae* and the inadequacy of modern criticism to explain it, this Chapter asks essential questions about the nature of the *Historiae*. Conversely this Chapter does not always provide conclusive answers; this is not necessarily the objective of the thesis, and there is sometimes merit in acknowledging the limitation of scholarship to explain all problems or difficulties, and the simultaneous viability of multiple answers. Part One explores what the text is particularly through the title, how Orosius perceived the *Historiae*, and the reception of the text from ancient to modern times through the title. Without limitation to a specific section of the text, Part Two examines the categorisation of the *Historiae* within alternative genres, and gives the text consideration as a *breviarium*, especially in contrast to Eutropius's *breviarium* of Roman history. The claims to stylistic brevity as well as Orosius's choice of dating, aligned with and deviating from Eutropius's example, are investigated. In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and function of the text the focus of the Chapter then expands to consider the audience written for and the opponent written against. A variety of different readerships are postulated, including the individual Augustine, the universal reader, a Christian and a pagan reader. The question of audience raises the connected issue of opponent, and the Chapter explores the opposition to earlier pagan writers and the hostile process of subtle and explicit denigration where the Christian authority of the text disassociates itself from pagan historians. The efforts of the text to enhance its own value through self-endorsement and claims of superiority are also examined. The final section studies the construction of the narrative voice and the self-assertions of the text and its methodology. As much as this Chapter is concerned with genre, the topic is limited; it is a useful place to begin in the attempt to achieve a better appreciation of the text, but a resolution of the difficult question of genre is not the particular objective. Indeed, the *Historiae* is a text that resists categorisation and reduction, as the final part of the



Chapter demonstrates. This Chapter treats the *Historiae* as a work of historiographical innovation, and one that aligns many genres within one text. Each generic aspect requires a thorough consideration and contextualisation, a task beyond the scope of this Chapter or thesis, but an undertaking that is begun here.

### 1.1.2 What is the Text?

Despite the modern title of Orosius's work as *Historiae*, the text has been variously designated. The critical view that the work does not deserve the title of 'History' is common, being perceived as such a poor contribution to that genre.<sup>81</sup> Adversely it has been argued that the work is very much History, a genre which has been subdivided into World History, Church History, Universal History or Christian History.<sup>82</sup> The *Historiae* has also been considered within alternative categories, such as Apologetic, Theology, Rhetoric, Polemic, Chronology, Epitome, and even as a textbook.<sup>83</sup> A fundamental part of understanding the text is understanding what the text *is*.<sup>84</sup> The significance of this issue is two-fold: one aspect concerns expectation, another historical context.

Expectation is the critical expectation of finding what the text has been designated as and that the designation is accurate. In a more general sense the title, according to the literary theorist Gérard Genette, presents the text 'in the strongest sense' of the verb: 'to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book...' <sup>85</sup> The initial reception of the text is predetermined by the title. A thorough evaluation of the title is therefore necessary when considering the genre of the work. Secondly, an understanding of the text requires Orosius and the *Historiae* to be placed within their historical context, in

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<sup>81</sup> Matthews, (1989), p. 6; p. 597; Laistner, (1940), pp. 250-2; Pocock, (2003), pp. 80-1; Starr, (1966), p. 28; Clemoes, (1972), p. 129; Barnes, (1977), p. 229.

<sup>82</sup> History: Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 31-2; Pocock, (2003), pp. 80-1; Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 17. World History: Croke and Emmett, (1983), p. 3. Church History: Heinzelmann (2001), 105. Universal History: Bury, (1923), p. 306; Fear, (2010a), p. 182; Alonso-Núñez, (2005), p. 25; Markus, (1991), p. 492; Marrou, (1970), p. 76. Christian History: Fear, (2010b), pp. 7-8; Van Nuffelen, (2010), p. 164; Whitby, (2011), p. 363; Goetz, (1980), p. 12.

<sup>83</sup> Apologetic: Markus, (1970), p. 4; Hay, (1977), p. 31; Laistner, (1940), p. 250; Deferrari, (1964), p. xx. Theology: Markus, (1970), p. 162. Rhetoric: Clemoes, (1972), p. 129. Polemic: Barnes, (1977), p. 229; Clemoes, (1972), p. 129. Chronology: Christys, (2001), p. 135. Epitome: Burrow, (2007), p. 195; Collins, (1954), p. 71. Textbook: Matthews, (1967), p. 168; Croke, Emmett, (1983), p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Compare with Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 9: '...my approach to the *Historiae* is literary, that is, we need first to understand the form of the *Historiae* before we can grasp its content.'

<sup>85</sup> Genette, (1997), p. 1.

defining the text against other contemporary writings and Orosius against other writers of the late fourth and early fifth centuries.

### 1.1.3 Genre, Critical Approaches, and the *Historiae*

Frequently an opinion concerning the categorisation of the *Historiae* is plainly and unequivocally stated without explanation of how that view has been formulated, or without a consideration of other possibilities. In addition the text is either seemingly read selectively or not at all by those commenting on it. When discussing the text as an alternative to independent critical analysis standard rhetorical formulae are replicated in a brief excerpt of criticism regarding the *Historiae*.<sup>86</sup> The result is that Orosian studies are not advanced and stereotypes are repeated whilst being presented as factual. In-depth studies of the text are not only reasonably rare, but seem disconnected from thought on ancient history or late antiquity. A good example is J. G. A. Pocock's intelligent and sensitive discussion of Orosius which seems to have vanished into the academic ether and is rarely cited.<sup>87</sup> Why these works have failed to enter the critical consciousness is unclear. Perhaps the quality of works is perceived as not good enough; perhaps the language of these texts not always in English makes them less accessible; or perhaps attention being drawn towards the *Historiae* and Orosius meets resistance, especially when claims are made about the significance and impact of the text. It is more common to find the *Historiae* referred to not for its own intrinsic value but in a more piecemeal way, such as the information the text provides that is not substantiated in other sources, or the definitions the *Historiae* offers.<sup>88</sup> With the text briefly referred to and not discussed these semi-standard passages on the text are particularly common.

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<sup>86</sup> An example is the encyclopedia entry by Benfell, (2004), p. 801. Although it is arguable that the entry is technically accurate it replicates much of the standard thought on Orosius using the prevailing language. The entry is too lengthy to include here, as is the analysis required to demonstrate in detail what is problematic about it. But briefly, the entry introduces Orosius through his birth specifically in Braga, for which there is only circumstantial evidence, his travels around the Mediterranean, the composition of the *Historiae* in conventional terms, and a much-repeated description of the reception history of the text. Similar criticisms can be raised against Rohrbacher's more detailed discussion of Orosius and the *Historiae*. See Rohrbacher, (2002), 135-149.

<sup>87</sup> Pocock, (2003). Further examples include: Goetz, (1980a), (1980b); Corsini, (1968); Fabbrini, (1979); Janvier, (1982); Lacroix, (1965); Marchetta, (1987); specific to time, Wilcox, (1987), pp. 119-153.

<sup>88</sup> See for example Barnes's discussion of the *Historiae* for the fragments of Tacitus's *Historiae* that it preserves. Barnes, (1977), esp. p. 229. See Markus (1990), p. 66, where Markus explores Orosius's definition of Monasticism; and O'Donnell's citation of Orosius's definition of 'paganus'. O'Donnell, (1977), p. 166.

A more nuanced and considered approach is necessary in order to progress thinking on Orosius and push the boundaries of knowledge concerning the *Historiae*.<sup>89</sup>

#### 1.1.4 Title and Genre

It has been argued that the paratext, defined as anything that is ‘beyond’ the text such as the title, author’s name, or preface, has a decisive impact on the reception of a text: ‘in reality [it] controls one’s whole reading of the text.’<sup>90</sup> The significance of titles, as well as their critical neglect, is recognised by Alastair Fowler: ‘Titles have received little critical attention. This is unfortunate, in view of their importance in modern literature, where, as Wayne Booth says, “they are often the only explicit commentary the reader is given.”’<sup>91</sup> The issue of genre therefore begins with the title. It appears that Orosius’s work is most commonly designated as a History primarily because of the title of the work, which is itself contested. Arnaud-Lindet interpreted the address to Augustine contained in the Prologue as the inspiration for the subtitle *adversus paganos*, which has generally been taken up by modern editors as the title: ‘D’autres sous-titres, s’inspirant de l’adresse à Augustin continue dans la préface, rappellent sa finalité première: ainsi celui qui a été généralement repris par les éditeurs modernes: (*aduersum*) *paganos*, <Contre les païens>’.<sup>92</sup> If this is the case, what is meant by ‘modern editors’? When was this addition made and when did it become the standard title? Did Orosius compose the work without giving it a title? Lacroix understands that the title clearly indicates that Orosius was writing against the pagans, the same pagans that Augustine wrote to counter in *De civitate Dei*.<sup>93</sup> A. H. Merrills draws the conclusion that the full title of the work indicates Orosius’s intended audience, that he created his work for a pagan readership.<sup>94</sup> However this argument is only tenable if the title was contemporary with the creation of the work and not a later insertion. Theodore Mommsen adopts a similar

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<sup>89</sup> A process which has perhaps begun with the publication of A. T. Fear’s English translation of the *Historiae* in 2010, Peter Van Nuffelen’s monograph *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* in 2012, and Brenda Deen Schildgen’s work, *Divine Providence: A History. the Bible, Virgil, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante* in 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Genette, (1997), p. 1, quoting Lejeune, (1975), p. 45: “a fringe of printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text”. ‘...sur cette frange du texte imprimé, qui, en réalité, *commande* toute la lecture’.

<sup>91</sup> Fowler, (1982), p. 92. No forwarding reference is given to ‘Wayne Booth’ in a footnote or in the bibliography.

<sup>92</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, pp. xiv-xv. Lippold also refers to ‘*adversus paganos*’ as a subtitle, comparing it to Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*. Lippold, (1976), p. xxv, fn. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Lacroix, (1965), p. 45. See also Lippold (1952), p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Merrills, (2005), p. 40. See Van Nufflen, (2012), p. 16.

interpretation: ‘Orosius’ very title, *The Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, makes clear his audience and his purpose. His book is an “Apology” in the conventional sense.<sup>95</sup> But if the title makes clear the purpose of the text its principal purpose is History not Apology, returning us to the connected issue of title, paratext, and genre.

### 1.1.5 Titles in Antiquity

The title of the *Historiae* raises a more general question of titular designation in antiquity. It seems that works were not automatically given a title by the author, and could be instead referred to using broad and interchangeable names.<sup>96</sup> With frequency of use and time certain names became permanent, eventually providing modern titles. Like Orosius, it seems that Augustine did not name his *magnum opus et arduum* (‘long and arduous work’) with a specific title.<sup>97</sup> The modern title ‘*De civitate Dei*’ appears to be a later addition taken from the Prologue to the second book, where Augustine explains that the ‘City of God’ is ‘the subject of the whole of this work’.<sup>98</sup> Similarly Bede’s text on chronology was known by medieval readers as *De temporibus* or *De temporibus liber secundus*, but its conventional modern title, *De temporum ratione*, or *The Reckoning of Time*, seems to be derived from the Prologue of the book.<sup>99</sup> It has been suggested that the original title of the *Historia Augusta* was *de Vita Caesarum* or *Vitae Caesarum*, with the familiar modern title originating from the early seventeenth century and the editor Isaac Casaubon.<sup>100</sup> Arnobius’s Apology, composed in the early fourth century, has two titles: *adverses Gentes* and *adversus Nationes*. The former is used by Jerome, the latter is taken from a subscription at the end of the second book, ‘The second book of Arnobius *adversus Nationes* ends’.<sup>101</sup> That the familiar title

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<sup>95</sup> Mommsen, (1959b), p. 336.

<sup>96</sup> Eadie, (1967), p. 11: ‘...titles often were supplied by medieval scribes for purposes of reference and/or cataloguing.’ Eadie argues that a title should only be applied when it is authenticated by an ancient reference, or when the best manuscripts provide a title. According to Roemer, papyrus rolls usually had titles which were written at the end of the text. Roemer, (2007), p. 86. Fowler suggests that naming titles for a text is a comparatively recent practice: ‘Medieval titling was commonly by incipit or opening phrase. In any case, authorial responsibility for titling began in effect with print. Before that, “titles” were given by commentators, editors, or scribes.’ Fowler, (1982), p. 92

<sup>97</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 1.1.

<sup>98</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 2.2.

<sup>99</sup> Wallis, (1990), p. xvi. Bede, *De temporum ratione*, Prologue: *De natura rerum et ratione temporum duos quondam stricto sermone libellos discentibus ut rebar necessarios composui*. ‘Some time ago I wrote two short books in a summary style which were, I judged, necessary for my students; these concerned the nature of things and the reckoning of time’.

<sup>100</sup> Magie, (1923), p. xi.

<sup>101</sup> Arnobius, (1871), pp. xviii-xix. The translators of the 1871 edition concluded in their introduction that ‘the copyist would hardly have gone so far astray, while it is quite possible that Jerome did not attempt to

*Historiae adversus paganos* derives from Orosius's Prologue, where the author is requested to speak '*adversus pagani*', is not unusual in comparison with the designation and transmission of other texts from antiquity.<sup>102</sup> Significantly what the title tells the reader is not how Orosius saw the text, but how later readers interpreted it.

### 1.1.6 Titles in the Modern Era - *Historia*, *Historiae*, or *Historiarum*?

The evolution of the title of Orosius's work is not limited to antiquity – the multiplication of the title continues into the modern era. Although it will not be possible to conduct a comprehensive survey of all the modern editions and manuscripts of the text the issue can still be usefully discussed using a variety of examples. Modern editions do not agree on one title for the work, but in general terms the text is most frequently referred to in an abbreviated form as the *Historia adversus paganos*, reflected by many of the modern translations. I. W. Raymond's translation into English published in 1936 is entitled *Seven Books of History against the Pagans: the Apology of Paulus Orosius*. R. J. Deferrari's English translation published in 1964 is entitled *Paulus Orosius. The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*. Adolf Lippold's edition with Italian translation published in 1976 is entitled *Orosio. Le Storie Contro I Pagani*. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet's Latin edition with French translation published in the 1990's is entitled *Orose. Histoires (Contre les Païens)*. The Portuguese translation published in 2010 is entitled *História apologética: o livro 7 das histórias*

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do more than indicate generally the purpose of the book without quoting its title page, this must be the true title.' Arnobius, (1871), pp. xviii-xix. The equivocation rests on palaeographical deficiency as the first page of the existing manuscript is torn away.

<sup>102</sup> However this is not always the case. Paulinus of Pella intended that his work was to be clearly understood by the title which accompanied it: 'Therefore, if ever this little work of mine should come into the hands of any, from the very title prefixed to the book he ought clearly to understand that this my little musing, which I consecrate to God Almighty, is a gift to my leisure, rather than to another's pleasure; and that my prayer is rather that this my service, such as it is, may be accepted by God, than that my uncouth poem should win its way to the attention of the learned.' Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticos*, *Praefatio* 4. *Proinde si quando hoc opusculum meum in cuiusquam manus venerit, ex ipso libelli titulo praenotato evidenter debet advertere me hanc meditatuinculam meam, quam omnipotenti deo dedico, otio meo potius quam alieno negotio praestitisse, magisque id meorum esse votorum, ut hoc qualecumque obsequium meum acceptum deo sit, quam ut carmen incultum ad notitiam perveniat doctiorum.* For a further example of the transience of titles specific to Eutropius's *Breviarium*, see Eadie, (1967), p. 13. Aulus Gellius's *Noctes Atticae* gives a discussion of titling conventions, as well as explicitly titling his own work: 'But I, bearing in mind my limitations, gave my work off-hand, without premeditation, and indeed almost in rustic fashion, the caption of *Attic Nights*, derived merely from the time and place of my winter's vigils; I thus fall as far short of all other writers in the dignity too even of my title, as I do in care and in elegance of style.' *Praefatio* 10. *Nos vero, ut captus noster est, incuriose et inmediate ac prope etiam subrustice ex ipso loco ac tempore hibernarum vigiliarum Atticas noctes inscripsimus tantum ceteris omnibus in ipsius quoque inscriptionis laude cedentes, quantum cessimus in cura et elegancia scriptionis.*

*contra os pagãos*.<sup>103</sup> A. T. Fear's English translation published in 2010 is entitled *Orosius. Seven Books of History against the Pagans*.<sup>104</sup> The diversity of modern titles can be said to reflect the uncertainty and lack of conformity in the title throughout the reception history of the text. The more ancient title which is taken from manuscripts and early modern editions of the work is quite different: *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum Paganos libri VII*. This is the title preserved by Karl Zangemeister in what is now considered to be the standard edition of the work, first published in 1882. This contrasts considerably with the title *Historiae adversus paganos*; the presumed name of the author features prominently at the beginning of the title, and the genitive plural *historiarum* differs in meaning from the singular *historia*.

The inclusion of *Pauli Orosii* in the title *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum Paganos libri VII* alters the immediate perception of the text, highlighting the construction of Orosius as a literary figure and a Father of the Church, reinforcing his status alongside his contemporary Augustine. The association of the text with a name itself associated with figures like Augustine and Jerome perhaps helps to explain the popularity and survival of the work.<sup>105</sup> However the prominence of Orosius's name in the title contradicts the humility of the authorial voice in the Prologue, and the general anonymity of the text – nowhere in the work does Orosius refer to himself by name, and biographical details interpolated from the text are sketchy at best. That the text is most often colloquially referred to as the *Historia*, 'History', ignores the more accurate designation, *Historiarum*, 'of the Histories' or *Historiae*, 'Histories'. The pluralisation changes the conception of the text, emphasising the individual books of history that constitute a whole. Indeed, all seven books have an independent preface or introduction and a conclusion. In his review of A. T. Fear's translation, Michael C. Sloan interprets 'Histories' rather than 'History' in a different light, that the *Historiarum* in the title,

perpetuates the cyclical notion of history (the prevailing concept of time prior to Augustine's linearisation of history espoused in *The City of God* and subsequently received by Bede et al.) while pointing to Orosius' organisation of epochs according to two chronological structures outlined by F. [Fear] in the Introduction: the interpretation of the four kingdoms from the Book of Daniel and another four-fold schematic emphasising Rome as the centre of the world and Christianity's indubitable influence as an improving factor.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Farmhouse Alberto and Furtado, (2000).

<sup>104</sup> On Fear's translation, see Leonard, (2010).

<sup>105</sup> Supported by O'Loughlin, (1999b), p. 363.

<sup>106</sup> Sloan, (2011), p. 491.

Sloan's argument that there are multiple 'histories' within the text again has an important impact on how it should be understood. His idea that the title is designed to reflect the chronological organisation of the text, although far-reaching, is valid. While highlighting the multiplicity of titles can be considered pedantic as the main purpose of the title is to make clear which text is being referred to, it is nonetheless important to be accurate. That the title of Orosius's work remains fluid is not necessarily negative, but it is revealing of the original way in which the text was composed (or at least transmitted as being) potentially without a title given by the author. It illustrates how the text has been marked and moulded by copyists and editors throughout history, designating the text according to their interpretation rather than Orosius's.

### 1.1.7 Critical References to the *Historiae*

However it becomes evident when examining the immediate reception of the *Historiae* that the text was appreciated as a work of history. This is demonstrated by Gregory of Tours in the sixth century who cites Orosius's work as such: 'As the history of Orosius tells'.<sup>107</sup> Already in the fifth century Gennadius of Marseilles described Orosius as 'a man most eloquent and learned in history.'<sup>108</sup> Similarly Pope Gelasius I's Papal Bull of 494 declared that Orosius was '...a most erudite man, who wrote a very necessary history for us against the calumnies of the pagans and with marvellous brevity.'<sup>109</sup> According to Fabbrini, the *Historiae* became *the* model for historiography during late antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>110</sup> It is possible that the authority of Orosius as an historian generated confusion between the author's name and the title of the work. The translation of the *Historiae* into Old English in the ninth century traditionally attributed to king Alfred opens with a superscription, 'Here begins the book which men call Orosius', illustrating how Orosius's name was used as a title for the work.<sup>111</sup> The translation from the Old English published in 1773 does not give the work a

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<sup>107</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 1.6: *Et, sicut Orosius narrat historia.*

<sup>108</sup> Gennadius, *De viri inlustribus*, 39: *Orosius presbyter, Hispanus genere, uir eloquens et historiarum cognitor.*

<sup>109</sup> Gelasius, *Decretum Gelasianum*, 4.1: *...Orosium virum eruditissimum cinlaudamus, quia valde necessariam nobis adversus paganorum calumnias ordinavit historiam miraque brevitet contextuit.*

<sup>110</sup> Fabbrini, (1979), p. 10: 'Ed essa divenne un modello costante di storiografia, anzi a dir il vero "il modello" durante tutto il Tardo Impero, l'Alto e il Basso Medio Evo, come testimonia del resto ampiamente la tradizione manoscritta, una delle più ricche di tutta la storiografia dell'antichità (e nella quale la distanza tra l'originale e il primo manoscritto è brevissima).'

<sup>111</sup> Alfred (trans. by Barrington), (1773), p. 1.

recognisable title, but instead names it as *The Anglo-Saxon Version, from the Historian Orosius*. Within the Preface the translator records that,

I should not have thought it necessary to have said any thing with regard to the whimsical title of Hormesta, given to this history of Orosius, had I not adopted it from Mr. Elstob's Transcript of the Anglo-Saxon Version, which I have made use of in this publication.<sup>112</sup>

This confirms that *Historia adversus paganos* was not commonly acknowledged as a title at least in the Old English tradition up to the eighteenth century. Possibly the familiarity with Orosius's name created by his authority as an author meant that this was a preferential method of referring to the text.

### 1.1.8 The Text According to Orosius

Quentin Skinner has argued that an understanding of the original intention of the author is crucial to understanding the text:

...to understand a text must be to understand both the intention to be understood, and the intention that this intention should be understood, which the text itself as an intended act of communication must at least have embodied. The essential question which we therefore confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance. It follows that the essential aim, in any attempt to understand the utterances themselves, must be to recover this complex intention on the part of the author.<sup>113</sup>

In a narrower sense the author's intention for how the work was to be understood can be discerned by the language used to refer to the text *within the text*. In his research on Gregory of Tours Martin Heinzelmann has similarly understood the title as a clue to the genre of a work. Writing in the sixth century, Gregory used Orosius's *Historiae* as a source, occasionally making reference to the text.<sup>114</sup> Gregory recorded that he had written '...ten books of history, seven of miracles, one of the Life of the Fathers'.<sup>115</sup> Heinzelmann therefore concludes that:

[t]here is no longer any doubt that *Decem libri historiarum* or *Historiae* was the title wanted by the author, the correct title, and not *Historia ecclesiastica*, *Historia*

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<sup>112</sup> Alfred (trans. by Barrington), (1773), Preface, p. iv.

<sup>113</sup> Skinner, (1969), pp. 48-9. This analysis is counter-balanced by Goffart: 'It is risky to judge a book only by the description its author provides.' Goffart, (1988), p. 348.

<sup>114</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*: 1 *praefatio*; 1.6; 2 *praefatio*; 5 *praefatio*.

<sup>115</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 10.31: *Decem libros Historiarum, septem Miraculorum, unum de Vita Patrum scripsi*.



*Francorum* or some other such description given to the work during the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>116</sup>

This allows Heinzelmann to reach the conclusion that ‘Gregory wrote history and defined and introduced his work in the context of the historiographical genre of *historia* or *historiae*...Regardless of whether these technical terms were in the singular or in the plural, they both denoted an historical work.’<sup>117</sup> In contrast to Gregory’s explicit designation of the genre of his work, no such statement has reached us from Orosius, and it has been established that the title of Orosius’s work does not indicate if he intended the *Historiae* to be conceived of as ‘History’. Similarly Justin’s ‘Epitome’ of Pompeius Trogus is nowhere referred to in the text as an epitome; Orosius describes Justin as an epitomizer (*breviator*), and Justin states that he excerpted (*excerpsi*) material from Trogus.<sup>118</sup> The claim that Orosius referred to his work as History is not uncommon, but the author seems careful not to designate the text in such terms, at least where the reader could most expect to find such an occurrence.<sup>119</sup> This is where the ‘programmatic authorial statements’ arise, the markers of the historian’s voice, that are particularly evident in places like the Prologue.<sup>120</sup> But the narrative voice describes the *Historiae* in neutral categories, as *opus*, ‘a work’ (Prologue 8), *uoluminis*, ‘a book, roll’ (Prologue 10), and *operam*, ‘work’ (Prologue 13).<sup>121</sup> The text is deliberately referred to in ways that do not align the text to a genre and, in doing so, bound it by certain conventions. In this way Orosius avoided the obligation to conform to the expectations of writing History.

This research explores Orosius’s attitude to genre, what he thought he was doing in writing the *Historiae*, and what he thought the text was. Orosius’s rhetorical claim, or

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<sup>116</sup> Heinzelmann, (2001), p. 106. Compare with Croke, Emmett, (1983), p. 9: ‘Despite its [Gregory’s *Historia*] popular title, it is not a history of the Franks but of Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries in the context of world history.’

<sup>117</sup> Heinzelmann, (2001), p. 107.

<sup>118</sup> Orosius’s description of Justin as an epitomizer: 1.8.1, p. 25; 1.8.1, vol. 1, p. 49. Yardley, (1997), p. 15.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Laistner states that Orosius ‘professed to write history’, and interprets this as a justification for ‘appraising the historical worth of the book.’ Laistner, (1940), p. 251; p 252. Deen Schildgen understands that Orosius claimed to be writing history but does not accompany the statement with evidence: ‘Orosius claims to be writing history, and indeed, inventing western or Latin universal history he begins with a king of the Assyrians, Ninus, and follows a chronological order up to the Romans after the invasions of the early fifth century.’ Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 17.

<sup>120</sup> Bravo, Węcowski, (2004), p. 145.

<sup>121</sup> *opus*: Prologue 8, vol. 1, p. 7; ‘work’: Prologue 8, p.4. *uoluminis*: Prologue 10, vol. 1, p. 8; ‘book, roll’: Prologue 10, p. 4. *operam*: Prologue 13, vol. 1, p. 9; Deferrari translates *operam* not as ‘work’ but as ‘task’.

absence of one, to be writing history, what impact this has on the text, and the location of the *Historiae* within the context of history writing will also be examined. The intention here is not to reconstruct Orosius's conception of History and consider his own conformity to and deviation from that model. Partly this comes from a dissatisfaction with such a model, that literary works can be fitted so easily into ancient or modern categories. But also Orosius's notion of what History and a work of History was, if he had fixed ideas about this at all, is not available to us through the *Historiae*; no comment or mention is made. Similarly this research does not attempt a broader definition of what History writing was in the ancient world, as Brian Croke and Alanna Emmett have attempted to do using Lucian of Samosata's *How to Write History* as a starting point.<sup>122</sup> The genre of historical literature in antiquity was not governed by common conventions, as recognised by John Marincola:

It is not the case that these [the settled tendencies of the major surviving historical works] were universal procedures (we must not impose a specious uniformity on the historical works of the Romans), nor were other historical approaches necessarily deviant or invalid.<sup>123</sup>

For this reason this research will not try to reconstruct the fixed boundaries of the genre of history in the ancient world and apply them to the *Historiae* in order to determine the authenticity or not of the work as a piece of historical prose narrative. According to Lucian's model there is probably no text that fully deserves the title of 'History'.<sup>124</sup> Not providing a definition of history writing does not make this analysis any less meaningful. The *Historiae* is a text that particularly defies categorisation, and a new genre must be created for it in order that it is properly understood and received.

### 1.1.9 History and the *Historiae*: Self-references in the Text

Despite the way the text carefully makes reference to itself only as a work of literature and not as History in the Prologue, the text nevertheless locates itself within a historical

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<sup>122</sup> Croke and Emmett, (1983). p. 1

<sup>123</sup> Marincola, (2009), p. 16. See also Edwards, Goodman, Price and Rowland, (1999), p. 2, quoting Conte, (1994), p. 132: '...this view of genres, that they serve as a means of classification, has come to seem deeply unsatisfactory to literary critics. Genre should not be seen as a mechanical recipe-book for the production of texts, but rather as 'a discursive form capable of constructing a coherent model of the world in its own image'. Genre is thus best seen as a way of talking about the strategies of writers (and readers) in different cultural traditions and particular contemporary situations.'

<sup>124</sup> Lucian, *Quomodo historia conscribenda*. For an example of some of Lucian's ideals for the writing of history, see *Quomodo historia conscribenda* , 41.

context. The Prologue is characterised by a preoccupation with historical literature. Initially Orosius refers to his research methodology in writing the *Historiae*, as instructed by Augustine, to use ‘histories and annals’, *historiarum atque annalium*: ‘accordingly you bade me set forth from all the records available of histories and annals whatever instances I have found from the past...’<sup>125</sup> (Prologue 10, p. 4) The Prologue is then concerned to establish previous historical writing as doing one thing, and the *Historiae* as doing something quite different. Orosius centres his argument around the choice to begin other works of history not with Creation but with the reign of Ninus, king of the Assyrians: ‘Since nearly all men interested in writing, among the Greeks as among the Latins, who have perpetuated in words the accomplishments of kings and peoples for a lasting record, have made the beginnings of their writing with Ninus...’<sup>126</sup> (1.1.1, p. 5) Orosius builds his apologetic argument around the neglect and ignorance of previous writers of history who chose to begin with Ninus and consequently neglect over three thousand years of history: ‘...3184 years passed, which either have been omitted or unknown by all historians.’<sup>127</sup> (1.1.5, p. 6) Orosius then completes his polemical attack on the pagan historians by entirely dismissing the period of history between Ninus and the birth of Christ: ‘2015 years have passed, in which between the performers and the writers the fruit of labours and occupations of all were wasted.’<sup>128</sup> (1.1.6, p. 6) This condemnation allows Orosius to differentiate these substandard literary works from the Old Testament:

Therefore, the subject itself demands that I touch upon briefly a few accounts from these books which, when speaking of the origin of the world, have lent credence to past events by the prediction of the future and the proof of subsequent happenings...<sup>129</sup> (1.1.7, p. 6)

It is possible to interpret the reference to the prediction of future events as the foreshadowing of the coming of Christ in the Old Testament. Orosius maintains that the Old Testament, especially the book of Genesis, is more accurate for dating history than

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<sup>125</sup> Prologue 10, vol. 1, p. 8: *praeceperas ergo ut, ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis...*

<sup>126</sup> 1.1.1, vol. 1, p. 10: *Et quoniam omnes propemodum tam apud Graecos quam apud Latinos studiosi ad scribendum uiri, qui res gestas regum populorumque ob diuturnam memoriam uerbis propagauerunt, initium scribendi a Nino Beli filio...fecere.* For an extended discussion of the choice of dating from Creation or Ninus, see 2.1.5, ‘Beginnings’, pp. 88-92, and 2.1.6, ‘Signposts’, pp. 92-3.

<sup>127</sup> 1.1.5, vol. 1, p. 10: *...anni III CLXXXIII, qui ab omnibus historiographis uel omissi uel ignorati sunt.*

<sup>128</sup> 1.1.6, vol. 1, p. 11: *colliguntur anni II XV in quibus se inter actores scriptoresque omnium otia negotiaque triuerunt.*

<sup>129</sup> 1.1.7, vol. 1, p. 11: *Quae propter res ipsa exigit ex his libris quam breuissime uel pauca contingere qui originem mundi loquentes praeteritorum fidem adnuntiatione futurorum et post subsequa probatione fecerunt.*

earlier pagan histories. In relying on Scripture the *Historiae* is therefore superior to the works of previous writers, a claim that is implicit but nonetheless evident.<sup>130</sup>

Orosius uses the Prologue to establish an opposition between earlier writers of history on the one hand, and the *Historiae*, informed by Scripture, on the other. In doing so Orosius is aligning the *Historiae* with a more ancient and reliable tradition; beginning with Creation the Old Testament pre-dates other works of history by thousands of years. Orosius does not claim explicitly to be writing *better* history; in fact in the Prologue he does not claim to be writing history at all. Orosius was instead writing about the material of history.<sup>131</sup> This is made evident by the subject matter itself, the universal scope of time and space, and the preoccupation with dating and time, as well as the numerous further references to works of history and historians as the work progresses. In Book Seven Orosius readily acknowledges that he is writing about history: ‘There is no need to expatiate on history known to very many, even as spectators, which those who have viewed it know better than I.’<sup>132</sup> (7.35.12, p. 344) Not only did Orosius perceive history through eye-witness accounts, as demonstrated in the previous citation, he also understood the material of history to be preserved by historical literature and material evidence: ‘...that Carthage surpassed all Africa and extended the boundaries of its empire...both the records of history and the remains of cities show us.’<sup>133</sup> (7.2.6, p. 286)

But despite Orosius’s approach in the Prologue the text contains three references to the work as ‘history’:

These matters will now be set forth by me more fully, unfolding my history orderly.<sup>134</sup>  
(2.3.10, p. 47);

At the same time, then, Cyrus, king of the Persians, whom I have mentioned

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<sup>130</sup> See Werner who understands the *Historiae* to be a continuation of the historical books of the Old Testament. Werner, (1987), fn. 7.

<sup>131</sup> A similar distinction was made by Olympiodorus of Thebes in the composition of his work in twenty-two books: according to Photius he writes that his work was not a history (συγγραφή) but a collection of materials for a history (ὕλη συγγραφῆς). 4.68, col. 1. See Thompson, (1944), p. 47.

<sup>132</sup> 7.35.12, vol. 3 p. 99: *Historiam notam etiam oculis plurimorum quam melius qui spectare nouerunt dilatari uerbis non opus est.*

<sup>133</sup> 7.2.6, vol. 3, p. 18: *Carthaginem uero uniuersae praecelluisse Africae...historiarum simul monumenta urbiumque declarant.* For the most famous example of Orosius’s reliance on eye-witness accounts, see 7.43.4-6.

<sup>134</sup> 2.3.10, vol. 1, p. 90: *Quae modo a me plenius ab ipso Urbis exordio, reuolutis per ordinem historiis, proferentur.*

above in the unfolding of my history...<sup>135</sup> (2.6.1, p. 52);  
 I have woven together an inextricable wicker-work of confused history...<sup>136</sup> (3.2.9, p. 83).

These references are arguably anomalies in Orosius's more general approach in his unwillingness to specifically characterise the *Historiae*. It is possible that these references slipped in erroneously due to the difficulty of sustaining language of what is a technical difference: the writing of history, or writing about the material of history. Alternatively the paucity of references to the *Historiae* as history could reflect Orosius's desire to differentiate his text from the works of earlier pagan historians, and he was therefore tentative in designating his text along similar lines, as history. Orosius's cautious approach is similarly revealed by his reluctance to specifically identify pagan historians (*gentiles historici*), directing his apologetic in the broadest of terms (1.3.6). Although Orosius does not juxtapose himself as a Christian author against pagan writers, the language of opposition is clear; pagan historians are false and untrustworthy and the knowledge they contribute is based on lies: 'but we have already spoken somewhat about the different opinions of disagreeing historians, and let it suffice that these have been detected and that what is falsely known is the knowledge of lies' (5.3.4, p. 178).<sup>137</sup> In this sense the approach of the *Historiae* to genre is apologetical, but in a way that leaves the text simultaneously contextualised within but excluded from the genre of history.

## Part Two

### 1.2.1 Alternative Genres

The first Part of this Chapter has examined the genre of the *Historiae* beginning with the title, what Orosius perceived his work as being, and the reception history of the text from antiquity to the present through the specific medium of the title. The focus has been on the text as functioning within the genre of history. Part Two will take a wider

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<sup>135</sup> 2.6.1, vol. 1, p. 95: *Igitur eodem tempore Cyrus, Rex Persarum – quem superius explicandae historiae causa commemoraueram...*

<sup>136</sup> 3.2.9, vol. 1, p. 142: *Contexui indigestae historiae inextricabilem cratem.*

<sup>137</sup> 5.3.4, vol. 2, p. 88: *sed de uarietate discordantium historicorum aliquanta iam diximus; quorum sufficiat detecta haec et male nota mendaciorum nota, quia parum credendum esse in ceteris euidenter ostendunt qui in his quoque, quae ipsi uidere, diuersi sunt.*

perspective in examining the influence of other genres on the text and the alternative genres the text could be said to belong to, indicated by different stylistic elements.<sup>138</sup> What is striking about the text is the numerous different allegiances the text indulges in: elements of epitome, *breviarium*, chronicle, and classical history are evident. Arnaud-Lindet has described the *Historiae* as a 'sort of *breviarium*' of the misfortunes of the world since its origin.<sup>139</sup> To view the *Historiae* as an Epitome or *breviarium* in the first instance denotes the condensed nature of the text, universal in scope, but epitomising in style, offering a compressed history of the world since Creation but contained within one volume. In the second instance, it more specifically suggests a comparison with the *breviaria* of Festus and Eutropius and the parallels with that genre. This analysis is not derivative; it will not seek to identify the specific areas where Orosius used Eutropius especially, although there are many.<sup>140</sup> This research will instead seek to view the *Historiae* from a different perspective, one that has not been considered extensively before, of the text as an Epitome or *breviarium*.

### 1.2.2 Brevitas and Breviaria

Just as the declared aim of Epitomes and *breviaria* is extreme brevity, with decorative features of the original such as speeches, digressions, or lengthy passages of text omitted, so the same is true for the *Historiae*.<sup>141</sup> Brevity is a constant source of anxiety for the authorial voice in the text, and is an issue frequently returned to for reflection and justification. Van Nuffelen interprets Orosius's references to the brevity of the text as 'statements of imperfection, they are constant reminders of what is not in the work and how much more examples and details of suffering from the past could be given.'<sup>142</sup> The intention to be brief is established in the Prologue to the work, where an ordered

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<sup>138</sup> Although the *Historiae* can be categorised within a genre, it is also unique within its own genre, as recognised by Andrew Gillett, (2003), p. 3: 'The dozen historians represent the 'sub-genres' of classicising historiography (Ammianus Marcellinus, Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus), *breviarii* (Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Festus), ecclesiastical history (Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret), and Orosius, who is *sui generis*.' See also Goetz, (1980), p. 13: 'Hier scheint also eine neue Gattung zu entstehen, obwohl die Chronik von ihren Inhalten her zunächst recht traditionell wirkt: In chronologischer Abfolge führt Orosius die *res gestae* vor und weist, wie viele Geschichtsschreiber vor ihm, zugleich auf den Zusammenhang von Raum und Zeit hin, indem er dem Geschichtswerk eine ausführliche Erdbeschreibung voranstellt und damit programmatisch andeutet, daß er sich in seiner Darstellung (anders als Augustin) auf die irdische Geschichte beschränken wird.'

<sup>139</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xxii: 'C'est donc une espèce de *breviarium* des malheurs du monde depuis son origine'.

<sup>140</sup> Bird recognises the use of Eutropius's *Breviarium* by Orosius. Bird, (1993), p. lvi.

<sup>141</sup> Gärtner, and Eigler, (2004), p. 1153.

<sup>142</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 135.

and concise exposition of the material is part of Augustine's instruction to Orosius on composing the text: '...and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.'<sup>143</sup> (Prologue 10, p. 4) In relation to the Prologue Van Nuffelen observed that '...the general preface to the *Historiae* claims the cardinal rhetorical virtue of *brevitas* and seems to situate the work in the tradition of writing *brevitas* rather than that of full-scale historiography.'<sup>144</sup> The intended brevity of the text is then addressed twice in quick succession on the opening of the work: 'I have decided to trace the beginning of man's wretchedness from the beginning of man's sin, touching on only a few examples and these briefly.'<sup>145</sup> (1.1.4, p. 6) 'What, then, prevents our unfolding the beginning of this story, the main body of which others have described, and demonstrating, by a very brief account, that earlier ages which were more numerous endured similar miseries?'<sup>146</sup> (1.1.13, p. 6-7) The universal description of the world known to Orosius is concluded with the statement: 'I have, as briefly as possible, completed a survey of the provinces and islands of the whole world.'<sup>147</sup> (1.2.106, p. 20) Omission and elision are crucial parts of the methodology of brevity; most frequently the elision is itself elided and not made evident, but Orosius does recognise sporadic instances: 'Furthermore, everywhere among many people a great many wars with quite different results were waged which, for the sake of brevity, I have passed over.'<sup>148</sup> (4.20.40, p. 167) Brevity is an explicit and implicit element of the text: it is part of the rhetorical discourse of the author and his approach to writing, most clearly seen in the Preface to Book Three; it is also a hidden aspect of composition, that what is left out is necessarily not evident.

The Preface to Book Three sees the most sustained engagement with the issue of brevity in the *Historiae*. The passage is instrumental in demonstrating Orosius's historical method and motives with regards to brevity, and reveals the conundrum of his situation as an author writing in universal proportions but with a brief to be brief.<sup>149</sup> Orosius

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<sup>143</sup> Prologue 10, vol. 1, p. 8: *...ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem*. See Goetz, (1980), p. 13.

<sup>144</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 133.

<sup>145</sup> 1.1.4, vol. 1, p. 10: *ego initium miseriae hominum ab initio peccati hominis docere institui, paucis dumtaxat isdemque breuiter delibatis*.

<sup>146</sup> 1.1.13, vol. 1, p. 12: *quid impeditenti est nos eius rei caput pandere cuius illi corpus expresserint et priora illa saecula, quae multo numerosiora monstramus, uel tenuissimo testari relatur similes miseriae pertulisse?*

<sup>147</sup> 1.2.106, vol. 1, pp. 41-2: *Percensui breuiter ut potui prouincias et insulas orbis uniuersi*.

<sup>148</sup> 4.20.40, vol. 2, pp. 68-9: *Plurima praeterea et satis diuersis prouentibus bella multarum ubique gentium gesta sunt, quae breuitatis causa praetermissi*.

<sup>149</sup> See Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 132: '*Brevitas* is thus a necessary quality of his history. Yet, it is a problematic one'.

reveals his deliberate method to unfold the story of past conflicts, but he admits that it is not possible to replicate events entirely and exactly:

...I take up again the story of the conflicts of past ages; neither can all things be unfolded nor though all things that were accomplished and just as they were accomplished, because important and innumerable matters were described by a great many writers at very great length.<sup>150</sup> (3 Preface 1, p. 77)

The narrative of history is too great and the number of authors writing about it is too many for Orosius to give a comprehensive account. Orosius is faced with a ‘knotty problem’ (*sollicitudo nodosior*): omission of events in a desire for brevity risks misrepresenting history, but inclusion of all events without description could make the narrative obscure.<sup>151</sup> This is, as Orosius states, his greatest concern, to ‘set forth the essence of things’ and not just their description.<sup>152</sup> (3 Preface 3, p. 77) He eventually decides that brevity is always obscure (*obscura brevitatis*), as it gives the appearance of understanding but takes away comprehension of events.<sup>153</sup> Orosius resolves to both fully narrate the essence of history and confine his narrative in order that ‘in some way one may be tempered by the other, if much seems not to be omitted and events seem not to be greatly compressed.’<sup>154</sup> (3 Preface 3, p. 77)

Van Nuffelen postulates that the Preface to Book Three is an honest confession from an author who realises the conflict that is developing in his narrative. But then he argues that the Preface is ‘a rhetorically informed admission of failure’ as the resulting text is ‘far from brief, and shares few characteristics with the extant *breviaria* of the fourth century – except that Orosius used them as sources.’<sup>155</sup> It is difficult to contend that the *Historiae* achieves its aim of brevity when, in its most recent translation, the *Historiae* occupies 414 pages.<sup>156</sup> However the scope of the work temporally and spatially is actually much greater than a *breviarium* like Eutropius’s, which is limited only to

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<sup>150</sup> 3 Preface 1, vol. 1, p. 134: *nec omnia nec per omnia posse quae gesta sunt et sicut gesta sunt explicari, quoniam magna atque innumera copiosissime et a plurimis scripta sunt*. It is possible to detect here an echo of Livy in the ‘throng of writers’ that threatens to eclipse his own fame: ‘...and if in this throng of writers my own fame should be eclipsed, I will console myself with the thought of nobility and greatness of those who overshadow my own.’ Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, Preface: *et si in tanta scriptorum turba mea fama in obscuro sit, nobilitate ac magnitudine eorum me qui nomini officient meo consoler*.

<sup>151</sup> 3 Preface 2, p. 77; 3 Preface 2, vol. 2, p. 134.

<sup>152</sup> 3 Preface 3, vol. 1, p. 134: *...nos uim rerum, non imaginem commendare curemus*.

<sup>153</sup> 3 Preface 3, p. 77; 3 Preface 3, vol. 1, p. 134.

<sup>154</sup> 3 Preface 3, vol. 1, p. 134: *Sed ego cum utrumque uitandum sciam, utrumque faciam ut quocumque modo alterutra temperentur, si nec multa praetermissa nec multum constricta uideantur*.

<sup>155</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 134.

<sup>156</sup> See Fear, (2010).



Roman history from the foundation of the City. By contrast Orosius begins with the Creation and ends around AD 417, and includes a universal description of the world. The geography is as wide ranging as the narration of events, covering the Assyrian empire, the Amazons, the Trojan war, the Median empire, the Athenian empire, the Roman empire, the Peloponnesian war, the rule of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, Carthage and its fall, Caesar's Gallic wars, the rise of Augustus, and the continued history of Rome to Orosius's own day based mainly on Imperial biographies. In a relative comparison with the seventy pages of Bird's translation of Eutropius which occupies much less history and geography, a comparable element of brevity can still be perceived in the *Historiae*.<sup>157</sup>

Van Nuffelen's dismissal that the *Historiae* 'shares few characteristics with the extant *breviarii* of the fourth century' is based upon the argument that traditional *breviaria* pretend to be comprehensive: 'they do not contain all events, but give a complete picture in the sense that the reader will know all he needs to.'<sup>158</sup> The fundamental detail here is the 'pretence' of comprehension by *breviaria*. Van Nuffelen cites the Prefaces of both Festus and Eutropius as establishing this comprehension but neither actually do. Instead what both *breviaria* do not do, in contrast with the *Historiae*, is indicate where events have been elided or shortened. Nowhere in either texts are there interjections in the first person that justify the compression of the narrative. Van Nuffelen argues that:

...in rhetorical theory brevity does not mean truncation: a brief account still is a full account, reduced to its essentials. Orosius, on the contrary, is at pains to emphasize his own incompleteness, as a rhetorical suggestion that he has even more proof of the misery of the past than he actually offers to the reader.<sup>159</sup>

However the claim not to truncate in an Epitome but still to offer comprehension is only theoretical. This reality is not lessened in the *breviaria* of Eutropius and Festus because it is not acknowledged. The difference therefore lies in the rhetorical interjections that continually penetrate the narrative of the *Historiae*. Van Nuffelen's unqualified rejection of the *Historiae* as a *breviarium* or as containing shared elements of the genre is therefore overly indiscriminate. Eutropius's *Breviarium* and the *Historiae* do indeed

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<sup>157</sup> Eutropius's *Breviarium* lacks an authorial statement on the purpose of the text, but the Prologue reveals Eutropius's composition as fulfilling a request from the emperor Valens to collect a brief chronological narrative of the achievements of the Romans. Willem den Boer has noted the significance of war in the text: 'the one thread which runs throughout the book...is the dignity of war. War was always better than peace without honour.' Den Boer, (1972), p. 164.

<sup>158</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 134; p. 135.

<sup>159</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 135.

deviate specifically in the stylistic construction of the author and their role as narrator, directing and explaining their methodologies; but this difference does not preclude the similarity of other elements in both texts. A more nuanced perspective on the fluidity of genre is surely essential, especially when considering the *Historiae*, a text that has many different allegiances, agendas, and audiences.

### 1.2.2.1 Narration and Effusion in the *Historiae*

The methodology of the author in the construction of the *Historiae* both conforms to and deviates from the stylistic example of *breviaria*. The *Historiae* is a blend of descriptive passages impassively conveying the material of history, interspersed with highly rhetorical comments and lengthier sections that continually return the reader to Orosius's apologetic agenda.<sup>160</sup> Each book opens with a preface written in the first person, often with a concentration of theological and polemical statements, that elucidates what will come in the forthcoming chapter. At the end of the chapter comes a further rhetorical statement which makes the argument of the section explicit. For instance, Book Two opens with the sentence, 'I think that...' (*arbitror*) in a discussion of the religious truth of the Christian God as the creator of mankind and the judicial divine punishment of man for sin in the world.<sup>161</sup> At the end of Book Two the argument recently made is summarised with clear evidence to demonstrate the sack of Rome in AD 410 was much less serious than the Gallic sack of the city in the fourth century BC (2.19.12-16). The factual material which narrates events according to an organised chronology most corresponds to the style of *breviaria*. This style of historical prose is spread throughout with statements or comments which reveal the partiality of the author, as well as longer passages which allow the contemplation of events that have been described. Robert Browning understands that Orosius's apologetic 'leaves no room for the detached objectivity – real or feigned – of the classical historian.'<sup>162</sup> The juxtaposition between the formal, unadorned narrative and the emotive reaction it generates is demonstrated in Book Three with the focus on Alexander the Great. The section opens with a firm chronology: 'So Alexander, in the four hundred and twenty-

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<sup>160</sup> For a discussion of the style, brevity, rhetoric and truthfulness of the *Historiae*, see Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 115-145.

<sup>161</sup> 2.1.1, p. 44: 'I think that...'; 2.1.1, vol. 1, p. 84: *arbitror*.

<sup>162</sup> Browning, (1982), p. 72.

sixth year after the founding of the City, succeeded Philip on the throne.’<sup>163</sup> (3.16.1, p. 100) Orosius relies upon Justin’s *Epitome* of Trogus for this material which he condenses and manipulates.<sup>164</sup> The statistic of the size of Alexander’s army is reproduced almost exactly by Orosius from Justin, as well as the accompanying comment:

In his army, there were thirty-two thousand infantry, four thousand five hundred cavalry, and one hundred and eighty ships. With so small a force it is uncertain whether Alexander is more to be admired for having conquered the whole world or for having dared to undertake it.<sup>165</sup> (3.16.3, p. 100)

The text relates the Persian wars against Darius with statistics of the size of armies and the numbers killed, the martial expansion of his empire, and his death. Although the passage cannot be described as impartial, initially the style is dry and factual, focusing mainly on the wars of Alexander through events and statistics. Like Justin’s *Epitome* and Eutropius’s *Breviarium*, this is the story of history, a narrative relating to important events and celebrated persons in the past, in the main uncomplicated by personal interjection and insight.<sup>166</sup>

The turn comes following the conclusion of this narrative in the demise of Alexander, when the first-person narrative voice intervenes:

O wicked soul of man and heart always inhuman. Did I not fill my eyes with tears as I reviewed these events to prove the recurring cycles of the misfortunes of all ages, in the relating of so much evil, because of which the whole world on learning of death itself or because of the fear of death trembled? Did I not grieve in my own heart? As I turned these things over in my mind, did I not make the miseries of my ancestors my own, viewing them as the common lot of man?<sup>167</sup> (3.20.5, p. 107)

This archetypal construction where an exposition of a period of history is followed by a highly emotional and introspective response occurs throughout the *Historiae*, for instance: following the narration of Athenian history in Book Two which ends with the

<sup>163</sup> 3.16.1, vol. 1, p. 163: *Igitur Alexander anno ab Vrbe condita CCCCXXVI patri Philippo successit in regnum.*

<sup>164</sup> See Justin, *Epitoma*, 11.2-13.1.

<sup>165</sup> 3.16.3, vol.1, p. 164: *In exercitu eius fuere peditum XXXII milia, equitum III milia quingenti, naues CLXXX. Hac tam parua manu uniuersum terrarum orbem utrum admirabilius sit quia uicerit an quia adgredi ausus fuerit incertum est.* Justin records 182 ships.

<sup>166</sup> Den Boer identifies only one place (1.12.2) where Eutropius interrupts his own narrative. Den Boer, (1972), p. 138.

<sup>167</sup> 3.20.5, vol. 1, p. 173: *O dura mens hominum et cor semper inhumanum! ego ipse, qui haec pro adserenda omnium temporum alternanti calamitate percenseo, in relatu tanti mali quo uel morte ipsa uel formidine mortis accepta totus mundus intremuit, numquid inlacrimaui oculis? numquid corde condolui? numquid reuoluens haec propter communem uiuendi statum maiorum miserias meas feci?*

death of Darius (2.14.1-2.18.3), the composition changes to an expressive reflection of the ‘masses of misfortunes’ and the ‘slaughter of that time’.<sup>168</sup> (2.18.4, p. 74) Again in Book Four, after the relation of the first Punic war (4.7.1-12.9) comes a lengthy commentary which bemoans the lack of Roman peace:

...in only one year did the Roman viscera not sweat blood, and in the midst of the many periods of long centuries the wretched City, truly a wretched mother, has enjoyed rest scarcely at any time from the fear of sorrows, not to say sorrows themselves.<sup>169</sup> (4.12.9, p. 146)

These emotional and rhetorical passages are the opposite of the style of authorship found in Eutropius’s *Breviarium*. The purpose of the *Breviarium*, to provide ‘a simple, succinct and readable account of Roman history’, is distinguished from the purpose of the *Historiae*, to persuade its reader using all of history.<sup>170</sup> The frequent referencing of the self by the narrator is a deliberate strategy to control the sense of the past the reader develops; in using his own emotional reaction as an example, Orosius not only determines the narrative of the past but also how the reader should respond to it. This is recognised by Browning: ‘Orosius continually interrupts his narrative to make personal comments, moral or ironical, on the matter which he narrates, and to suggest to his reader the appropriate reaction.’<sup>171</sup> Van Nuffelen understands that the *Historiae* is ‘at once a narrative of the past and an argument on how to interpret that past.’<sup>172</sup> This is history but with a purpose, writing about the material of history utilised as evidence in order to fulfil an apologetic agenda.<sup>173</sup>

### 1.2.3 Dating and Genre

The second part of Chapter Two (‘Time and Dating’) is concerned with a systematic exploration of technical dating in the *Historiae*, specifically Orosius’s method of

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<sup>168</sup> 2.18.4, vol. 1, p. 124: *Ecce paruissima pagina uerbisque paucissimis quantos de tot prouinciis populis atque urbibus non magis explicui actus operam quam implicui globos miseriarum.*

<sup>169</sup> 4.12.9, vol. 2, p. 41: *...una tantummodo aestate Romana sanguinem uiscera non sudarunt, et inter plurimas magnorum saeculorum aetates misera ciuitas, uere misera mater, uix uno tempore a timore luctuum, ut non dicam ab ipsis luctibus, conquieuit.*

<sup>170</sup> Bird, (1993), p. xix. See also Bird, (1993), p. xlv: ‘Eutropius’ manner of composition is deceptively unaffected, and he is not as open as Aurelius Victor in divulging his strongly-held opinions in personal interjections’.

<sup>171</sup> Browning, (1982), p. 72.

<sup>172</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 131.

<sup>173</sup> See Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 16: ‘...expressions of psychology and emotions and the use of theoretical statements serve a purpose within the text in order to draw the reader into the narrative and convince him of the correctness of Orosius’ depiction of past and present.’

organising his chronology according to *ab urbe condita*, ‘from the foundation of the City’. It is therefore necessary to limit the discussion here solely to dating in relation to genre, specifically the correspondence between the chronological organisation of Eutropius’s *Breviarium* and Orosius’s *Historiae*. The theoretical considerations of the motives behind this choice or how the system of dating works in the *Historiae* are reserved for the forthcoming Chapter. Eutropius’s *Breviarium* operates a strict and practical chronology that would have taken considerable care and attention to construct. The ‘brief narrative in chronological sequence’ is immediately distinguished as important in the short Preface which dedicates the work to the emperor Valens.<sup>174</sup> Eutropius uses a variety of different methods in order to situate events within the linear progression of time, calculating from the time of the Roman kings, *ab urbe condita*, the consular years, and the monthly calendar.<sup>175</sup> Dating according to the rule of the consuls and *ab urbe condita*, often in conjunction, is most frequent: ‘In the consulship of Marcus Portius Cato and Quintus Marcius Rex, in the six hundred and thirty-third year after the founding of the city...’.<sup>176</sup> The concentration on dating is sustained throughout and provides a clear structure to the work, enabling the relation of clear and unbroken narrative history.

It is often stated that Eutropius’s *Breviarium* was written above all to be useful; as H. W. Bird argued the text was intended to provide ‘a simple, succinct and readable account’ for Valens and his military commanders (‘uneducated provincials from the Danube region or Germans, with little knowledge of Roman history’) and newly initiated senators at Constantinople.<sup>177</sup> Implicit within this reasoning is that levels of education and awareness of Roman history, amongst the senatorial elite at least, had declined. Eutropius and Festus were both commissioned to write *breviaria* of Roman history in order to rectify this problem. Although this rather limited view of the text

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<sup>174</sup> Eutropius, Preface: ‘In keeping with the wish of your Clemency I have gathered in a brief narrative, in chronological sequence, the conspicuous achievements of the Romans, whether in war or in peace. I have also concisely added those topics which appeared exceptional in the lives of the emperors, so that your Serenity’s divine mind may rejoice that it has followed the actions of illustrious men before it learned of them from reading.’ *Res Romanas ex voluntate mansuetudinis tuae ab urbe condita ad nostram memoriam, quae in negotiis vel bellicis vel civilibus eminebant, per ordinem temporum brevi narratione collegi, strictim additis etiam his, quae in principum vita egregia extiterunt, ut tranquillitatis tuae possit mens divina laetari prius se inlustrium virorum facta in administrando imperio secutam, quam cognosceret lectione.*

<sup>175</sup> See Den Boer, (1972), pp. 124-137 for a systematic analysis of these types.

<sup>176</sup> Eutropius, 4.23: *M. Porcio Catone et Q. Marcio Rege consulibus, sexcentesimo tricesimo et tertio anno ab urbe condita...*

<sup>177</sup> Bird, (1993), p. xix. See also Momigliano, (1963), pp. 85-6.

leaves room for further exploration regarding the purpose and impact of the *breviaria*, the general purpose of the works to be useful and instructive is correct. The clipped and neutral style of Eutropius's *Breviarium*, lacking in description and moving swiftly on once facts have been enumerated, give a strong sense that the work was designed to convey as much information about the narrative of history in as clear and accessible manner as possible. A clear and consistent chronology was absolutely essential in performing this task.

### 1.2.3.1 A Concern with Chronology

Orosius similarly prioritises a consistent and fully calculated chronological system, consciously imitating Eutropius in dating from *ab urbe condita*, the foundation of Rome, throughout the text. Chapter Two seeks to demonstrate, in contradistinction to the claims of modern critics, that the dating system used by Eutropius and Orosius was unique within the historical context of the mid-fourth and early fifth centuries, and influenced the construction of later dating schemes throughout the centuries. A concern with chronology characterises the Prologue and opening to the *Historiae*, especially beginning at the correct moment in time (Creation) and setting out the events of history in an orderly manner: '...and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.'<sup>178</sup> (Prologue 10, p. 4) This focus on the temporal sequence of events is evident throughout the work: 'Behold the events and their great number which I have enumerated as having taken place continuously year by year...'<sup>179</sup> (4.5.10, p. 129) Often Orosius's authorial preoccupation manifests itself in a self-conscious justification of the historical method used: 'I shall interrupt for a little while the calamities of the world during his wars, rather those which followed, in order that I may add in this place, according to the proper sequence of events, the Roman wars.'<sup>180</sup> (3.15.1, p. 98) The order of events and the clarity of the text generate anxiety expressed by the narrative voice, whether affected or authentic, of the ability to manage the scope of material:

I have woven together an inextricable wicker-work of confused history and I have worked in with words the uncertain cycles of war carried on here and there with frantic

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<sup>178</sup> Prologue 10, vol. 1, p. 8: *...ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem*. For Orosius's wranglings about the beginning of history, see 1.1.1-15. See Chapter Two, 2.1.5, 'Beginnings', and 2.1.6, 'Signposts'.

<sup>179</sup> 4.5.10, vol. 2, p. 19: *Ecce continuatim quae et quanta numeramus accidisce annis singulis plurima*.

<sup>180</sup> 3.15.1, vol. 1, p. 161: *Cuius bella immo sub cuius bellis mundi mala ordine sequentia suspendo paulisper, ut in hoc loco pro conuenientia temporum Romana subiciam*.

fury, following the evidence closely, for the more I kept to the order of events, the more, as I see it, I wrote in a disorderly fashion.<sup>181</sup> (3.2.9, p. 83)

Orosius's evident preoccupation with his historical method is unsurprising in consideration of the universal scope of the work temporally and spatially, and the demands of brevity. The logical response of the author is the attempt to impose order by containing and delineating the narrative of history within a formal and perpetual system of dating.

### 1.2.3.2 Dating and Divergence

In terms of brevity the *Historiae* both conforms to and deviates from the stylistic example of a *breviarium*. A further example of this conformity to and deviation from an existing historiographical model is provided by technical dating and chronological organisation in Orosius's *Historiae* and Eutropius's *Breviarium*. There are moments of correspondence between the *Historiae* and the *Breviarium* in terms of dating which illustrate the shared concern with chronology and the desire to date according to similar events in a related style, especially according to *ab urbe condita*. Both the *Breviarium* and the *Historiae* eschew the mythical founding of Rome by Aeneas in preference for Romulus and Remus, and date the foundation of the City relatively according to multiple events. Eutropius dates according to the monthly calendar, the Olympiad system, and the destruction of Troy:

...he [Romulus] founded a small city on the Palatine Hill on the 21st April, in the third year of the sixth Olympiad, in the three hundred and ninety-fourth year after the destruction of Troy, according to those who give the earliest and latest dates.<sup>182</sup>

Orosius also dates according to the fall of Troy but arrives at a different calculation, and specifies that the founding of Rome occurred in the fifth year of the sixth Olympiad:

In the four hundred and fourteenth year after the overthrow of Troy, moreover in the sixth Olympiad, which precisely in the fifth year, after the intervening four years had

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<sup>181</sup> 3.2.9, vol. 1, p. 142: *Contexui indigestae historiae inextricabilem cratem atque incertos bellorum orbes huc et illuc lymphatico furore gestorum uerbis e uestigio secutus inplacui, quoniam tanto, ut uideo, inordinatius scripsi, quanto magis ordinem custodiui*. For a similar justification, see Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 2 Prologue, and Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 2 Prologue.

<sup>182</sup> Eutropius, 1.1.2, p. 2: *...a Romulo exordium habet, qui Reae Silviae, Vestalis virginis, filius et, quantum putatus est, Martis cum Remo fratre uno partu editus est. Is, cum inter pastores latrocinaretur, decem et octo annos natus urbem exiguum in Palatino monte constituit XI Kal. Maias, Olympiadis sextae anno tertio, post Troiae excidium, ut qui plurimum minimumque tradunt, anno trecentesimo nonagesimo quarto*.

been completed, was customarily celebrated in Elis, a city of Greece, the city of Rome was founded in Italy by Romulus and Remus, twin originators.<sup>183</sup> (2.4.1, p. 48)

Eutropius favours dating according to *ab urbe condita* and the consular year, an example which Orosius follows:

Thereafter a war was undertaken against Carthage, in the six hundred and second year after the founding of the city, in the consulship of Lucius Manlius Censorinus and Manius Manilius, the fifty-first year after the Second Punic War had been concluded.<sup>184</sup>

Six hundred and two years after the founding of the City, in the consulship of L. Censorinus and M. Manilius, the Third Punic War broke out.<sup>185</sup> (4.22.1, p. 169)

However these comparisons are not intended to give the impression that Orosius copied Eutropius without question; Orosius's independence is demonstrated by the frequency with which he calculated dates in opposition to Eutropius's chronology, and was unafraid to challenge Eutropius explicitly:

In the eight hundred and forty-sixth year after the founding of the City, although Eutropius wrote that this was the eight hundred and fiftieth, Nerva, a very old man, was made the tenth emperor after Augustus by Petronius, the praetorian prefect, and by the eunuch, Parthenius, the murderer of Domitian.<sup>186</sup> (7.11.1, p. 305)

Orosius's dating at this point varies from Eutropius's by four years, he does not include the consulship of Vetus and Valens as Eutropius does, and he specifically identifies Nerva in the Imperial succession as opposed to Eutropius's more vague assertion that 'the state returned to a most prosperous condition after being entrusted with great good fortune to virtuous rulers.'<sup>187</sup> Orosius does more than transpose Eutropius's dating system onto the *Historiae*. The logic, importance, and practicality in dating from the foundation of Rome were appealing in the reconstruction of history from a Christian

<sup>183</sup> 2.4.1, vol. 1, p. 90: *Anno post euersionem Troiae CCCCXIII olympiade autem sexta – quae quinto demum anno quattuor in medio expletis apud Elidem Graeciae ciuitatem agone et ludis exerceri solet – urbs Roma in Italia a Romulo et Remo geminis auctoribus condita est.*

<sup>184</sup> Eutropius, 4.10.1, p. 24: *Tertium deinde bellum contra Carthaginem suscipitur, sexcentesimo et altero ab urbe condita anno, L. Manlio Censorino et M'. Manilio consulibus, anno quinquagesimo primo postquam secundum Punicum transactum erat.*

<sup>185</sup> 4.22.1, vol. 2, p. 71: *Anno ab Vrbe condita DCII L. Censorino et M. Manlio consulibus tertium Punicum bellum exortum est.*

<sup>186</sup> 7.11.1, vol. 3, pp. 42-3: *Anno ab Vrbe condita DCCCXLVI – quamuis Eutropius quinquagesimum hunc esse annum scripserit – Nerua admodum senex a Petronio praefecto praetorio et Parthenio spadone, interfectore Domitiani, imperator decimus ab Augusto creatus.*

<sup>187</sup> Eutropius, 8.1.1: 'In the eight hundred and fiftieth year from the founding of the city, in the consulship of Vetus and Valens, the state returned to a most prosperous condition after being entrusted with great good fortune to virtuous rulers.' *Anno octingentesimo et quinquagesimo ab urbe condita, Vetere et Valente consulibus, res publica ad prosperrimum statum rediit, bonis principibus ingenti felicitate commissa.*



perspective which situates Rome as the chosen and ultimate world empire.<sup>188</sup> The manipulations and challenges to Eutropius's chronology not only indicate an independence of mind and authorial integrity on the part of Orosius, but they also suggest an element of competition between the two writers, in a shared purpose of composition that saw Orosius writing partly in reaction to Eutropius's text.

The divergence between Eutropius and Orosius in terms of dating and chronology is also demonstrated by Orosius's revolutionary decision to predate according to the foundation of Rome: 'One thousand three hundred years before the founding of the City, Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians...'.<sup>189</sup> (1.4.1, p. 21) This method is superfluous for the purposes of the *Breviarium* as Eutropius begins his narrative with the founding of Rome and has no need to predate history before that event. Orosius follows no example in dating events that occurred before the founding of the City, displaying an independence of mind that reveals the level of chronological interest in the *Historiae*. The death of Caesar at the opening of Book Seven of the *Breviarium* is dated according to *ab urbe condita*: 'In about the seven hundred and ninth year of the city, after Caesar had been killed, the Civil Wars were renewed, for the senate favoured the assassins of Caesar.'<sup>190</sup> From this point there is a distinct reduction in the use of the dating system, with only five references *ab urbe condita* in the final four books.<sup>191</sup> Instead Eutropius locates the chronology of events, narrated as they are according to Imperial biography, by the age of the emperor and the length of his reign, for example: 'He [Vitellius] died in the fifty-seventh year of his life, in the eighth month and first day of his reign.'<sup>192</sup> The chronological methodologies of Eutropius and Orosius here diverge, as Orosius sustains his dating scheme by *ab urbe condita* throughout the final two books of the *Historiae*.

Orosius's determination to continue using *ab urbe condita* enables the situation of important events such as the accession of Augustus and the birth of Christ according to the foundation of Rome (7.20.1; 7.3.1). These events are significant not only

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<sup>188</sup> The ideological implications for Rome as a choice for dating are dealt with in Chapter Two.

<sup>189</sup> 1.4.1, vol. 1, p. 43: *Ante annos Urbis conditae MCCC Ninus rex Assyriorum, 'primus' ut ipsi uolunt.*

<sup>190</sup> Eutropius, 7.1: *Anno urbis septingentesimo fere ac nono, interfecto Caesare, civilia bella reparata sunt. percussoribus enim Caesaris senatus favebat.*

<sup>191</sup> Eutropius, 7.1; 8.1; 9.3; 10.17; 10.18.

<sup>192</sup> Eutropius, 7.18: *...periit autem aetatis anno septimo et quinquagesimo, imperii mense octavo et die uno.*

intrinsically, but possess an additional level of importance as they are central to the apologetic of the text. Orosius's persistence in dating allows them to be associated with Rome and in conformity with the presentation of all history in the work. The deviation between the *Breviarium* and the *Historiae* in dating schema demonstrates Orosius's ability and purpose beyond simply copying and excerpting from other sources, an accusation frequently levelled against the author.<sup>193</sup> Orosius independently calculated the dating of a large swathe of history according to *ab urbe condita* in books Six and Seven. This shows the *Historiae* to be more than a selection of quotations lifted from other literary works, and illustrates not only the importance of a sustained chronology to the author but specifically dating by the foundation of Rome. It reveals an originality and independence not often recognised in Orosius, and is instructive of his historiographical concerns, in the perpetual importance of Rome, the value of stylistic and structural continuity, and the resemblance of the *Historiae* to a Chronicle in its cohesive, sustained and strict chronological formulation. A chronological system is a response to the material of history, which is the content of the *Historiae*, in an attempt to impose order. This is revealing about the function and purpose of the text, that in its presentation the ability to inform and convey information is paramount. In choosing to date *ab urbe condita*, Orosius is aligning the *Historiae* with the *Breviarium* in a way that suggests shared concerns and purposes of the two texts. This consideration is not intended to be *Quellenforschung*, identifying the instances where Orosius used the *Breviarium*. It is instead an attempt to understand the purpose of the *Historiae* and Orosius's intention when writing, by comparing the *Historiae* with a text Orosius made use of and possibly composed the *Historiae* in competition with.

#### 1.2.4 The Epitomising Purpose of the *Historiae*

As demonstrated above, an exploration of how the issue of dating is approached in the *Historiae* elucidates the parallels between the text and *breviaria*. When considering the issue of genre and the place of the *Historiae* within, it is similarly instructive to examine

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<sup>193</sup> For example, Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. x: 'À la vérité, sur le plan de l'historiographie, Orose a eu la mauvaise fortune d'être l'abrégiateur de sources qui nous sont presque toutes parvenues dans leur intégralité, si bien que, à l'exception de la partie perdue de l'*Histoire romaine* de Tite-Live, pour laquelle il existe d'autres possibilités de reconstitution, et de quelques fragments de la fin des *Histoires* de Tacite, les renseignements qu'il nous fournit sont, au titre de l'information pure, le plus souvent d'un mince intérêt pour l'historien de l'Antiquité.' Marrou, (1970), pp. 64-5: 'Orose a d'abord été pour le moyen âge un immense répertoire de connaissances de tout ordre sur l'Antiquité classique, puisées aux meilleures sources des historiens latins'. O'Loughlin, (1999), p. 11.

the purpose or stated purpose of the text. Despite the patent alliance of the text through the title to a specific purpose – history with a cause against paganism – the purpose of the text is not always clear. Orosius precedes his geographical description in Book One with a statement on his intentions for the text:

I shall describe the world itself which the human race inhabits, as it was divided by our ancestors into three parts and then established by regions and provinces, in order that when the locale of wars and the ravages of diseases are described, all interested may more easily obtain knowledge not only of the events of their time, but also of their location.<sup>194</sup> (1.1.16-17, p. 7)

Orosius here hints at the purpose of the text to be useful, so that any reader who is interested can understand the neatly categorised world he presents and the contextualised historical narrative. This is the only explicit statement on such an intention, but it is arguable that the usefulness of the text is an underlying concern and was a motivating factor in the composition of the work. The construction of the text is comparable to a *breviarium* or Epitome, designed to convey information about events but with a limiting style that does not allow for discussion or causation. The apologetic passages are, of course, an exception. This conforms to Benoît Lacroix's interpretation of the text: 'De cette conscience qu'il faut au public moins cultivé des récits courts et directs, plutôt que des théories, est née l'*Historia adversus Paganos*. Orose est invité à écrire pour le peuple et dans le sens de Justin et d'Eutrope.'<sup>195</sup> As Lacroix argues, that Orosius wrote in a direct style avoiding theorising and following the example of Eutropius and Justin changes the understanding of the text, that it was not simply apologetic or history but had a wider purpose and was composed in competition with previous *breviaria* and epitomes in what was essentially a rewriting of secular and political history from a Christian perspective.<sup>196</sup>

Within ancient literature conflicting ideologies trigger the multiplication of historical narratives and alternative versions of history arise. This is arguably what was happening in the fourth and early fifth centuries, from Constantine and Eusebius, to Eutropius and Festus, to Ammianus Marcellinus, to the Church historians Theodoret, Socrates and

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<sup>194</sup> 1.1.15-17, vol. 1, p. 12: *...necessarium reor ut primum ipsum terrarum orbem quem inhabitat humanum genus sicut est a maioribus trifarium distributum, deinde regionibus prouinciisque determinatum, expediam; quo facilius, cum locales bellorum morborumque clades ostentabuntur, studiosi quique non solum rerum ac temporum sed etiam locorum scientiam consequantur.*

<sup>195</sup> Lacroix, (1965), pp.51-2.

<sup>196</sup> For Orosius's *Historiae* as Epitome, see Momigliano, (1966a), vol. 1, pp. 95-7.

Sozoman, to Symmachus and his patronage of the editing of Livy's history at the turn of the fourth century. The 'historicization' of Christianity saw an intensification of competition, where Christian authors attempted to crystallise modes of worship, doctrine and behaviour, and defend the status of Christianity historically against other religions. The *Historiae* is a key text in this process. The text effectively rewrote the version of Roman history found in Eutropius's *Breviarium*, extending its scope to universal proportions temporally and spatially, and transforming the perspective so that secular and political history were given a Christian meaning. Orosius's *Historiae* offers an alternative version of history with a strong apologetical slant. This was not simply Christian history; Orosius predated the providence of the Christian God and the influence of Christianity on the direction of history not only from the birth of Christ but from the moment of Creation. Roman history is reshaped, the emperors are Christianised, the institution of the Church is elided, and the providential power of God is projected forward and backward in time.

### 1.2.5 Audience and the *Historiae*

In order to fully understand the text there is a need to consider who the work was written for, and how the purpose of the text and the identity of the audience are related. It cannot be automatically assumed that, because the *Historiae* is a work of apologetic, it is primarily intended to be read by the non-Christian critics of Christianity whom it frequently addresses.<sup>197</sup> The issue of audience has been often overlooked, as critics assume that the audience is, axiomatically, pagan.<sup>198</sup> However close analysis of the text and consideration of the historical context of its composition alter and multiply the variety of potential audiences the text has, requiring a broader and deeper evaluation of

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<sup>197</sup> For the issue of audience and apologetic, see Edwards, (1999), p. 262: 'In reading other apologetic works, we can only guess at the distinction between the implied and intended audience, or between the intended audience and the eventual readership. A treatise dedicated to a persecuting magistrate will be written as though the whole of the pagan world could overhear it; yet the silence of posterity will suggest that it found no reader outside the Church.' Price discusses the 'exoteric' and the 'esoteric' audience, and stresses that with the exoteric formal addressee a work could easily be used by Christians in arguing against their opponents: 'Some treatises by Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Cyprian are exoteric, addressing outsiders. I stress the formal addressee of the works: apologies are necessarily a response of some sort of criticism. The actual readership of the works is of course unknowable, but perhaps not crucial. Even if existing Christians constituted the main readership...the exoteric form of the treatises ensured that Christians could easily make use of their arguments. Their own faith might be strengthened, but in addition they had ready-made arguments to use in discussions with non-Christians.' Price, (1999), pp. 105-6. See Introduction, 0.12, 'Terminology', for a discussion of Apology.

<sup>198</sup> See Merrills, (2005), p. 40; Van Nufflen, (2012), pp. 16-17; Mommsen, (1959b), p. 336; Lacroix, (1965), p. 45; Lippold (1952), p. 4.

the audience for the *Historiae*. The issue of the intended audience is not a simple distinction between Christian and pagan, whatever these terms actually meant in the early fifth century AD.<sup>199</sup> As is somewhat typical of Orosian studies it is a complex and multifaceted issue. Before reaching any conclusions, if that is possible, it is necessary to think more widely regarding the possible readership than has previously been done by modern scholarship. How should 'the reader' be defined? On what basis should the categorisation be made? How does any categorisation take into account the fluidity of 'the reader'? Just as the genre of the text is difficult to stereotype, so the speculative reader is.

### 1.2.5.1 Purpose and Audience

It is possible that the purpose of the text was defined by its audience; before the *Historiae* there would have been a need for a version of secular history, similar to the need for the *breviaria* of Festus and Eutropius, but a version that would be acceptable to a Christian audience. The need for this type of history fulfilled by the *Historiae*, although extended and excerpted in later periods, was not superseded by any other author, explaining the enduring popularity of Orosius's work. This is attested to by Lacroix, who argues that the *Historiae* 'replaced and supplanted traditional texts', those of Pompeius Trogus, Justin, Florus, and even Eutropius.<sup>200</sup> Orosius became the 'official historian of pagan and Christian times of the past'.<sup>201</sup> Lacroix argues that '[a]ll the old cultures have had their 'easily digestible' accounts'; Orosius's *Historiae* functions to supply the new Christian Roman culture with theirs.<sup>202</sup> The text assimilated Christianity, world history and secular political Roman history in what was in some senses an ultra-conservative history which would have been largely non-offensive to individual versions of Christianity, that is those that would have been considered heterodox rather than orthodox.<sup>203</sup> Although the text largely directs its rhetoric towards paganism or at

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<sup>199</sup> See Al. Cameron, (2011), 'Pagans and Polytheists', pp. 14-33.

<sup>200</sup> Lacroix, (1965), p. 39.

<sup>201</sup> Lacroix, (1965), p. 39: 'Orose devient l'historien chrétien officiel des temps païens et chrétiens d'autrefois'.

<sup>202</sup> Lacroix, (1965), p. 39. 'C'est ainsi que peu à peu l'*Historia adversus Paganos* remplace et supprime bientôt les textes traditionnels, les *Histoires* de Trogue Pompée, de Justin, de Florus et même d'Eutrope. Orose devient l'historien chrétien officiel des temps païens et chrétiens d'autrefois, l'écrivain rapide à la portée de tous les talents, l'*autorité* qui a le mieux résumé toute l'histoire de l'humanité depuis Adam jusqu'en 416, soit plus de cinq mille ans d'histoire. Toutes les vieilles cultures ont eu leurs *digestes*. Reste à savoir, maintenant, si l'*Historia adversus Paganos* a été pire que les autres.'

<sup>203</sup> With the exception of Arianism in Book Seven.

least a theoretical pagan, the text seems unconcerned about offending the pagan reader. The lack of concern for alienating or irritating the pagan reader suggests that they were not the intended audience.

### 1.2.5.2 Orosius's Reader

Despite the rhetorical style of the *Historiae* which constantly directs its invective against an opponent or 'detractor', the identity of the reader or intended audience of the work is opaque. Orosius makes only one clear statement on the reader of the text:

But since, although these arguments are presented very truthfully and strongly, they nevertheless require a faithful and obedient listener; moreover, my present audience (I shall see whether or not they will believe at some time) certainly at present does not believe, and I shall now bring forward rather quickly arguments which they themselves, although they are unwilling to approve them, cannot disapprove.<sup>204</sup> (7.1.5, p. 284)

Orosius expects to have a current reader, in contrast to Ammianus Marcellinus's insecurities: 'Having reached this stage in my complex story, I earnestly beg my readers, should I have any, not to demand minute details...' <sup>205</sup> Orosius's audience is defined by faith; it is unambiguous that they currently 'do not believe', that they are not Christian, but that Orosius hopes to induce them to Christian belief and to abandon their presumed paganism. The intrusion of the narrative voice here communicates two important elements: one, in the words of Orosius the audience of the *Historiae* was intended to be pagan and not Christian; and two, the text was expected to have a proselytising effect.

Orosius's statement on audience comes in the context of the opening of Book Seven, where the narrative voice steps back to regard the rhetorical formulation of the text so far; it has been indisputably proved that there is only one true God, the Christian God, the Creator God, and Jesus Christ Incarnate (7.1.1). Immediately following the assertion Orosius recognises the shared religiosity of Christianity and paganism, that 'we and our opponents'

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<sup>204</sup> 7.1.5, vol. 3, p. 15: *Sed haec quoniam, etsi uerissime fortissimeque dicuntur, fidelem tamen atque oboedientem requirunt, mihi autem, uidero an aliquando credituris, certe nunc cum incredulis actio est, promptius ea proferam quae ipsi etsi probare noluerint, inprobare non possint.*

<sup>205</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, 31.5.10. *Et quoniam ad has partes post multiplices ventum est actus, id lecturos (siqui erunt umquam), obtestamur, nequis a nobis scrupulose gesta....* This contrasts with Harris's understanding of the audience of 'ecclesiastical writers': 'The essential fact is perhaps that ecclesiastical writers usually did not write for a critical audience, indeed hardly *wrote* for an audience at all.' Harris, (1992), p. 306.

live with reverence toward religion and with the acknowledgement and worship of a higher power, the nature of our belief alone being different, because it is our practice to confess that all things are from and through one God, and theirs to think of as many gods as there are things.<sup>206</sup> (7.1.6, p. 284)

The text then directs an intense polemic against the existence and nature of the pagan pantheon. The pagan challenge to Christianity regarding the power of the Christian God is reversed by Orosius to prove the non-existence of the pagan gods. Or, the narrative voice allows, if they did exist, they were so ineffective and powerless that they are easily dismissed: 'For we are concerned with great gods, as they think, not with most paltry artificers who lose their skill if material is lacking.'<sup>207</sup> (7.1.9, p. 285) The denunciation of the pagan deities is terminated by the rejection: 'But I do not think that we need to consider further the practice of religious rites, because in the midst of continual sacrifices there was no end or respite from ceaseless disasters'.<sup>208</sup> (7.1.11, p. 285) Orosius's initial statement on audience seems to suggest that these arguments, the derogatory attack on pagan religion, would stimulate conversion to Christianity. However it cannot be logically supposed that this invective was actually an exhortation to convert; the approach is too deprecatory to persuade a pagan reader, it would only engender feelings of anger and insult. Orosius surely could not expect to find a 'faithful and obedient' listener that the text requires in a non-Christian reader.<sup>209</sup>

### 1.2.5.3 A Point of Disjuncture: Reader and Addressee

To conclude that Orosius's intended audience was not pagan contradicts the explicit representation of the author. But the deliberate designation by the narrative voice of a pagan reader to be converted to Christianity does not automatically mean it is the case. This extrapolation creates a disjuncture between the reader who was anticipated and the

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<sup>206</sup> 7.1.6, vol. 3, p. 15: *Itaque, quantum ad conscientiam humanarum mentium pertinet, utrique sub reuerentia religionis et confessione cultuque supernae potentiae uiuimus, distante dumtaxat fide, quia nostrum est fateri ex uno et per unum Deum constare omnia, illorum, tam multos deos putare quam multa sunt.*

<sup>207</sup> 7.1.9, vol. 3, p. 16: *...nos auctorem rerum potentiam, non artificem scientiam quaerimus, de diis quippe – ut putant – magnis, non de fabris uilissimis quaestio est, quibus nisi materia accedat, ars cessat.*

<sup>208</sup> 7.1.11, vol. 3, p. 17: *Porro autem de cura caerimoniarum nec recensendum arbitror, quoniam inter sacra continua incessabilibus cladibus nullus finis ac nulla requies fuit.*

<sup>209</sup> According to Lacroix Orosius knew that the pagans were uninterested in his ideas, and decides ultimately that the text was conceived and drawn up because of the pagans, but was actually intended for a Christian reader who had to exist in a pagan society: 'En définitive, l'*Historia adversus Paganos* a été conçue et préparée à cause des Païens. Mais une lecture attentive prouve qu'il s'agit en fait en plutôt d'un livre chrétien écrit à l'usage de ceux qui fréquentent les Païens en général.' Lacroix, (1965), p. 48.

hypothetical reader constructed by the text as a recipient for the polemic, also termed as the addressee. The addressee is variously portrayed, often as pagan, and in this guise is a rhetorical construct to be invoked, cajoled, sympathised with and insulted by the narrative voice.<sup>210</sup> All the persuasive powers the author is capable of are employed against the pagan addressee. But discerning a difference between the intended reader and the pagan addressee creates a different understanding of the work; that it is likely to be more insulting, more extreme, and less concerned with a fair representation of paganism. It also reveals the *Historiae* not as an opportunity to the non-Christian to convert, and the rhetoric of exhortation becomes hollow. Despite its self-presentation the text is not actually interested in a dialogue or a reasoned debate with paganism - this is clear from the version of pagan religion the text offers. Instead the text is only concerned with winning the rhetorical argument and proving the apologetic point, an achievement which requires methodological concessions, especially accuracy, fairness, and consistency.

#### 1.2.5.4 Potential Readerships: Pagans and Christians

It has been claimed that in the *Historiae* Orosius was writing against the same pagans Augustine was attempting to counter in *De civitate Dei*.<sup>211</sup> Although this is likely it is also true that these pagans do not necessarily constitute a readership: 'It cannot be assumed that, because the *City of God* is an apologetic work, it is primarily written for the non-Christian critics of Christianity to whom it so often refers.'<sup>212</sup> Alan Cameron has argued convincingly along these lines, beginning with the sermons of Augustine and

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<sup>210</sup> For example, 1.6.1-4, p. 24: '...let those who cast as much spit upon Christ whom we have shown to be the Judge of the centuries, distinguish between the cases of Sodom and Rome, and let them compare their punishments; these matters must not be discussed at length by me because they are known to all. Yet how gladly would I accept their opinions, if they would faithfully acknowledge what they really feel. And yet I do not think that it ought to be taken very seriously that they murmur occasionally about Christian times and this in out-of-the-way places, since the feelings and views of the entire Roman people may be learned from the harmonious expression of their unanimous judgement.' 1.6.1, vol. 1, p. 47-48: *Itaque nunc si placet hi qui in Christum, quem nos iudicem saeculorum ostendimus, quantum in ipsis est sputa coniciunt, inter Sodomam et Romam discernant causas et conferant poenas; quae a me uel maxime ob hoc retractandae non sunt, quia omnibus notae sunt. Et tamen quam libenter sententias eorum acciperem, si illi fideliter ita ut sentiunt faterentur, quamquam quid de temporibus Christianis rari et hoc in angulis murmurent, non usque adeo moleste accipiendum putem, cum totius populi Romani consona uoce parique iudicio sensus ac sermo sit cognitus.*

<sup>211</sup> See, for example, Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 16-17: 'The close connection between the *City of God* and the *Historiae*, the latter being presented as a supplement of the former, makes it likely that both target a similar audience.' Also Croke and Emmett, (1983), p. 3.

<sup>212</sup> O'Daly, (1999), p. 36.



moving on to *De civitate Dei*.<sup>213</sup> Cameron understands that Augustine's intended audience (in his congregation and reader) were former pagans, 'cultivated members of the elite whose faith was to be given a rude shock by the sack of Rome six years later.'<sup>214</sup> Augustine was concerned with those recent converts whose commitment to Christianity was not secure and who might return to old religious practices: 'Augustine's arguments were aimed less at converting practicing pagans than providing vulnerable Christians with the ammunition to resist the seductive arguments of their remaining pagan peers.'<sup>215</sup> Similarly the *Historiae* can be interpreted as intended to secure Christian belief, not necessarily incite pagan conversion. Despite the distinctions between religious beliefs in the ancient world provided by labels which give clear definition to certain groups or groups of ideas in society, these boundaries are anachronistic and artificial, as recognized by Averil Cameron:

What may seem now to be distinct and separate sets of issues – Christianity versus Judaism, Christianity in relation to polytheism, and true as opposed to “false” belief within Christianity – were close together in the minds of early Christians and approached in very similar ways. Naturally the edges became blurred.<sup>216</sup>

Although the partitioning of Christians and pagans in such absolute terms follows the apologetic discourse of both Augustine and Orosius, it misses (potentially deliberately) the more fluid religious boundaries of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, where lax Christians, recent converts to Christianity, those pagans prepared to convert, those operating under the pretence of Christian conversion, the unbaptized, those considered to be heterodox, and those Christians still practicing pagan traditions and rituals could all be conceived of as the target for both the *Historiae* and *De civitate Dei*.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Al. Cameron, (2011), especially pp. 792-5.

<sup>214</sup> Al. Cameron, (2011), p. 792. Also O'Daly, (1999), p. 36: 'Rather than seeing the *City of God* as refutation of pagan objections to Christianity, to be read directly by pagans, it is more in keeping with what Augustine actually says about his aims to think of the work's readers as Christians or others closely concerned with Christianity, who require fluent and convincing rebuttal of pagan views, both for their own satisfaction and as weapons to be used in arguments with defenders of paganism.'

<sup>215</sup> Al. Cameron, (2011), p. 792. 'His [Augustine's] primary audience must have been Christians, many of them recent converts, most as yet unbaptized, whose motives and sincerity alike were suspect.' Al. Cameron, (2011), p. 792.

<sup>216</sup> Av. Cameron, (2007), p. 350.

<sup>217</sup> Kempshall considers the text to be intended for both Christians and pagans. Kempshall, (2011), p. 71. Also Van Nuffelen: 'Like the first ten books of the *De civitate Dei*, then, the *Historiae* are an attempt to convince the wavering on the basis of the inconsistency and incoherence of the arguments of the others. Hence Orosius explicitly wishes not to rely on biblical authority to show that the pagan idealization of the past is untrue, but remains within the methodological limits of classical historiography.' Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 17-18. The blurring of religious labels and categories of 'other' is demonstrated in the elision of 'pagan' with heterodox Christian identity, specifically Manichaeism. See Baker-Brian, (2011), pp. 4-6. Also represented by the synthesis of 'barbarian' and 'Scythian' as categories of heresy by Epiphanius, discussed by Boyarin, (2004), pp. 24-26. For 'false' Christians, see 1.8.14, pp. 27-8: 'Therefore, it is not

### 1.2.5.5 The Universal Reader

Both Alan Cameron in relation to *De civitate Dei* and Benoît Lacroix regarding the *Historiae* draw the same conclusion – that both texts had a ‘realistic’ audience, an envisioned reader; and that neither Augustine nor Orosius could have written their works for pagans. Cameron states that ‘...the *City of God* was surely not primarily addressed to practicing pagans. Augustine cannot realistically have expected hard-core pagans even to read, much less be persuaded by, so massive and polemical a work.’<sup>218</sup> According to Lacroix Orosius knew that the pagans were uninterested in his ideas and were more likely to go to the amphitheatre than to read the *Historiae*:

Quand il écrit son *Historia adversus Paganos*, Orose connaît que ses Païens sont peu intéressés aux idées parce qu’ils sont trop intéressés aux faits ; il les sait beaucoup plus prêts à se rendre au cirque qu’à lire son histoire. Quelques-uns la liront peut-être. Quand même, il faut qu’il écrive ; il faut qu’il respecte la psychologie de celui pour qui l’événement est seul point de départ et seul point d’arrivée de réflexion.<sup>219</sup>

Lacroix offers a psychological insight into Orosius, in his zealous imperative to write, regardless of the reality of his reader, or lack of one: it is necessary for Orosius to write, for the text represents for him the beginning and end of all thought.<sup>220</sup> When writing to Jerome Augustine described Orosius as ‘keen-spirited, swift to speak, and full of zeal.’<sup>221</sup> The same fervour impelled Orosius across the Mediterranean to a foreign land where his reception was unknown, and to the Holy Land where he became involved in the Pelagian controversy that would ultimately see him accused of heterodoxy. Perhaps the text was written with a specific reader in mind, perhaps not; it is difficult to know, and there is contradictory evidence for both sides of the argument and multiple

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surprising if now also some are found who, when they would remove the sword hanging over their necks by pretending to be Christians, either conceal the very name of Christ by which alone they are saved, or make accusations against Him and assert that they are oppressed in the time of those through whose merits they are liberated.’ 1.8.14, vol. 1, p. 52: *Quamobrem non est mirandum, si nunc quoque aliqui reperiuntur, qui cum “a ceruicibus suis inpedentem gladium” praetento Christiano nomine auerterint, ipsum nomen Christi, quo solo salui sunt, aut dissimulent aut infament grauissime se eorum temporibus adserant, quorum meritis liberantur.*

<sup>218</sup> Al. Cameron, (2011), p. 792.

<sup>219</sup> Lacroix, (1965), p. 48.

<sup>220</sup> In a similar vein, see Trompf: ‘...one comes to realize that there is no point worrying over the distinction between the work Orosius *had* to write and the work he might have written had he not been charged by Augustine: he produced what he wanted to write (and his nervousness at the end about what his mentor will think of the result...only goes to confirm his self-acknowledged independence).’ Trompf, (2000), p. 299.

<sup>221</sup> Augustine, *Epistula* 166 to Jerome, 1.2: *Ecce uenit ad me religiosus iuuenis, catholica pace frater, aetate filius, honore compresbyter noster Orosius, uigil ingenio, promptus eloqui, flagrans studio...*

possibilities. It is feasible that the text was written for a universal audience, regardless of ethnography, geography, religion, or education. What was more important was that the work was written in defence of Christianity, and was driven by a rhetorical indulgence. Initiated by Augustine's request, Orosius saw the opportunity for an apologetical argument to be made and won. There is a sense that Orosius's preoccupation with this was so absolute that little else was able to impinge, which explains the inconsistencies and variability of the text towards the reader. With no firm idea of audience at the outset, the intended reader alternated according to the frame of mind of the author at a particular moment, or the material being dealt with. Impelled ultimately by his own conviction and the rectitude of his ideas, Orosius composed the *Historiae* convinced of his own religious orthodoxy, with no room for ideas other than his own.

#### 1.2.5.6 The Case for a Pagan Reader?

It has been demonstrated that much of the evidence derived directly from the *Historiae* and by implication from *De civitate Dei* suggests that a non-Christian reader was not the intended target of either works. But it must be noted that there are important exceptions to this rule; this will be explored in this section.<sup>222</sup> Although these anomalies do not automatically prove the intention for a pagan readership for the *Historiae*, they cannot be ignored. Firstly, there are few Scriptural allusions in the *Historiae*, demonstrated clearly by Arnaud-Lindet's Appendix Four, a table which identifies the sources Orosius used.<sup>223</sup> The assessment of the *Historiae* as a Christian text renders the lack of the Old and New Testament surprising. To align history with Scripture would seem like the most obvious and important purpose of the text. It cannot be explained by ignorance on the part of the Christian polemicist; Orosius's other works, the *Commonitorium* and the *Liber Apologeticus* show his familiarity with and security in using the Bible. In

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<sup>222</sup> Lacroix argues for the alteration of the *Historiae* to suit a pagan reader: 'Le besoin de s'adapter à ses Païens mal éduqués et la nécessité d'être convaincant malgré tout entraînent Orose à toutes sortes de démarches qui nous étonnent aujourd'hui mais qui, reportées dans leur contexte, peuvent expliquer sans complètement excuser l'écrivain qu'on pourrait toujours accuser de céder un peu vite à la preuve massive. Ainsi, pour s'accommoder à leur mentalité négativiste, Orose évite de se montrer trop ouvertement chrétien, hésite devant certains mots, cite leurs auteurs préférés, interpelle, adopte au besoin leur façon carrée de raisonner, les menace de châtiments s'ils ne veulent pas comprendre. C'est sans doute pour ne pas dérouter l'esprit étroit de ses mêmes lecteurs qu'Orose hésite à citer ouvertement les Ecritures, qu'il met de côté la division de l'histoire en six âges, retient le thème plus classique des quatre empires. Pour les mêmes raisons, à notre avis, pour s'adapter, il glisse sur le thème des deux Cités si cher à son maître, invoque d'un mot le Corps Mystique sans le définir, parle peu de l'au-delà.' Lacroix, (1965), p. 47.

<sup>223</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, vol. 1, pp. 267-299.

comparison the contemporary *Historia sacra* (or *Chronica*) of Sulpicius Severus is largely occupied with reconstructing biblical events from the Old Testament into a form of Christian history, as the Prologue to the work makes clear:

I address myself to give a condensed account of those things which are set forth in the sacred Scriptures from the beginning of the world and to tell of them, with distinction of dates and according to their importance, down to period within our own remembrance.<sup>224</sup>

In contrast Orosius chooses to rely more on secular classical pagan texts for his history, peppered with allusions and quotations from Homer and most frequently, Virgil.<sup>225</sup>

The *Historiae* is undoubtedly a Christian text; the focus on the omnipotence and providence of the Christian God, of sin and punishment, the synchronisation of Roman and Christian authority through Augustus and Christ, and the construction of a Christian identity within a universal Christian community make this indisputable. However many important aspects of Christianity are omitted. For example, the *Historiae* lacks a Christian geography, a specific spatial focus for the Christian milieu of history, as noted by Lozovsky:

Orosius does not want his picture of the world to be contemporary or even distinctly Christian. He evokes no significant biblical associations; he mentions no biblical places; he even omits Jerusalem. Only once does he introduce a comparatively contemporary and Christian note, when he mentions Constantinople, previously called Byzantium.<sup>226</sup>

The punishment of death by crucifixion was banned in AD 337 by Constantine but Orosius can still mention the practice numerous times without comment on the crucifixion of Jesus: 'For this offense, by order of the Carthaginians, he [Hamilcar] was fastened to the *patibulum* in the middle of the Forum and furnished a cruel spectacle to his fellows.'<sup>227</sup> (4.6.32, p. 133) The differing historiographical approach of Orosius is highlighted when viewed alongside Sulpicius Severus's *Historia sacra* which takes a

<sup>224</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Historia sacra*, 1.1: *Res a mundi exordio sacris litteris editas breuiter constringere et cum distinctione temporum usque ad nostram memoriam carpitam dicere aggressus sum*. Van Andel sees the *Historia sacra* as partly an epitome of the Old Testament, and that the Old Testament interested Severus more than any other work See Van Andel, (1976), p. 7; p. 12. Also Trompf on Sulpicius Severus's *Chronica*: 'As his [Severus's] work is two-thirds an epitome of the Biblical record of the past...with his account of Church affairs then running up to his own time, the *Chronica*'s narrative is very much conditioned by the mounting concern in Old Testament histories with the consequences of wickedness.' Trompf, (2000), p. 284.

<sup>225</sup> See Coffin, (1935).

<sup>226</sup> Lozovsky, (2000), p. 73.

<sup>227</sup> 4.6.32, vol. 2, p. 25: *Ob quam noxam in medio foro iussu Carthaginiensium patibulo suffixus crudele spectaculum suis praeuit*. See also 4.6.20; 4.9.9; 5.9.4. For the abolition of crucifixion by Constantine, see Aurelius Victor, *Liber de caesaribus*, 41.4; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.8.

much more conventional approach in providing a history of the institutional Christian Church from the time of Christ:

Moreover, it seemed to me not out of place that, after I had run through the sacred history down to the crucifixion of Christ, and the doings of the Apostles, I should add an account of events which subsequently took place. I am, therefore, to tell of the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecutions of the Christian people, the times of peace which followed, and of all things again thrown into confusion by the intestine dangers of the churches.<sup>228</sup>

Subsequent to the relation of biblical history, the work focuses on the Christian persecutions, the Christian emperors with particular attention to Constantine, the discovery of the True Cross by Helena, the 'heresies' of Arianism and Sabellianism, internal political church wranglings in Episcopal elections and exiles, church synods, and the contemporary conflict of Priscillianism. Although Orosius does incorporate the Christian persecutions and the Christianity of the Roman emperors is significant, Constantine is treated almost indifferently, and the internal conflicts of the church regarding heterodoxy and orthodoxy, Episcopal elections, and church synods are not included. It is possible to argue that the neglect of these details was a deliberate policy on the part of the author in order to avoid alienating a pagan reader who would have no interest in church synods and the election of one bishop or exile of another. The more theological aspect of Christianity, such as Augustine's two cities, would arguably not have engaged a pagan audience and is consequently suppressed.<sup>229</sup>

Furthermore, there is a specific lack of engagement with individual pagan cults and practises in the *Historiae*. While Orosius can be caustic at times towards the pagan religion he rarely remarks upon individual customs and his polemical attack is directed towards a homogenized version of paganism where the plurality of cults are lumped together as the pagan opposition. This is demonstrated at the beginning of Book Six in the extended polemic against the pagans who claim the success of the Roman empire for the pagan deities: 'But if some...give credit to their own gods whom they first chose out of prudence and then won over by their special devotion so that this extensive and

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<sup>228</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Historia sacra*, 1.1, p. 71: *uisum autem mihi est non absurdum, cum usque ad Christi crucem Apostolorumque actus per sacram historiam cucurrissem, etiam post gesta conectere: excidium Hierosolymae uexationesque populi Christiani et mox pacis tempora, ac rursus ecclesiarum intestinis periculis turbata omnia locuturus*. On the division of the *Historia sacra*, see Van Andel, (1975), p. 85.

<sup>229</sup> The Augustinian theory of the two cities is mentioned only once in the *Historiae*, in the Prologue to the work within the definition of paganism the text offers. Prologue 9.

magnificent Empire was founded for them through these gods...'.<sup>230</sup> (6.1.10, p. 228) Orosius's apologetical response to paganism is strangely superficial; the vehemence of the argument is evident in the defence of Christianity, but in the attack against paganism it is deliberately limited: 'However, I shall discuss the subject briefly...'.<sup>231</sup> (6.1.19, p. 231) The curtailed argument is echoed at the beginning of Book Seven: 'But I do not think that we need consider further the practice of religious rites, because in the midst of continual sacrifices there was no end or respite from ceaseless disasters, except when Christ, the Saviour of the world, shone upon us.'<sup>232</sup> (7.1.11, p. 285) Individual pagan deities or the rites they receive are not targeted; indeed, throughout the text the image of the temple of Janus occupies a positive position of significance in indicating the peaceful or warring state of the empire.

Orosius is keen to construct moments of shared religiosity, demonstrated by the image of a universal Christian community that encompasses Romans and Christians both governed by the same laws:

The breadth of the East, the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the great islands are of my law and name because I, as a Roman and a Christian, approach Christians and Romans.<sup>233</sup> (5.2.3, pp. 176-7)

Orosius even claims that polytheism has been abandoned and instead there is only belief in one god: '...the pagans, whom now revealed truth convicts of stubbornness rather than ignorance when they dispute with us, confess that they do not follow many gods, but under one great god worship many ministers of religion.'<sup>234</sup> (6.1.3, p. 228) It is only confusion that now prevents the pagans from realising the one true God. The suppression of fundamental elements in Christian history, the style of anti-pagan rhetoric, and the emphasis on common ground between Christians and pagans can be interpreted as evidence that the *Historiae* was intended for a pagan readership. This

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<sup>230</sup> 6.1.10, vol. 2, p. 164: *Quodsi aliqui hanc lucidissimam rationem inritam putant suisque diis potius adsignant, quos primum prudentia elegerint deinde praecipuo cultu inuitarint, ut sibi per eos amplissimum hoc pulcherrimumque imperium conderetur.*

<sup>231</sup> 6.1.19, vol. 2, p. 165: *Verumtamen breuiter discutio.*

<sup>232</sup> 7.1.11, vol. 3, p. 17: *Porro autem de cura caerimoniarum nec recensendum arbitror, quoniam inter sacra continua incessabilibus cladibus nullus finis ac nulla requies fuit, nisi cum saluator mundi Christus inluxit.*

<sup>233</sup> 5.2.3, vol. 2, p. 86: *Latitudo orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissimae tutissimaeque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo.*

<sup>234</sup> 6.1.3, vol. 2, p. 162: *unde etiam nunc pagani, - quos iam declarata ueritas de contumacia magis quam de ignorantia conuincit, - cum a nobis discutiuntur, non se plures deos sequi sed sub uno deo magno plures ministros uenerari fatentur.*

rationale is sustained by a passage in *De civitate Dei* which seems to provide direct evidence that the work was read by a pagan audience:

After I had circulated the first three books, and they began to be widely circulated, I heard that some people were preparing to write some kind of reply. Then I received information that this reply had been written, but the authors were looking for a suitable occasion to publish it without danger to themselves. I hereby warn them not to wish for something which is not for their own good. It is easy for anyone to imagine that he has made a reply, when has refused to keep silence. Is there anything more loquacious than folly?<sup>235</sup>

As it is possible that *De civitate Dei* and the *Historiae* were written in response to the same anti-Christian attack and for similar audiences, Augustine's warning to 'some people', his opponents, demonstrates the immediacy of the response to apologetical Christian works. For *De civitate Dei* and the *Historiae* to be written for an existent and specific pagan opposition and for that opposition to be active in response changes the perception of both the texts and the social context in which they were composed. This has the potential to contradict Momigliano's statement, that the Christians were unable to write their history for pagans.<sup>236</sup>

#### 1.2.5.7 A Triangle of Text: Speaker – opponent – addressee

Christian Tornau has recently proposed a model for understanding the intended audience of *De civitate Dei*, a model that can be extended to the *Historiae*. The arguments that the authors wrote for a shared readership have already been highlighted, which make the theory equally applicable to Orosius's text.<sup>237</sup> Tornau argues that in apologetic texts written for a Christian audience like *De civitate Dei*, it is possible to differentiate sharply between the pagan opponent and the Christian addressee:

Zu Augustins Zeit, als die Christianisierung des Imperiums schon weit fortgeschritten ist, ist es demgegenüber auch möglich, apologetische Texte für ein christliches

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<sup>235</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26: *Quorum tres priores cum edidissem et in multorum manibus esse coepissent, audiui quosdam nescio quam adversus eos responsionem scribendo praeparare. Deinde ad me perlatum est, quod iam scripserint, sed tempus quaerant, quo sine periculo possint edere. Quos admoneo, non optent quod eis non expedit. Facile est enim cuiquam videri respondisse, qui tacere noluerit. Aut quid est loquacius vanitate?*

<sup>236</sup> 'As far as I know, the Christians were unable to write their history for pagans.' Momigliano, (1966b), p. 21.

<sup>237</sup> For example, Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 16-17: 'The close connection between the *City of God* and the *Historiae*, the latter being presented as a supplement of the former, makes it likely that both target a similar audience.'

Publikum zu schreiben und den heidnischen Gegner vom christlichen Adressaten scharf zu trennen; wie wir sehen werden, ist Augustinus in *De civitate Dei* so vorgegangen.<sup>238</sup>

Tornau recognises that the presence of the pagan critic is always a feature of apologetic texts, whether in the role of addressee or opponent, and he understands a clear difference between the roles.<sup>239</sup> Before the eyes of the judging addressees the debate between Augustine and his opponents is enacted, where a perpetual stream of pagan objections demand the creation of counter-arguments from Augustine in defence of Christianity:

Was sich vor den Augen des urteilenden Adressaten zwischen Augustinus und seinen Gegnern abspielt, ist ein Streitgespräch, eine Disputation, in der auf die verteidigenden Darlegungen Augustins immer neue pagane Einwände folgen, die wiederum neue Argumente des Autors zur Verteidigung des Christentums provozieren.<sup>240</sup>

Tornau's concept sees Augustine as the speaker, the imagined pagan critics as his opponents, and his Christian readers as his addressees with the authority of judges; it is they who must decide the case: 'Die Adressaten werden mit der Autorität von 'Richtern' (*iudices*) ausgestattet, die den Konflikt zwischen Augustinus seinen heidnischen Gegnern zu entscheiden haben.'<sup>241</sup> This theoretical tripartite dialogue based on Augustine and *De civitate Dei* can be used as a model to understand the identity of audience and rhetorical nature of the *Historiae*. The difference in the text between the Christian addressee and the pagan opponent has already been established. Like Augustine, Orosius creates fictitious objections in order to direct his rhetoric against his hypothetical pagan detractors. In doing so Orosius intends to construct an intricate tissue of counterarguments that are designed to defeat any possible criticism of Christianity.

Following Tornau, Van Nuffelen understands the audience not to be pagan, but open to both sides of the argument and in need of persuasion for Christianity over paganism.<sup>242</sup> Like the first ten books of *De civitate Dei*, the *Historiae* is an attempt to 'convince the wavering on the basis of the inconsistency and incoherence of the arguments of the others.'<sup>243</sup> Van Nuffelen interprets this as the reason that Orosius does not rely

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<sup>238</sup> Tornau, (2006), p. 110.

<sup>239</sup> Tornau, (2006), p. 115.

<sup>240</sup> Tornau, (2006), p. 116.

<sup>241</sup> Tornau, (2006), p. 115.

<sup>242</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 17.

<sup>243</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 17-18.



explicitly on biblical authority to show that the pagan idealization of the past is untrue, but ‘remains within the methodological limits of classical historiography. He positions himself consciously in the playing field of the others.’<sup>244</sup> The tripartite dialogue with Orosius as speaker in dispute with a pagan opponent intended for a Christian addressee explains the apparent unconcern of the text about irritating a pagan reader or the unfavourable representation of pagan religion. I believe that this theory most convincingly explains the rhetorical argumentation and purpose of the text; however it must be recognised that because of the multiplicity and variance of the text, and the constant changing direction of the narrative voice in terms of address, it is possible to argue convincingly of the validity of the alternative proposed identities of the *Historiae*’s audience.

This section has presented and considered the evidence in the search for the pagan or Christian audience of the *Historiae*. This section has not argued definitively that the text was written for a pagan audience; instead it has offered evidence that can be interpreted as substantiating a pagan readership in a *Versuch* for a conventional Christian-pagan understanding of the text. However it has been argued that the partitioning of pagan and Christian in absolute terms, whilst conforming to the discourse within the *Historiae*, elides the fluidity between religious boundaries in the late fourth and early fifth century in a sense that is unhelpful in the attempt at audience identification. Although the conceit that Orosius was writing primarily for a pagan reader contravenes what I currently consider to be most likely in terms of rhetoric and audience, following Tornau (see above), evidence that potentially contradicts this theory should not be elided. This section may appear to be inconclusive, but the lack of a firm conclusion reflects the need to be open to changing theories and the fluid nature of audience, and also most significantly reflects the ambiguity of the text produced by variance and contradiction in relation to the reader. Here a consideration of the evidence particularly for a pagan readership is offered without the conclusion that this was the ‘actual’ readership. The idea of an actual, factual, or concrete readership is perhaps redundant in relation to the *Historiae*, as the text does not lend itself to such certainty.

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<sup>244</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 18.

## 1.2.6 The Language of Opposition: ‘Pagan’ and ‘Paganism’

### 1.2.6.1 Orosius and Pagan Writers

Within this historiographical investigation of the genre of the *Historiae* the theoretical difference between the reader and the addressee or opponent has been established. Despite the typical assumption that the reader is pagan, it has been demonstrated that this is not automatically the case, and that a more nuanced approach to the question of audience is required. In order to fully understand what the text is and what the text is doing, the related but distinct issues of audience and opponent must be considered. This section will look closely at the treatment and function of the pagan opposition, particularly as writers of history rather than as the contemporary pagan opponents Orosius was writing in response to.<sup>245</sup> This distinction between a writer of the past and a contemporary opponent complicates the definition of ‘pagan’ and who is being evoked with the use of the term, but it is crucial to recognise this distinction if a more complete understanding of the text is to be reached.

In the *Historiae* the perception of the past according to pagan writers is challenged, a perception where the past is glorified and provides *exempla* for imitation and aspiration. This perception is a one-sided representation by Orosius, and will be inevitably distorted and manipulated by his apologetic motivations. Orosius’s conception of the past is formulated through literature, and his response is itself literary. But Orosius is careful to direct his attack against other writers in the broadest possible terms. Although it is rarely made explicit, it is a reasonable deduction, based on the wider apologetic discourse of the text, that the authors Orosius writes against are pagan.<sup>246</sup> In this context, ‘pagan’ refers to the construct offered in the *Historiae* which functions as a binary opposite to ‘Christian’. It is impossible to tell from the text alone how far this is a fictionalised concept. At the outset of the work Orosius directs his criticism against Greek and Latin writers (*Graecos...Latinos*) ‘who have perpetuated in words the

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<sup>245</sup> Here ‘contemporary’ is the contemporary time of Orosius, the early fifth century AD.

<sup>246</sup> Van Nuffelen makes the same argument: ‘as Orosius remarks, ancient (given his apologetic slant, that label equals pagan) historians...’ Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 69.

accomplishments of kings and peoples for a lasting record'.<sup>247</sup> (1.1.1, p. 5) Within this polemic the 'blind opinion' (*opinio caeca*) of these writers is juxtaposed with the more complete and truthful Christian reading of history.<sup>248</sup> (1.1.2, p. 5) The narrative voice argues against *gentiles historici*, 'pagan historians' (1.3.6, p. 21) and the reign of Alexander the Great is told by *historici*.<sup>249</sup> (3.16.13, p. 102) Similarly Orosius challenges the evidence given by *historici* (4.13.8, vol. 2, p. 44) and 'writers' (*scriptorum*) who are inconsistent and false:

This inconsistency among the writers is surely a falsehood, but the cause of the falsehood is certainly flattery, for they are eager to pile up the praises of the victor and to extol the courage of the fatherland for present and future generations.<sup>250</sup> (4.20.7, p. 162)

The same accusation is made later against *historicum* who lie and whose diversity in recording events is evidence of their untrustworthiness: '...we have already spoken somewhat about the different opinions of disagreeing historians, and let it suffice that these have been detected and that what is falsely known is the knowledge of lies'.<sup>251</sup> (5.3.4, p. 178) At the opening of Book Three Orosius discusses the conundrum of attempting to cover all past events and how they came about, as recorded by 'authors' (*scriptores*) who do not have the same motivation for writing as he does.<sup>252</sup>

As Van Nuffelen has recognised, Orosius's polemic invites us to see a wide chasm between the *Historiae* and pagan works of history. Van Nuffelen understands that it is Orosius's 'express aim' to present 'the only true narrative of the past, which does not

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<sup>247</sup> 1.1.1, vol. 1, p. 10: *Et quoniam omnes propemodum tam apud Graecos quam apud Latinos studiosi ad scribendum uiri, qui res gestas regum populorumque ob diuturnam memoriam uerbis propagauerunt, initium scribendi...*

<sup>248</sup> 1.1.2, vol. 1, p. 10. See 2.1.5, 'Beginnings', for further discussion.

<sup>249</sup> 1.3.6, vol. 1, p. 43; 3.16.13, vol. 1, p. 166.

<sup>250</sup> 4.20.7, vol. 2, p. 62: *Sed haec uarietas scriptorum utique fallacia est; fallaciae autem causa profecto adulatio est, dum uictoris laudes accumulare uirtutemque patriae extollere uel praesentibus uel posteris student.*

<sup>251</sup> 5.3.4, vol. 2, p. 88: *sed de uarietate discordantium historicorum aliquanta iam diximus; quorum sufficiat detecta haec et male nota mendaciorum nota, quia parum credendum esse in ceteris euidenter ostendunt qui in his quoque, quae ipsi uidere, diuersi sunt* -. I have thought it preferable to retain the original Latin cases when quoting from the *Historiae* in order to maintain consistency so that quotations are always direct and replicate the original text exactly. For a previous note on this, see 0.11, 'Methodological Considerations'.

<sup>252</sup> 3 Preface 1, p. 77: '...neither can all things be unfolded nor through all things what were accomplished and just as they were accomplished, because important and innumerable matters were described by a great many writers at very great length; moreover, the writers, although they did not have the same motives...'. 3 Preface 1, vol. 1, p. 134: *nec omnia nec per omnia posse quae gesta et sicut gesta sunt explicari, quoniam magna atque innumera copiosissime et a plurimis scripta sunt; scriptores autem etsi non eadem causas...*

suffer from the blindness and bias of earlier histories.’<sup>253</sup> Although individual authors are on occasion criticised by name in the *Historiae*, it is evident from the examples cited above that Orosius is generally careful to restrict the terminology he uses to designate the authors he is writing against, describing them as *historici* or *scriptores*.<sup>254</sup> In doing so Orosius is establishing his polemic as vaguely directed against the writers of the past. Orosius is able to focus on his own apologetic argument and perspective of the past that he considers to be right rather than having to engage too closely with the individual arguments of others. This collectivization into a discursive category enables Orosius to homogenize the literature he is opposing, facilitating its disproof.<sup>255</sup> To designate the writers as writers of the past also has its own inherent pejoration; Orosius is trying to demonstrate that the past has been fundamentally misrepresented and was actually much worse than is generally thought. Earlier authors are automatically considered to be untrustworthy and deceitful, a portrayal actively emphasised by Orosius’s discourse to enlighten the reader to the correct interpretation of the present, which is much more favourable.

The instances provided above where Orosius refers directly to the authors he is writing to oppose demonstrate the generalized terminology he employs; although individual writers are given the epithet of ‘pagan’, in only one place are these writers collectively identified as pagan: *gentiles historici*, ‘pagan historians’.<sup>256</sup> (1.3.6, p. 21) Orosius’s strong apologetic motivations for writing and use of rhetoric necessitate that the *Historiae* is thoroughly interrogated and that the occurrences where Orosius informs the reader that the text is something or is doing something are not blindly accepted as a truthful statement. However, Orosius’s important and infamous definition of ‘pagan’ given in the Prologue where the narrative voice addresses Augustine confirms his instructions for the composition of the *Historiae*: ‘You [Augustine] bade me speak out in opposition to the empty perversity of those who, aliens to the City of God, are called

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<sup>253</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 80-1.

<sup>254</sup> For example, see 4.20.6 where Orosius questions the statistics of the enemy who were killed or captured in battle provided by Polybius, Valerius Maximus, and Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius.

<sup>255</sup> Kahlos, (2007), p. 16: ‘Lumping all non-Christians together under one term was a convenient and practical way of clarifying the complex reality. However, this lumping together was also an efficient rhetorical strategy since it was far easier to attack one target at a stroke than try to hit opponents one by one.’ Similarly Athanassiadi and Frede, (1999), pp. 4-5: ‘...those who were grouped together as pagans by the Christian apologists, partly for reasons of convenience, partly for reasons of propaganda.’ See Al. Cameron, (2011), pp. 26-7.

<sup>256</sup> 1.3.6, vol. 1, p. 43.

‘pagans’...’<sup>257</sup> (1 Prologue 9, p. 4) It would be hard to conceive that Orosius would represent Augustine as his patron, associated with and directing the text in instructing the defence of Christianity against paganism, if this situation was without foundation.<sup>258</sup> Therefore it is possible to conclude from this statement that at least according to the author’s own admission and using his own terminology, the main opposition of the text was pagan.<sup>259</sup> At this point it is important to note that the terminology of ‘pagan’ used in the Prologue develops multiple layers of identity in the text; the pagan authors of the past must be separated from the contemporary ‘pagan’ opponents who were attacking Christianity and whom Orosius directed his polemic against. The former provides the evidence for Orosius to argue against and discredit, and the latter is the adversary to be disproved. This Chapter is here focused on earlier pagan writers and not contemporary opponents.<sup>260</sup>

### 1.2.6.2 Labelling the Other

To describe the writers Orosius was opposing in a literary sense as ‘pagan’ seems inappropriate; this is partly because of Orosius’s own tentativeness in naming them as such, and because of the clear anachronism such a labelling involves.<sup>261</sup> Following Chadwick’s contention that ‘the pagans did not know they were pagans until the Christians told them they were’, the recognition of paganism as a concept created by Christians is increasingly endorsed within criticism.<sup>262</sup> The ‘paganism’ represented in

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<sup>257</sup> 1 Prologue 9, vol. 1, p. 8: *Praecepas mihi uti aduersus uaniloquam prauitatem eorum qui alieni a ciuitate Dei ex locorum agrestium conpitis et pagis pagani uocantur...*

<sup>258</sup> Orosius confirms the link between the pagans he is writing against and ‘the same pagans’ (*hos ipsos paganos*) that Augustine was writing to counter in *De ciuitate Dei*. 1 Prologue 11, p. 4; 1 Prologue 11, vol. 1, p. 8.

<sup>259</sup> However there is no reason to suppose that just because Orosius says at the beginning he is going to write against the pagans, that is actually what he intends to do or what he does do in the text, much like the reference to the City of God in the same place, which is the only place the theological concept is mentioned in the *Historiae*.

<sup>260</sup> For allusion to contemporary pagans, see: 6.1.3; 2.3.5; 3.2.14; 4.6.34-42; 4.12.5; 4.21.5-7; 6.22.10; 7.1.5; 7.8.4; 7.28.3-5; 7.33.17.

<sup>261</sup> This is partly recognised by Cameron: ‘Fourth-century pagans naturally never referred to themselves as pagans, less because the term was insulting than because the category had no meaning for them.’ Al. Cameron, (2011), p. 27.

<sup>262</sup> Chadwick, (1985), p. 9-10: ‘The very concept of ‘paganism’ is a Jewish-Christian construct. ‘Paganism’ is a term used by Latin-speaking Christians from about 300 onwards to describe the cults of the gods whether of Roman or Greek or Punic ancestral tradition. It is a lump word, a Christian category imposed on all non-monotheists to describe the unbaptised ‘civilian’ or ‘non-combatant’ whom they hoped to enlist in Christ’s army, but who remained held by social tradition or prejudice or the blinding influence of diabolical counterfeit.’; North, (2000); North, (1992), p. 188: ‘...the pagans, before their competition with Christianity, had no religion at all in the sense in which that word is normally used today. They had no tradition of discourse about ritual or religious matters (apart from philosophical

the *Historiae* is similarly a created construct, but it nevertheless signifies within the text an identity of people in the ancient world who were not Christians and who could potentially worship a variety of traditional cults.<sup>263</sup> As scholarship is still broadly dependent on the terminology invented by late antique Christians, it is arguably correct to describe these writers as pagan.<sup>264</sup> But it is not a self-categorisation they would have used themselves and it is not the primary way in which they would be categorised in modern criticism. Although Orosius targets Homer and Virgil as ‘pagan’ writers of antiquity, they would be described as epic poets or according to their ethnicity as Greek or Roman before their assumed individual religious affiliations would be used as a label. But the categorisation of Orosius’s literary opponents as pagan functions as part of his rhetoric, as recognised by Kahlos: ‘...the term ‘pagan’ abounding in literary sources illustrates the binary oppositions in the Christian polemic. These people indeed exist as the *category* of ‘pagans’ in Christian discourse (if not necessarily elsewhere).’<sup>265</sup> The use of the same problematic terminology within this research reflects Orosius’s language and is appropriate for close textual analysis of the *Historiae*. In addition, this research does not attempt to reconstruct or rehabilitate ancient paganism, but is more concerned with Orosius as a Christian polemicist, trying to understand his apologetic argument, and how the ‘othering’ of paganism against Christianity helped to formulate a Christian identity in the text. Like Kahlos, this research focuses on the ‘text world created by the Christian polemicists, although other

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debate or antiquarian treatise), no organised system of beliefs to which they were asked to commit themselves, no authority-structure peculiar to the religious area, above all no commitment to a particular group of people or set of ideas other than their family and political context. If this is the right view of pagan life, it follows that we should look on paganism quite simply as a religion invented in the course of the second to third centuries AD, in competition and interaction with Christian, Jews and others.’ Beard, North and Price, (1998), p. 312: ‘...persecution of the Christians, whether haphazard or systematic, reinforced a sense of religious identity for the Roman élite; while overt official backing for the ancestral cults defined, for the first time, all the accepted religious practices of the empire as a single category, in opposition to Christianity – so it is only from this point, and directly under the influence of Christianity, that it is possible to speak of ‘paganism’ as a *system* rather than as an amalgam of different cults.’ fn. 202: ‘Only now is it proper to speak of ‘paganism’. It is a paradox that Christianity invents paganism, not just as a term, but also as a system.’; Fowden, (1998), p. 176: ‘Roman paganism is especially difficult to deal with because anyway it did not exist. ‘Paganism’ was just a collection of ethnic polytheisms, whatever not Judaism or Christianity, but given a name by the lazy cunning of Christian apologists, who could then use their most salacious material to discredit all their opponents at one go.’; Kahlos, (2007), p. 18: ‘Paganism was never a religion and there were no pagans before Christianity. Christians invented paganism, not only as a term, but also as a system...Pagans are a relational concept, that is, there were no pagans as such but only in relation to and in most cases in contrast with Christians.’

<sup>263</sup> The early Christian use of ‘paganism’ functioned as ‘a convenient shorthand for [a] vast spectrum of cults ranging from the international to the ethnic and local.’ Fowden, (1993), p. 38.

<sup>264</sup> See the discussion by Kahlos, (2007), pp. 17-18.

<sup>265</sup> Kahlos, (2007), p. 18.

worlds, the world of historical reality and other text worlds, are glimpsed from time to time.’<sup>266</sup>

### 1.2.6.3 Truthful Statistics

Within the dichotomy of earlier pagan writers as deceitful and the *Historiae* as a text to be trusted, it is through the evidence from these texts in relation to warfare that Orosius is able to most effectively discredit pagan writers. Orosius criticises the suppression of the true statistics of war by ‘ancient writers’ who do not record the number of people killed on the winning (Roman) side:

How great a number of Pyrrhus’ allies on the opposite side were destroyed, tradition has not handed down, especially because it is the custom of ancient writers not to preserve the number of the slain on the side of those who were victorious, lest the losses of the victor tarnish the glory of the victor, unless perchance when so few fall that the small number of the losses increases the admiration and fear of the victor’s courage, as was the case with Alexander the Great in the battle of the Persian War.<sup>267</sup> (4.1.12-13, p. 123)

Orosius argues that in order to preserve the glory of the victory ‘tradition has not handed down’ the total number of losses for the victorious Romans; in highlighting this absence Orosius implies that the past has been misrepresented and the full impact of war, even for those who are triumphant, is elided. The inconsistency in the statistics given by Polybius, Valerius Maximus, and Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius for the number killed or captured at the battle of Cynoscephalae is attributed to deceit (*fallacia*):

The inconsistency among the writers is surely a falsehood, but the cause of the falsehood is certainly flattery, for they are eager to pile up the praises of the victor and to extol the courage of the fatherland for present and future generations. Otherwise, if the number had not been investigated, whatever it had been would not have been expressed. But if it is glorious for a general and the fatherland to have killed a large number of the enemy, how much more joyful can it seem to the fatherland and happier to the commander to have lost none or very few of his men. Thus, it is very clear that this takes place with the like shamelessness of lying, by which an addition is made to the number of the enemy killed, and also the loss suffered by the allies are diminished or even completely overlooked.<sup>268</sup> (4.20.7-10, pp. 162-3)

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<sup>266</sup> Kahlos, (2007), p. 5.

<sup>267</sup> 4.1.12-13, vol. 2, p. 12: *Nam quantus e diuerso numerus sociorum Pyrrhi fuerit extinctus, memoriae traditum non est, maxime quia scriptorum ueterum mos est ex ea parte quae uicerit occisorum non commendare numerum ne uictoriae gloriam maculent damna uictoris, nisi forte cum adeo pauci cadunt, ut admirationem terroremque uirtutis augeat paucitas perditorum, sicut in prima Persici belli congressione apud Alexandrum Magnum fuit...*

<sup>268</sup> 4.20.7-10, vol. 2, pp. 62-3: *Sed haec scriptorum utique fallacia est; fallaciae autem causa profecto adulatio est, dum uictoris laudes accumulare uirtutemque patriae extollere uel praesentibus uel posteris*

Orosius accuses the historians of falsifying the records of war for the sake of flattery, in order to heap praise (*laudes accumulare*) upon the winning side and proclaim the courage of the fatherland (*patriae*). These writers can increase the glory of their narratives if they can not only record that a large number of the enemy have been killed in battle but that none or very few Roman lives were lost in the process. It is with the ‘shamelessness of lying’ (*impudentia mentiendi*) that the number of the enemy (*hostium*) killed is increased whilst the number of the allies (*sociorum*) killed is reduced or suppressed altogether.

In Book Five Orosius again highlights the discrepancy in the historical narrative shown through the statistics of war. Tacitus, Valerius Antias, and Polybius all give varying figures for the numbers killed in two battles, Thermopylae and Phocis. Tacitus records twenty thousand killed at Thermopylae and seven thousand killed at Phocis; Valerius Antias only confirms the occurrence of the first battle and the number of the dead; whilst Polybius is forced to record both battles, ‘since he could not ignore a disaster at home’, but does not give the numbers of dead involved (5.3.3, p. 178).<sup>269</sup> From these historical assessments Orosius is able to dismiss the evidence given by the historians of the past as not to be trusted:

But we have already spoken somewhat about the different opinions of disagreeing historians, and let it suffice that these have been detected and that what is falsely known is the knowledge of lies, because they clearly show that they must receive little credence in other matters, who, in those things which they themselves have seen, are contrary.<sup>270</sup> (5.3.4, p. 178)

Orosius understands variance in the historical record as evidence of deceit.<sup>271</sup> Writers who differ when recording events that they have witnessed cannot be trusted in the rest

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*student: alioquin, si inquisitus non fuisset numerus, nec qualiscumque fuisset expressus. Quodsi gloriosum est duci et patriae plurimos hostium peremisse, quanto magis laetum patriae et duci beatum potest uideri suorum uel nullos uel paucissimos perdidisse. Ita lucidissime patet quia simili impudentia mentiendi qua occisorum hostium numero adiicitur, sociorum quoque amissorum damna minuuntur, uel etiam omnino reticentur.*

<sup>269</sup> 5.3.3, vol. 2, p. 88: ...tamen, quia domesticam cladem ignorare non potuit...

<sup>270</sup> 5.3.4, vol. 2, p. 88: sed de uarietate discordantium historicorum aliquanta iam diximus; quorum sufficiat detecta haec et male nota mendaciorum nota, quia parum credendum esse in ceteris euidenter ostendunt qui in his quoque, quae ipsi uidere, diuersi sunt. Orosius is probably referring the reader back to 4.20.7-10, as discussed above.

<sup>271</sup> As part of this rhetoric Orosius questions even the statistics that are provided as being deliberately inaccurate: ‘For who, I ask, would believe that there was that number just in the army of the Romans; I do not mean the number that fled?’ 4.13.8-9, p. 147: ‘When a part of their army had been killed, not at all so great as ought to have caused them terror, eight hundred thousand fled; for the historians hand down that at that time three thousand of them were killed, which is, therefore, more ignominious and disgraceful,



of their accounts. By considering and comparing the statistics of warfare given by pagan historians Orosius argues that these writers cannot be believed; their misrepresentation and distortion of the past is responsible for the warped view of contemporary pagans:

The rhetorical culture thus has a double distorting effect, for it disfigures the perception of both past and present: the former is deemed uniformly glorious, the latter infamous and dire. Such an attitude comes at the price of sanitizing the past: as Orosius remarks, ancient (given his apologetic slant, that label equals pagan) historians systematically leave out the number of dead on the Roman side so as to enhance the glory of the victory... contemporary pagans have no idea what real suffering is and how much blood the rise of Rome has cost.<sup>272</sup>

The pagan writers who have misrepresented the past are responsible for the flawed contemporary understanding of the past and present, a perspective Orosius is writing to correct. Orosius as a writer and the *Historiae* as a text are, by implication, more trustworthy.

#### 1.2.6.4 Self-endorsement and Superiority

The defamation of pagan writers of history as deceitful and false carries with it the implicit claim of Christian superiority, that the *Historiae* is, by contrast, more reliable and truthful. Orosius's rhetoric does not pretend to offer an alternative version of history; rather it is presented as the only accurate narrative of history. It has already been discussed how Orosius depicts himself as originally satisfied with the pagan argument of the misery of the present before being persuaded by the evidence of his own research that the past was much worse, providing an example for the reader to be similarly persuaded. Orosius does not directly accuse pagan writers of falsity and assert that he is to be trusted; instead a more nuanced rhetorical strategy is employed. Orosius systematically deconstructs the pagan interpretation of the past, targeting individual writers and examples, in order to ultimately disprove contemporary pagan attacks against Christianity. The omnipotent narrative voice, deliberately intended to be thought

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that so many battle lines fled when so few had been lost, since they betrayed that in other victories they had prevailed, not by the strength of their courage, but by the fortunate issue of the battles. For who, I ask, would believe that there was that number just in the army of the Romans; I do not mean the number that fled?' 4.13.8-9, vol. 2, p. 44: *octingenta milia Romanorum, nec saltim tanta quanta eos terrere debuit, caesa sui parte fugerunt: nam tria milia eorum tunc interfecta historici tradunt. Quod ideo ignominiosius turpiusque est, tam paucis amissis tanta agmina diffugisse, quia se in aliis uictoriis non uiribus animorum praeualuisse sed bellorum prouentibus prodiderunt. Quis enim rogo in exercitu Romanorum crederet numerum istum fuisse saltim, non dico fugisse?*

<sup>272</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 69.

of as synonymous with the author, is key in gaining the reader's confidence. This is achieved not only through the denigration of pagan writers but by giving occasional insights into the methodology of the text, creating a more intimate connection with the reader, as Van Nuffelen has observed.<sup>273</sup> The authorial interruptions allow momentary textual self-reflection:

I have woven together an inextricable wicker-work of confused history and I have worked in with words the uncertain cycles of war carried on here and there with frantic fury, following the evidence closely, for the more I kept to the order of events, the more, as I see it, I wrote in a disorderly fashion.<sup>274</sup> (3.2.9, p. 83)

The confusion that results from the composition of the historical narrative is portrayed as a product of the author's scrupulousness; the more Orosius follows the order of events, the more the text falls into disorder.

The subtle combination of self-deprecating humility, where the narrative voice recognises the 'inextricable wicker-work of confused history' (*indigestae historiae inextricabilem cratem*) produced, but as a reflection of the chaos of history and not a lack of skill on the part of the author, is intended to disarm the reader and secure their trust.<sup>275</sup> Orosius's authority as a writer is increased in highlighting the difficulty of his task. Crucially the polemic that the past is, perhaps unexpectedly, much worse than the present, is reinforced. The self-confessed confusion Orosius creates in his narrative is intended to undermine the glorified version of the past:

Orosius's true picture of the past is thus predicated on the fact that the past may be fundamentally muddled. It creates a loss of orientation among the readers, which helps to undermine the glorious and limpid narrative of Roman success that Orosius supposes to be rife among his audience.<sup>276</sup>

The narrative voice reveals the anxiety for order and clarity and shares in the methodological issues of the composition of narrative history which is designed to draw the reader into the author's way of thinking and gain their sympathy. Pagan writers are

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<sup>273</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 131: 'the repeated self-references are thus part of a conscious strategy of using himself as the explicit gateway for his audience to get a true sense of the past.' Van Nuffelen sees this as an 'obvious strategy of persuasion...given the fact that the *Historiae* are aimed at an audience that is in doubt about Christianity's claims.' Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 131.

<sup>274</sup> 3.2.9, vol. 1, p. 142: *Contexui indigestae historiae inextricabilem cratem atque incertos bellorum orbes huc et illuc lymphatico furore gestorum uerbis e uestigio secutus implicui, quoniam tanto, ut uideo, inordinatius scripsi, quanto magis ordinem custodiui.*

<sup>275</sup> 3.2.9, p. 83; 3.2.9, vol. 1, p. 142.

<sup>276</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 130.

discussed in opposite terms; they are given a total lack of credibility, and any errors or inconsistencies are immediately condemned as evidence of falsity and deceit.

#### 1.2.6.5 Brevity and Truth

Issues of brevity and genre in the *Historiae*, especially in the Prologue to Book Three, have already been addressed in this Chapter. However, the claims to brevity by the authorial voice are intricately connected with the rhetoric of the text, and overlap with this research on textual trust and honesty. Professions of brevity, order and clarity by the narrative voice are fundamental to the impression that Orosius the author is an authority to be trusted, in deliberate contrast with the deceit and falsity of the pagan historians.<sup>277</sup> The clear and recurrent signposting by the narrative voice which directly addresses the reader gives a sense of transparency and creates an intimacy where the methodology of the author is revealed:

But now I am forced to confess that for the purpose of anticipating the end of my book, I am passing over many details concerning the circumstances of the numerous evils of the age and am abbreviating everything. For in no way could I have at any time passed through so dense a forest of evils unless I were able at times to hasten my progress by frequent leaps. For inasmuch as the kingdom of the Assyrians was governed by some fifty kings through the one thousand one hundred and sixty years up to the reign of Sardanapallus, and almost never up to that time had peace from offensive and defensive wars, what end will be achieved if we try to recall them by enumerating them to say nothing of describing them? This is especially so, since the deeds of the Greeks must not be passed over and those of the Romans especially must be surveyed.<sup>278</sup> (1.12.1-3, pp. 32-3)

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<sup>277</sup> Despite characterising pagan writers as deceitful and false, the truth contained within Christian texts or arguments is rarely presented explicitly, indicated by the statement: 'In the midst of such a multitude of evils, the truth is most difficult to express.' 3.17.8, p. 103. *In tanta malorum multitudine difficillima dictis fides*. 3.17.8, vol. 1, pp. 167-8. More developed exceptions are found at the opening of Book One with the superiority of the Old Testament over pagan works of literature (1.1, pp. 5-7) and again in Book One with the argument of the superiority of Christian over pagan arguments (1.3, pp. 20-1). On authority and Orosius, see Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 5: 'The writings of Virgil, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante acquired authority because of the authors' social and/or cultural status when living, and more importantly as a result of the subsequent cultural and institutional reception of their works, they acquired the authority of *studium*, *imperium*, or *sacerdotium*.'

<sup>278</sup> 1.12.1-3, vol. 1, p. 59: *At ego nunc cogor fateri me prospiciendi finis commodo de tanta malorum saeculi circumstantia praeterire plurima, cuncta breuiare. Nequaquam enim tam densam aliquando siluam praetergrederi possem, nisi etiam crebris interdum saltibus subuolarem. Nam cum regnum Assyriorum per MCLX annos usque ad Sardanapallum per quinquaginta propemodum reges actum sit et numquam paene uel inferendis uel excipiendis usque in id tempus bellis quieuerit, quis finis reperietur, si ea commemorare numerando, ut non dicam describendo, conemur? praesertim cum et Graecorum praetereunda non sint et Romanorum uel maxime recensenda sint.* For further examples of methodological brevity, see 2.18.4; 3 Preface; 5.17.2.

Orosius argues that it is necessary to pass over details and abbreviate everything (*cuncta breuiare*) due to the dense ‘forest of evils’ that is the almost continuous narrative of war during the Assyrian kingdom. The abbreviation is justified by the logic that there would be little benefit in recording and describing these wars, and Orosius must be careful not to neglect the historical narrative of the Greek and Roman empires. Authorial brevity is represented as troubling and difficult but essential for all events to be included in the work, and as a quality that maintains the high literary standard of the *Historiae*.

The *Historiae* is characterised by a constant tension between the impulse towards brevity and providing comprehensive detail, a feature that is particularly evident in the Prologue to Book Three:

...from this very abundance about which I complain, there arises a difficulty...if I omit some things in my zeal for brevity, they will be thought either to have been lacking to me now or never to have taken place then; but if being anxious to point all things out, but not to describe them, I summarize them in a brief compendium, I shall make them obscure...<sup>279</sup> (3.1.2, p. 77)

The reader is intended to feel the agony of the author, and empathise with his conundrum in struggling to contain the chaos of the past in an articulate and ordered text. Although it is possible that the sense of being overwhelmed by the sheer volume of detail is genuine, it functions as part of the rhetoric which condemns the past as miserable and the present as much better. This rhetorical posturing is a construct where the reader is required to trust the author and his perspective on the past rather than witnessing complete historical detail.<sup>280</sup> Confidence in the author is encouraged by the presentation of the narrative voice as functioning to serve the reader, justifying methodological decisions according to logic and usefulness: ‘But that these have been mentioned rather than set forth in detail, I would concede to modesty, so that both he who knows them may refresh his memory and he who does not may enquire about

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<sup>279</sup> 3.1.2, vol. 1, p. 134: *Praeterea ex hac ipsa de qua queror abundantia angustia oritur mihi et concludit me sollicitudo nodosior. Si enim aliqua studio breuitatis omitto, putabuntur aut mihi nunc defuisse aut in illo tunc tempore non fuisse; si uero significare cuncta nec exprimere studens compendiosa breuitate succingo, obscura faciam...*

<sup>280</sup> Van Nuffelen understands that Orosius’s claims to brevity suggests to the reader the drama that remains hidden: ‘The admission of the failure to achieve full lucidity...is thus an invitation to the reader to fill in the skeleton offered...The drama punctually supplied by Orosius is to be extended imaginatively by the audience to the other events that are merely summed up. Read in this light, the repeated references throughout the narrative to the necessity to abbreviate and the omissions this implies, take on a different meaning. As statements of imperfection, they are constant reminders of what is not in the work and how many more examples and details of suffering from the past could be given...Orosius...is at pains to emphasize his own incompleteness, as a rhetorical suggestion that he has even more proof of the misery of the past than he actually offers to the reader.’ Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 134-5.

them.<sup>281</sup> (3.3.3, p. 84) Similarly Orosius defers narrative authority to Augustine rather than expanding on a topic further, being content to serve as a reminder to the reader and a useful signpost to Augustine's *De civitate Dei*:

Rich, indeed, now is this opportunity for grief and reproach, but where already your reverence has exercised the zeal for wisdom and truth, it is not right for me to venture beyond this. Let it suffice that I have reminded the reader and have turned him from any other intention to the fullness of that text of yours.<sup>282</sup> (3.4.6, pp. 85-6)

Humility accompanies brevity in justifying the methodology of Orosius and the direction of the narrative, facilitating the depiction of the author as a trustworthy guide to the travails of the past. The preoccupation with brevity and clarity are not only about the literary control and skill of the author, but deliberately advertising these qualities to the reader, implicitly claiming superiority over pagan literature.

### 1.2.7 Narrative Voice and the Limits of Orosian Biography

The narrative voice of the *Historiae* is intimately linked to and revealing of both the audience and the purpose of the text, in its address to a reader or opponent with respect to the former, and the methodological and apologetical reflexive passages that regularly punctuate the work concerning the latter. However, a critical discussion of the narrative voice, especially disconnected from the author or the name 'Orosius', has not been forthcoming.<sup>283</sup> The reader encounters a concrete portrayal of the 'I' in the *Historiae*, the narrative voice, that foregrounds, controls, and explains the narrative. This is fundamentally not the same as the author, and does not constitute direct access to or an accurate reflection of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of Orosius the historical figure. The narrative voice is ultimately a construct. It is also the case that the author, both represented within the text, and as an historical figure, are also constructs. There is no distinction between the narrative voice and the authorial voice in the text; they are presented as synonymous. The reader is intended to know who the 'I' of the text is; the assumption is supposed to be made that the narrative voice is Orosius. This is

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<sup>281</sup> 3.3.3, vol. 1, p. 144: *...probans se solum esse et conseruatorem humilium et punitorem malorum. Sed haec ut commemorata sint magis quam explicita uerecundiae concesserim ut et qui scit recolat et qui nescit inquirat.*

<sup>282</sup> 3.4.6, vol.1, p. 145: *Vber nunc quidem mihi iste doloris atque increpationis locus est, sed in quo iam reuerentia tua studium sapientiae et ueritatis exercuit, mihi super eo audere fas non est. Commonuisse me satis sit et ex qualibet intentione lectorem, ad illius lectionis plenitudinem remisisse.*

<sup>283</sup> The narrative voice and Orosius in the Old English tradition is discussed briefly by Deborah VanderBilt. VanderBilt, (1998), pp. 379-80.

demonstrated by the lack of any explanation for the voice and the affiliation the text makes with Augustine. However nowhere in the text is there a reflexive statement or reference to the narrative voice by name. The name of the author is attached to the *Historiae* through the paratext, which is itself subject to alteration and evolution. Indeed, the name ‘Orosius’ or ‘Paulus Orosius’ is not unproblematic. The use of the first name is not evident until the mid-sixth century when it is included by Jordanes.<sup>284</sup> Arnaud-Lindet has suggested that ‘Paulus’ is not in reality part of Orosius’s name, but is an error by copyists of the text who elaborated ‘Paulus’ from the initial ‘P’, which actually designated his clerical status as a Presbyter.<sup>285</sup>

The confusion surrounding the author’s name is further complicated by the association of the word ‘Ormesta’, ‘Ormista’, or ‘Hormesta’ with the *Historiae* in many of the manuscripts, although this is likely to have been a later addition.<sup>286</sup> The word is treated variously either as a name, an adjective, or part of the title.<sup>287</sup> Arnaud-Lindet interprets ‘ormesta’ not as a name applied to Orosius but as the equivalent in Old Breton of *excidium* in Latin, meaning ruin or destruction. The word is therefore an element of the Breton sub-title of the *Historiae*, ‘*De ormesta mundi*’, ‘The Destruction of the World’, thus emphasising its Millenarian perspective.<sup>288</sup> An alternative interpretation is offered by Alistair Campbell who suggests that ‘Hormesta’ as the traditional title for the work is ‘doubtless a portmanteau word made from some such contraction as Or.m.hist. (=Orosii mundi historia)’.<sup>289</sup> The categorisation of the narrative voice according to the identity of the author is intrinsically problematic; with specific regard to the *Historiae* this is further complicated by the instability of the language used to refer to the author. The lack of certainty has not prevented the categorisation of Orosius and the *Historiae* using the ‘knowledge’ of the name of the author and the title of the work.<sup>290</sup> Despite the

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<sup>284</sup> Jordanes, *Getica*, 9.58.

<sup>285</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xiii.

<sup>286</sup> Recognised by Lippold, (1976), vol. 1, p. xxv, fn. 8.

<sup>287</sup> According to Theodore Von Mörner, Orosius’ full name was ‘Paulus Orosius Hormistas’ or ‘Paulus Hormistas Orosius’ or even ‘Paulus Hormistas Mundus’. Mörner, (1844), pp. 180-1.

<sup>288</sup> Arnaud-Lindet., (1990), vol. 1, pp. XIII-XIV. This argument is unlikely; although Millenarianism does feature in the *Historia* it is not prominent enough to warrant a subtitle in reference.

<sup>289</sup> Campbell, (1953), p.13.

<sup>290</sup> This is shown by Arnaud-Lindet, who discusses the ethnography of Orosius based on his name: ‘La possibilité d’une origine bretonne d’Orose n’est pas infirmée par l’onomastique. A la vérité, le nom “Orosius” n’appartient pas au domaine latin, où il n’est attesté que de façon douteuse et tardive...Le nom porté par notre auteur n’était sans doute qu’un nom barbare, latinisé par se désience...’ Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), pp. xii-xiii.

fluidity of the title of the work and the name of the author scholarship makes claims about both, but presented as secure factual statements.

The correspondence particularly between Augustine and Jerome confirms the existence of the historical figure of Orosius in the western Roman empire in the early fifth century, and the attachment of his name to the *Historiae*, the *Commonitorium* and the *Liber Apologeticus* is not necessarily inaccurate or invalid.<sup>291</sup> The name 'Orosius' is therefore useful in referring to the author of the *Historiae*; but the limitations of the name beyond an indicator of a broad conception of a person should be recognised. The tendency in modern criticism to read biography into the *Historiae* is common, and commonly problematic. A typical example is Rohrbacher's reconstruction of the life of Orosius, with speculation about the date of his birth, country of origin, and manner of death, all of which is unsubstantiated by historical detail.<sup>292</sup> Most frequently the narrative of the *Historiae* is interpreted literally, and a figurative construct of identity for rhetorical purposes is understood as an accurate relation of events in the life of Orosius, as recognised by Van Nuffelen.<sup>293</sup> This is most clearly seen in Book Five where the Christian identity elucidated in the text is construed as a biographical detail:

Long ago, when wars raged throughout the whole world, every province enjoyed its own kings, its own laws, and its own customs, and there was no alliance of mutual good feelings where a divergence of power divided...If anyone then, at that time, overcome by the severity of evils deserted his native land to the enemy, to what unknown place did he, an unknown, finally go? What people, in general an enemy, did he, an enemy, supplicate? To whom did he at a first meeting entrust himself, not having been invited by reason of an alliance by name, nor induced by a common law, nor secure by a oneness of religion?<sup>294</sup> (5.1.14-16, p. 175)

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<sup>291</sup> Augustine, *Epistula* 166 to Jerome; Augustine, *Epistula* 169 to Evodius; Augustine, *Epistula* 80 to Oceanus; Augustine, *Epistula* 19 to Jerome; Augustine, *Epistula* 202 to Opatius; Augustine, *Epistula* 228 to Orosius; Augustine, *Ad Orosium contra Priscillianistas et Origenistas*; Augustine, *Retractiones*. Jerome, *Epistula* 134 to Augustine. Avitus de Braga, *Epistula Auiti, ad Palchonium*. Severus, *Epistula Seueri ad omnem ecclesiam*. For a discussion of the life of Orosius, see Vilella, (2000).

<sup>292</sup> Rohrbacher, (2002), pp. 135-137. Arnaud-Lindet opens the introduction to his critical edition with an extended discussion of the biography of Orosius, including a reconstruction of the dates of the composition of the *Historiae*. Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, pp. ix-xx. See also Lacroix, (1965), pp. 29-40.

<sup>293</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 15: 'Scholars have been tempted to fill in the canvas of Orosius' life, even going so far as to draw a psychological portrait of Orosius based on certain passages, in particular the preface.' See Marrou for an understanding of the Prologue to the *Historiae* as biographical. Marrou, (1968), p. 67.

<sup>294</sup> 5.1.14-16, vol. 2, p. 85: *Olim cum bella toto Orbe feruebant, quaeque prouincia suis regibus suis legibus suisque moribus utebatur, nec erat societas adfectionum ubi dissidebat diuersitas postestatum...Si quis igitur tunc acerbitate malorum uictus patriam cum hoste deseruit, quem tandem ignotum locum ignotus adiit? quam gentem generaliter hostem hostis orauit? cui se congressu primo credidit, non societate nominis inuitatus, non communione iuris adductus, non religionis unitate securus?* See also 3.20.6-8, p. 107, which has similarly been interpreted as reflecting actual events in the life of Orosius.

Orosius is here building the rhetoric in preparation for the change from an abstract hypothetical scenario to a more definite first person. The author is deliberately blurring the boundaries between the image of a pre-Christian world, chaotic and politically divided, and the account constructed by the narrator of his escape from his 'native land' and the Christian sanctity he found in Africa:

But for me, when I flee at the first disturbance of whatever commotion, since it is a question of a secure place of refuge, everywhere there is native land, everywhere my law and my religion. Now Africa has received me as kindly as I confidently approached her...Africa, of her own free will, spreads out wide her kindly bosom to receive allies of her religion and peace, and of her own free will invites the weary ones whom she cherishes.<sup>295</sup> (5.2.1, p. 176)

The account of oppression, danger and escape reprieved by the welcome found in a Christian land enables the creation of a universal Christian identity, in contrast to the warring and inhospitable world before Christianity:

The breadth of the East, the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the great islands are of my law and name because I, as a Roman and a Christian, approach Christians and Romans...the one God...is both loved and feared by all; the same laws, which are subject to one God, prevail everywhere; and where I shall go unknown, I do not fear sudden violence as if I be unprotected.<sup>296</sup> (5.2.1-4, p. 176)

Following this triumphant and jingoistic version of religious nationalism, the narrative voice returns to the apologetic point, that because of Christianity the times have been demonstrably improved: 'These are the blessings of our times, which our ancestors did not have in their entirety either in the quiet of the present or the hope of the future or in a place of common refuge'.<sup>297</sup> (5.2.8, p. 177) Van Nuffelen understands that 'the awareness of the rhetoric of the text limits the possibility of biographical reconstruction.'<sup>298</sup> The particular strength of the apologetic of the text and the inclusion of the scenario for rhetorical reasons discounts what has been an automatic assumption,

<sup>295</sup> 5.2.1, vol. 2, p. 86: *Mihi autem prima qualiscumque motus perturbatione fugienti, quia de confugiendi statione securo, ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est. Nunc me Africa tam libenter excepit quam confidenter accessi...nunc ultro ad suscipiendos socios religionis et pacis suae beniuola uoluntate gremium pandit atque ultro fessos, quos foueat, inuitat.*

<sup>296</sup> 5.2.1-4, vol. 2, p. 86: *Mihi autem prima qualiscumque motus perturbatione fugienti, quia de confugiendi statione securo, ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est. Nunc me Africa tam libenter excepit quam confidenter accessi...Latitudo orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissimae tutissimaeque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo.*

<sup>297</sup> 5.2.8, vol. 2, p. 87: *Haec sunt nostrorum temporum bona: quae in totum uel in tranquillitate praesentium uel in spe futurorum uel in perfugio communi non habuere maiores...*

<sup>298</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 15.



that Orosius was here relating in accurate and honest terms his own individual biography. Instead the implication that the dangerous flight from a native land was drawn directly from the experiences of the author is intended to engage the reader emotionally and reinforce the apologetic point, in this case to demonstrate the ameliorating effect of Christianity.

### 1.2.7.1 Multiplicity and Contradiction in the Narrative Voice

The narrative voice of the *Historiae* is therefore not simple. It is complicated by the projection of a potentially fictionalised autobiography of the author, the historical figure of ‘Orosius’ onto the voice which directs the text. But beyond this it is possible to argue that the intrinsic nature of the text itself complicates the narrative voice, in the multiple tones and registers of the voice, and the numerous apologetical agendas the voice switches between. This makes the text difficult to define, problematic to categorise, and impossible to designate as one thing, or as having a uniform purpose.<sup>299</sup> The contradiction and multiplicity is more than simply stylistic; it is fundamental to the *Historiae* and any understanding of it. However this issue is often critically overlooked in the tendency to represent the text according to convenience, avoiding difficult issues and using a non-generalising language. The variety and inconsistency of the text can be demonstrated in the approach towards paganism: the text is often understood primarily as an anti-pagan diatribe, but the hostility towards paganism and the construction of religions more widely is not crystallized. Towards the end of Book One the narrative voice directs its polemic against ‘the pagans’, those who are too blind to see that the success of the Roman empire is attributable solely to the Christian religion.<sup>300</sup> (1.16.4, p. 37) Here the opposition is being established between the Christian and pagan religions, that Christianity ‘unites all peoples through a common faith’ (1.16.4, p. 37) whilst paganism is oblivious to unity offered through alliance in the blind intent of the

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<sup>299</sup> The tensions and inconsistencies of the text are recognised by Henry Chadwick in his review of Hans-Werner Goetz's monograph on Orosius: 'As an exponent of a Christian reading of world history, Orosius is more complex than may appear. This dissertation-like volume [Goetz's work] shows both learning and judgement in eliciting the tensions he betrays, e.g., the love-hate relation both to Rome and its Empire on the one hand, and to the barbarians on the other; or the argument that the disasters being endured now are providentially mild compared with those of the Roman republic. The present is idealised at the expense of the past.' Chadwick, (1982), p. 59.

<sup>300</sup> 1.16.4, vol. 1, p. 67: *Et tamen caeca gentilitas cum haec Romana uirtute gesta non uideat, fide Romanorum inpetrata non credit nec adquiescit, cum intellegat, confiteri, beneficio Christianae religionis – quae cognatam per omnes populos fidem iungit.*

Roman empire on war and slaughter.<sup>301</sup> (1.16.2-4, p. 37) By contrast, Book Six opens with a statement on the universalism of mankind (*omnes homines*), and continues by claiming a united belief of monotheism between Christians and pagans:

...God is the one author of all things, to whom alone all things should be referred, so also now the pagans, whom now revealed truth convicts of stubbornness rather than ignorance when they dispute with us, confess that they do not follow many gods, but under one great god worship many ministers of religion.<sup>302</sup> (6.1.3, p. 228)

This unity of belief presented by the narrative voice is connected to a wider apologetic strand of universalism, in the construct of a universal community of mankind based on knowledge of God as the creator and the process of the sin of man punished by God (2.1.1-4). However this universalism is paralleled by an equal concern voiced by the narrator for disunity and political conflict in the concentration on the damaging effects of war, a topic which again divides the attention of the narrative voice.

Another area of tension that preoccupies the narrative voice is the juxtaposition between the past and the present:

That our pleasures are sometimes interfered with and our passions somewhat restrained, this we cannot endure. And yet there is this difference between men of that time and the present, namely, that the former endured these intolerable things with equanimity ...whereas the men of today being perpetually and serenely accustomed in their lives to tranquillity and pleasure, are aroused by every even moderate cloud of anxiety that envelopes them.<sup>303</sup> (1.21.18, p. 43)

The polemical point here is to downplay the significance of the sack of Rome by relativizing the event within history, neutralising pagan objections to Christianity. The narrative voice instructs 'those who grumble foolishly about Christian times' (2.3.5, p. 47), presumably pagan opponents, to 'truly reflect upon the times of their ancestors, so disturbed by wars, accursed with crimes, horrible with dissensions, most constant in miseries, at whose existence they can properly shudder, and they necessarily should ask

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<sup>301</sup> 1.16.4, vol. 1, p. 67: *...beneficio Christianae religionis – quae cognatam per omnes populos fidem iungit.*

<sup>302</sup> 6.1.3, vol. 2, p. 162: *...unum Deum auctorem omnium reppererunt, ad quem unum omnia referrentur; unde etiam nunc pagani, - quos iam declarata ueritas de contumacia magis quam de ignorantia conuincit, - cum a nobis discutiuntur, non se plures deos sequi sed sub uno deo magno plures ministros uenerari fatentur.*

<sup>303</sup> 1.21.18, vol. 1, p. 77: *Quamquam inter illius temporis homines atque istius hoc interest quod illi aequo animo haec intoleranda tolerabant quia in his nati uel enutriti erant et meliora non nouerant, isti autem, perpetuo in uita sua tranquillitatem et deliciarum sereno absuefacti, ad omne uel modicum obductae sollicitudinis nubilum commouentur.*

that they not return.<sup>304</sup> (2.3.9, p. 46) The contradiction inherent in the narrative voice is particularly evident in the diverging attitude to empire. The political entity of empire is the most favoured form of government and is used as a narrative structure to the text. The Roman empire is the empire chosen by God to succeed all others, under which the Incarnation would occur, and the final judgment would (eventually) take place (Prologue 15-16). The positive presence of the Roman empire, divinely ordained and Christianised, primarily by the conversion of the Roman emperors, functions as the triumphant culmination for the entire text. However the notion of empire and the Roman empire in particular is also derided in the postcolonial perspective the narrative voice, on occasion, adopts:

Behold, then, how happily Rome conquers, to the extent that whatever is outside Rome is unhappily conquered. Therefore, at what value is this drop of happiness obtained with great labour to be weighed, to which the felicity of one city ascribed in the midst of so great a mass of unhappiness through which the upheaval of the whole world is brought about?<sup>305</sup> (5.1.3-4, p. 173)

The anti-Roman discourse is associated with a position of pro-provinciality, where the effect of martial conquest on Carthage, Spain, Italy and Gaul are elucidated in overtly negative terms. Carthage is reduced to a single funeral pyre, with its citizens casting themselves into the flames (5.1.5); Spain, for two hundred years, watered its fields with its own blood and was reduced to internecine conflict (5.1.6); Italy unhappily resisted the Roman occupation for four hundred years (5.1.7); and Gaul, at the point of a sword, was forced to profess a promise of eternal slavery (6.12.2-5). The vilification of war and its effects necessitate the denigration of empire, a discourse which is not reconciled comfortably with the pro-empire stance of the text and the positive presentation of the Roman empire which enables the continued existence of mankind.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> 2.3.5, vol. 1, p. 89: *...tanto arcano ineffabilium iudiciorum Dei ex parte patefacto, intellegant hi qui insipienter utique de temporibus Christianis murmurant...*; 2.3.9, vol. 1, p. 89: *Recolant sane mecum maiorum suorum tempora, bellis inquietissima, sceleribus execrabilia, dissensionibus foeda, miseriis continuatissima, quae et merito possunt horrere, quia fuerunt, et necessario debent rogare, ne sint.*

<sup>305</sup> 5.1.3-4, vol. 2, p. 82: *Ecce quam feliciter Roma uincit tam infeliciter quidquid extra Romam est uincitur. Quanti igitur pendenda est gutta haec laboriosae felicitatis, cui adscribitur unius urbis beatitudo in tanta mole infelicitatis, per quam agitur totius Orbis euersio?*

<sup>306</sup> Book Five functions as an extended diatribe against the concept of war. See especially 5.24.9-21. For a consideration of the *Historiae* from a post-colonial perspective, see 5.3.3-5.3.11.

### 1.2.7.2 Multiple (Narrative) Voices

Beyond the tension created by the contrariety of the narrative voice and the apologetic argument, the constant switching of the voice between different registers adds a further layer to the presentation of the text. The narrative voice is broadly occupied by three areas of activity: one, the factual relation of events, more neutral in tone and chronologically determined; two, the apologetic passages, where the polemic about the narrative of history becomes most evident; and three, the self-conscious concern with authorial methodology, where the narrative voice offers an insight into the composition of the text. The indulgence of the narrative voice in explanation or justification for the direction of the narrative or elision of events creates a moment of suspension, where the author steps back from the progression of the work and reminds the reader that the text is a construct, a construct that is subjective and ultimately determined by the individual. This is demonstrated by the interruption of the narrative in Book One:

But now I am forced to confess that for the purpose of anticipating the end of my book, I am passing over many details concerning the circumstances of the numerous evils of the age and am abbreviating everything. For in no way could I have at any time passed through so dense a forest of evils unless I were able at times to hasten my progress by frequent leaps.<sup>307</sup> (1.12.1, pp. 32-33)

These moments are seen in addition to the self-conscious style of the Prologue to the work and the Prefaces to the individual books, but are part of the same process. The Preface to Book Three, which has already received close textual attention because of its focus on brevity, is an extended example of this rationalization of authorship: 'In an earlier book, I called to witness and, now of necessity, according to your instructions, I take up again the story of the conflicts of passed ages' (3 Preface 1, p. 77).<sup>308</sup> Further recourse to Augustine as the patron who established the principal aim of the work (elucidated in the Prologue) disrupts the narrative:

Rich, indeed, now is this opportunity for grief and reproach, but where already your reverence has exercised the zeal for wisdom and truth, it is not right for me to venture beyond this. Let it suffice that I have reminded the reader and have turned him from any other intention to the fullness of that text of yours.<sup>309</sup> (3.4.6, pp. 85-6)

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<sup>307</sup> 1.12.1, vol. 1, p. 59: *At ego nunc cogor fateri me prospiciendi finis commodo de tanta malorum saeculi circumstantia praeterire plurima, cuncta breuiare. Nequaquam enim tam densam aliquando siluam praetergredi possem, nisi etiam crebris interdum saltibus subuolarem.*

<sup>308</sup> 3 Preface 1, vol. 1, p. 134: *Et superiore iam libro contestatus sum et nunc necessarie repeto secundum praeceptum tuum de anteactis conflictationibus saeculi...*

<sup>309</sup> 3.4.6, vol. 1, p. 145: *Vber nunc quidem mihi iste doloris atque increpationis locus est, sed in quo iam reuerentia tua studium sapientiae et ueritatis exercuit, mihi super eo audere fas non est. Commonuisse me satis sit et ex qualibet intentione lectorem ad illius lectionis plenitudinem remisisse.*

The narrative voice is deliberately aligning the *Historiae* with *De civitate Dei*, that one necessarily supplements the other and the subject of the works do not overlap.

The constant intrusion of the voice into the narrative deliberately fractures the text, presenting and breaking down the meaning for the reader in clear and directed terms, and explaining the methodology of the composition. Unlike the multiplicity and contradiction of the narrative voice as discussed above, the reflexive intrusion of the voice here does not create tension in the same way; instead it requires the reader to suspend their involvement in the narrative. It returns the audience to the moment of composition rather than allowing the uninterrupted application of the *Historiae* to the reader's own times or an independent evaluation of the text. In constructing the narrative voice in such a way, with the prominent position of the narrator, the author is deriving attention beyond his status. The strong apologetic purpose of the text and the need to convince the reader of the apologetic makes this arguably necessary. The narrative voice of the *Historiae* is complex and multifaceted. It is interwoven with the identity of the author, the historical figure of Orosius, from which an autobiographical narrative has been derived. The text itself, foregrounded by the voice of the narrator, struggles to contain many apologetical agendas; there are too many cases to argue, too many perspectives to be represented, that split and divide the voice. The multiple registers and tones of the voice are demanded by the diversification of the apologetic argument. Contradiction becomes not only inevitable but an active and striking characteristic of the text. The intrinsic nature of the text in its purpose and function, and the voice that directs it, therefore make the critical process of locating a genre for the *Historiae* much more difficult – it is almost impossible to designate exactly what the text is. This struggle within modern criticism is linked to the unpopularity of the text. The misdiagnosis of genre means that critical anticipation is often disappointed; when a reader expects to get one thing and finds another, according to generic expectations the text has failed. That the categorisation of genre is only of limited usefulness and significance is a legitimate perspective. What is most important is that the lack of generic classification does not mean that the text is overlooked or judged as deficient.

### 1.2.8 Conclusion

The *Historiae* is a work of historiographical innovation; elements of various literary genres – chronicle, history, *breviarium*, and apologetic – are intertwined in one text, creating a new genre. This is recognised by Van Nuffelen:

In this respect it is important to note the peculiar nature of the world history of Orosius in the context of late antique historiography. Extremely influential in the Middle Ages, his work may resemble, in hindsight the paradigmatic Christian history...[But] Orosius is less the paradigm of Christian historiography in late antiquity than an important exception.<sup>310</sup>

In the absence of a more appropriate label, the *Historiae* can be categorised as ‘sacredizing’ history, in the appropriation and reworking of secular classical history into a new form of Christian universal history. The main aim of the *Historiae* as a prototype of historiography is to demonstrate the influence of the Christian God on all of history. ‘Sacred’ history is often used as a synonym for ecclesiastical history in the tradition of Eusebius of Caesarea, Sulpicius Severus, or Socrates, Sozoman and Theodoret, who emphasised the importance of ecclesiastical affairs and Christianity as defined by the institution of the Christian Church. To label the *Historiae* as ‘sacredizing’ recognises the difference of the text; ‘sacredizing’ history actively makes time sacred, as opposed to providing an account of sacred or ecclesiastical history. The genre that Orosius creates cannot be described as ecclesiastical history as the *Historiae* almost completely elides the ecclesiastical institution of the Church. Instead Orosius focuses on the secular and political, and, rather than shoe-horning Christian ecclesiastical history into an existing model, explodes the model by representing the divine providence of God as active within all of time and space, not simply from the period following the Incarnation. The political institution of empire is aligned with the authority of the Christian God, culminating in the sacred alliance with the Roman empire, represented foremost in the synchronisation of Christ and Augustus, with the Roman empire as the chosen and final empire, under which time would continue until the final judgement.<sup>311</sup> The perception of the *Historiae* as a unique creation has been critically interpreted positively and negatively, seen by Van Nuffelen’s designation of the text, and Michael Whitby’s epithet of ‘the oddball Orosius’, or Matthew’s judgement of the *Historiae* as

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<sup>310</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2010), p. 164. The creation of new genres in late antiquity is briefly contextualised by Basson, (1996), p. 276.

<sup>311</sup> For a discussion of Orosius’s theory of the four empires synthesised with the four compass points, see Inglebert (2001), pp. 360-2.

an ‘embarrassment’.<sup>312</sup> But the importance of the work cannot be overlooked; the engagement of a Christian work with secular history was unique for its time. Although later writers looked over Orosius’s shoulder in extending and excerpting the *Historiae*, Orosius’s contribution was never surpassed or replaced, and became the main instrument for the transmission of history from antiquity in a Christianised form throughout the Middle Ages and early Modern period.

## 2. Providence through Time: Dating and Division in the *Historiae*

### 2.1.1 Introduction

The *Historiae* is often described as ‘the first universal Christian History’, an epithet that relates to time as well as to space.<sup>313</sup> Orosius found meaning in history, specifically a Christian theological meaning, that necessitated a revisionist re-writing of past, present and future events. Time held a particular interest for Orosius, as it provided the framework on which to hang his discourse. Within the reinterpretation of history the modification and manipulation of time was itself required in order to give all history a purpose which transcends the narrative of events to complement the polemic of ever-worsening or ever-improving time. The *Historiae* arguably represents Orosius’s single-minded response to pagan accusations that Christian worship was responsible for the fall of Rome in AD 410. The text was designed to prove that the pagan past had actually

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<sup>312</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2010), p. 164; Whitby, (2003), p. 389; Matthews, (1989), p. 6.

<sup>313</sup> Coffin, (1935), p. 235. Zecchini, (2003), p. 320; Curtis, (1948), p. 30; Frend, (1989), p. 23. Trompf, (2000), pp. 294-5: ‘for all its “axe-grinding”’, the *Historiae* has been classified as ‘not only the first detailed Christian world history, but also arguably the only fully extant major “universal history” surviving from antiquity.’

been much worse than the troubled Christian present; the further temporally from the birth of Christ, the more 'horribly wretched' (*atrocius miseros*) time was.<sup>314</sup> Since the birth of Christ the Roman world had not declined but had improved, and was set on a course of constant improvement. The construction of linear time facilitates the broad eschatological consciousness of the text, enabling the postmillenarian premise of ever-improving time under the universal peace of the Christian Roman Empire. Following on from Chapter One where the fundamental purpose and genre of the *Historiae* were thoroughly deconstructed, the focus of this Chapter is enabled to be more specific and finite. The aim of the Chapter is to expose Orosius's historiographical method in relation to time – how he writes history, how it is structured, how it is organised and divided, and how it is manipulated or (mis)represented. The size and complexity of time as a subject, in general terms and specifically regarding the *Historiae*, necessitates the limited scope of the Chapter to a two-fold approach. Part one explores the philosophy of time within the text, examining abstract notions of the periodisation, division, synchronism, and continuation of time. This section concentrates on the organisation of world history centred around empire, with the rise and fall of the Babylonian, Macedonian, and Carthaginian empires culminating in the Roman empire, which is preordained for the coming of Christ. By contrast the focus of part two is more tangible and distinct, concerned with specific dating and systems for recording time. This section considers technical dating and questions how numerous methods such as *ab urbe condita* ('from the founding of the City') as well as Consular and Olympiad dating are synthesised in a Christian history. Divine providence, God as the author of time, and the providential idea of temporal progress are themes which run throughout the analysis of the Chapter.

## Part One – Time and Division

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<sup>314</sup> Prologue 13-14, p. 5: 'I gave myself over to the work and straight away found myself in confusion, for I had often thought that the disasters of our present times seemed to rage beyond what could have been expected. However, I found that the days gone by were as fraught as the present, and all the more horribly wretched as they were further from the salvation of True Religion.' Prologue 13-14, vol. 1, p. 9: *dedi operam et me ipsum in primis confusione pressi...Nactus sum enim praeteritos dies non solum aequae ut hos graues, uerum etiam tanto atrocius miseros quanto longius a remedio uerae religionis alienos.* Compare with Ammianus Marcellinus, 31.5.11-17. See Bird, (1993), p. xxiii-xxiv.



### 2.1.2 The Meaning of Time to Orosius

The treatment of time in the *Historiae* is well illustrated by comparison with another authority within the early church, Augustine of Hippo.<sup>315</sup> Unlike Orosius who does not pause to consider time from a personal perspective, in the *Confessiones* Augustine reflects on time as a philosophical concept. Whilst recognising the complexity of the answer, he asks the question *quid est enim tempus*, ‘What then is time?’ His failure to articulate a satisfactory explanation, contrived for rhetorical effect, is tinged with frustration: ‘I know what it is if no one asks me what it is; but if I want to explain it to someone who has asked me, I find that I do not know.’<sup>316</sup> In opposition to Augustine’s preoccupation with time in relation to the individual human memory, the concept is not interrogated in the *Historiae*; Orosius’s approach is quite unselfconscious. At the outset of the work he immediately commences his attack, criticising those pagan writers who, in their *opinione caeca*, ‘blind opinion’, have not acknowledged the creation of the world as the beginning of time, implicitly a rejection of the cyclical notion of history.<sup>317</sup> Orosius did not stop to wonder if he knew what time was, or if he could offer a comprehensible and rational explanation to his reader. Nevertheless time is the frame of the *Historiae*, riveted together by relative dating and forming a solid yet unobtrusive structure. Time is presented as accurately divisible and organised by fixed axis points. In this sense Orosian time is comparable with the inflexible and universal modern concept of absolute time. The perception of time in the *Historiae* is not a passive act; it is both interested and directed. It is for the author to decide what the definitive moments of history are, those that will break the continuity of the narrative and change the direction of time.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Similarly an approach taken by Wilcox, (1987), pp. 131-2.

<sup>316</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones*, 11.14: *quid est enim tempus?...si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio*. For a comparison of Augustine and Orosius in relation to time, see Wilcox, (1987), p. 131. For Augustine and Time, see Knuutila, (2001).

<sup>317</sup> 1.1.2, vol. 1, p. 10: *opinione caeca*. 1.1.2, p. 5: ‘blind opinion’.

<sup>318</sup> For the importance of time and chronology in the *Historiae*, see Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xlv: ‘Habités comme nous le sommes à la rareté des dates absolues transmises par les historiens gréco-latins, hors les chronographes, l’abondance et le précision apparente des indications chronologiques rencontrées dans les *Histoires* séduit et étonne à la fois. Ce caractère de l’œuvre, qui l’apparente à un “manuel”, fut l’une des raisons principales de sa grande diffusion dans le monde médiéval, où chaque bibliothèque se devait d’en avoir un exemplaire.’

### 2.1.3 Historiography and Methodology

Orosius's historiographical approach determines his methodology in relation to time. In the Prologue Orosius sets out the instructions he received from Augustine for the composition of the text:

...accordingly you bade me set forth from all the records available of histories and annals whatever instance I have found recorded from the past of the burdens of war or ravages of disease or sorrows of famine or horrors of earthquakes or of unusual floods or dreadful outbreaks of fire or cruel strokes of lightning and storms of hail or even the miseries caused by parricides and shameful deeds, and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.<sup>319</sup> (Prologue 10-11, p. 4)

The intent of the *Historiae* was universal; the geographical and temporal scope meant that all periods of history must be covered. Beginning with the creation of the world and ending with 'the present day', approximately AD 417, Orosius calculates a total of 5199 years from the Creation to the birth of Christ, a precise dating scheme which gives authority to the division and subdivision of history.<sup>320</sup> Although the text is not strictly annalistic, it does not set out all events occurring within each year, it does to some extent operate within the chronographical tradition, with the immediate example of Eusebius-Jerome's *Chronicon* to follow, which according to Fear 'forms the spine of Orosius's work.'<sup>321</sup> Orosius's version of history is successive; one thing happens after another, presented in the text in a chronological fashion.<sup>322</sup> Orosius creates a single temporal series of all human history within a broad political chronology that focuses on the collective rather than the individual, directed by the divine providence of God and progressing in one linear direction. The innovation in genre of universal Christian history represented by the *Historiae* similarly demanded innovation in temporal division and dating. In other works of history where events recorded occurred in relative

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<sup>319</sup> Prologue 10-11, vol. 1, p. 8: – *praeceperas ergo ut, ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis, quaecumque aut bellis graua aut corrupta morbis aut fame tristia aut terrarum motibus terribilia aut inundationibus aquarum insolita aut eruptionibus ignium metuenda aut ictibus fulminum plagisque grandinum saeua uel etiam parricidiis flagitiisque misera per transacta retro saecula repperissem, ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem.*

<sup>320</sup> Marrou recognises the originality and impact of Orosius's decision to begin his work with the Creation: '...combien de chroniqueurs du Haut moyen âge se setiront tenus de suivre cet exemple et récapituler l'histoire en commençant eux aussi *ab orbe condito* (I, 1, 14) ou si l'on préfère *ab Adam*.' Marrou, (1970), p. 70.

<sup>321</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 14.

<sup>322</sup> Munz, (1977), p. 115: '...one of the reasons why historians have always been so concerned with the rise and decline of power (be it of classes, or empires, or communities) is because stories of rise and decline are, in the first place, reflections of myth. After all, one does not *have* to perceive the passage of time in that particular shape of rise and decline. One could just as easily see it as "one damned thing after another"...But there is no getting away from the fact that a story of rise and decline is more meaningful than a chain of one damned event after another.'

proximity to each other, separated only by a few years, an absolute system of dating was not necessarily required. An example can be found in an important source for the *Historiae*, Pompeius Trogus's *Philippic History*, usually dated to the reign of Augustus and transmitted through the Epitome of Justin. The work circumvents the need for a regularised means of dating through a prepositional style of language. Events are connected by linking words and phrases such as: 'In the meantime', *interea* (3.5.1); 'After a long time and many adventures', *diuque et per uarios casus* (3.4.11); 'After a number of years', *Sed post annos plurimos* (3.4.12). By contrast Orosius's universal temporal and spatial objective to cover all ages in a synthesis of history meant that a systematic scheme for absolute dating was essential.

#### 2.1.4 The Elaborate Construction of Universal Time

According to Bertrand Russell, 'There is not one universal time, except by an elaborate construction; there are only local times, each of which may be taken to be the time within one biography.'<sup>323</sup> Russell's opposition to universal time in favour of local time through individual biography can be applied and extended to Orosius and the *Historiae*. The *Historiae* represents one vision of history from a fixed temporal, cultural, ethnic, spatial and religious position. The Orosian rhetoric is relentless and inflexible; it leaves no room for question, possibility, or alternative. In this sense it is a biography of universal proportions, where macro-history elucidates micro-history. The tendency is often to take this literally, in finding biographical details of the author in the text. The most famous example occurs in Book Five where Orosius's construction of a Christian identity formulated around the idea of being a political refugee fleeing hostile invasion is usually interpreted as a biographical detail:

But for me, when I flee at the first disturbance of whatever commotion, since it is a question of a secure place of refuge, everywhere there is native land, everywhere my law and my religion. Now Africa has received me as kindly as I confidently approached her...The breadth of the East, the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the great islands are of my law and name because I, as a Roman and a Christian, approach Christians and Romans.<sup>324</sup> (5.2.1-4, p. 176)

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<sup>323</sup> Russell, (1921), p. 128.

<sup>324</sup> 5.2.1-4, vol. 2, p. 86: *Mihi autem prima qualiscumque motus perturbatione fugienti, quia de confugiendi statione securo, ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est. Nunc me Africa tam libenter excepit quam confidenter accessi...Latitudo orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissimae tutissimaeque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo.*

How far the *Historiae* is a universal biography, or rather how much it can be said to represent a typical or accurate vision of the Western Roman Empire in the early fifth century, is an ongoing issue of contention within criticism.<sup>325</sup>

What is certain is the lack of the local in the *Historiae*; the universal aspect of the text assumes such prominence that a concentration on individual places or peoples at a local level is not included. This is confirmed by Lozovsky:

Among these global concerns, Orosius gives comparatively little attention to individual places. General trends and connections seem to interest him more than concrete locations. Describing the events of Eastern and Greek history, he uses a broad stroke more often than a minute touch, and he speaks of the conquests and movements of his characters in general terms of continents and provinces rather than in specific cities or landscape features.<sup>326</sup>

The large-scale tendency in the text is demonstrated through the issue of time. Although the fundamental nature of time is important, in its beginning and end, and organisation through dating and division, nowhere is a more specific engagement with time made, in local calendars or alternative local dating schemes. An immediate example is the Hispanic Era, used in Hispania to date from 38 BC following Augustus's conquest of Hispania.<sup>327</sup> If the hypothesis of Orosius's Hispanic origin is accepted, it would have been familiar to the author, but it is not used, with preference instead for a centric model of dating. In considering the *Historiae* in this way, as universal in aspect but through the medium of the individual, another perspective becomes apparent. Orosius can be regarded as omnipotent; in writing the *Historiae* he assumes the position of God-like knowledge and authority.<sup>328</sup> He knows the whole story, the 'burdens of war or ravages of disease or sorrows of famine or horrors of earthquakes or of unusual floods or dreadful outbreaks of miseries caused by parricides and shameful deeds', before it

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<sup>325</sup> Ward-Perkins (2006).

<sup>326</sup> Lozovsky, (2000), p. 76.

<sup>327</sup> The dating system seems to have been known to Isidore of Seville: see *Etymologiae*, 36.4. For a brief discussion of the dating system, see Gerli and Armistead, (2003), p. 190 ('Calendar').

<sup>328</sup> This perspective is shared by Marrou: 'Orose pour sa part se place un peu trop facilement à la place de Dieu lui-même pour formuler des jugements sur la signification des événements, des hommes et des temps; voilà qui ne sera pas d'un très bon exemple pour les historiens du Haut moyen âge qui se verront encouragés à déchiffrer le mystère de l'histoire et à voir la main de Dieu transparaître dans les épisodes de leur chronique, - cela d'autant plus qu'ils liront Orose non plus en fonction du but très précis que celui-ci s'était proposé, à savoir de répondre aux calomnies des païens dans ces années 410 – mais s'en serviront comme d'un manuel de base, de répertoire-type, modèle de l'histoire universelle. Mais on ne peut rendre Orose responsable du mauvais usage que les générations suivantes feront de lui!' Marrou, (1970), p. 76.

begins.<sup>329</sup> (Prologue 10-11, p. 4) In the same way that he argues that history is pre-ordained, so his History is, as revealed by the Christian numerology Orosius favours, which functions as more than an organising principle but illustrates the providential nature of the *Historiae*.

### 2.1.5 Beginnings

The *Historiae* opens with a statement of intent for the composition of the work that is explicitly orientated around time. The history of mankind (*hominum*) will be traced from ‘the origin of the world’ and ‘the beginning of man’s sin’, Original Sin.<sup>330</sup> (1.1.2-4, p. 5) This is situated in opposition to Greek and Latin writers (*Graecos...Latinos*) who, it is claimed, do not recognise the creation of humankind or origin of the world:

...nearly all men interested in writing, among the Greeks as among the Latins, who have perpetuated in words the accomplishments of kings and peoples for a lasting record...wish it to be believed in their blind opinion that the origin of the world and the creation of mankind were without beginning; yet they explain that kingdoms and wars began...as if, indeed, the human race up to that time lived in the manner of beasts, and then for the first time, as if shaken and aroused, awoke to a new wisdom.<sup>331</sup> (1.1.1-4, p. 5)

It is possible to see this statement in opposition to Livy, who utilises his Prologue to make clear his position with regard to pre-Roman history:

The traditions of what happened prior to the foundation of the City or whilst it was being built, are more fitted to adorn the creations of the poet than the authentic records of the historian, and I have no intention of establishing either their truth or their falsehood.<sup>332</sup>

Orosius attacks the Greek and Latin literary tradition by claiming that the reign of the Assyrian king Ninus is their starting point, and that it is in ‘their blind opinion that the origin of the world and the creation of mankind were without beginning’. (1.1.1-3, p. 5)

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<sup>329</sup> Prologue 10-11, vol. 1, p. 8: – *praeceperas ergo ut, ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis, quaecumque aut bellis grauia aut corrupta morbis aut fame tristia aut terrarum motibus terribilia aut inundationibus aquarum insolita aut eruptionibus ignium metuenda aut ictibus fulminum plagisque grandinum saeua uel etiam parricidiis flagitiisque misera per transacta retro saecula repperissem, ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem.*

<sup>330</sup> 1.1.2-4, vol. 1, p. 10: *...mundi originem creaturamque hominum...ab initio peccati hominis...*

<sup>331</sup> 1.1.1-4, vol. 1, p. 10: *Et quoniam omnes propemodum tam apud Graecos quam apud Latinos studiosi ad scribendum uiri, qui res gestas regum populorumque ob diuturnam memoriam uerbis propagauerunt, initium scribendi...qui cum opinione caeca mundi originem creaturamque hominum sine initio credi uelint, coepisse tamen ab hoc regna bellaque definiunt, quasi uero eatenus humanum genus ritu pecudum uixerit et tunc primum ueluti ad nouam prudentiam concussum suscitatumque uigilarit.*

<sup>332</sup> Livy, Prologue: *Quae ante conditam condendamue urbem poeticis magis decora fabulis quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec adfirmare nec refellere in animo est.*

The criticism has been interpreted as directed against the cyclical view of history, as opposed to a linear progression of time.<sup>333</sup> In opposition to these earlier writers, who are implicitly pagan, the narrative voice declares that ‘I have decided to trace the beginning of man’s wretchedness from the beginning of man’s sin, touching on only a few examples and these briefly.’<sup>334</sup> (1.1.4, p. 5) Accordingly Donald Wilcox understands that ‘Orosius was forging a new path, and he knew it.’<sup>335</sup> Orosius establishes the text by situating his methodology in opposition to the literary culture he was working within.

The argument which Orosius uses to reject the inherited tradition of pagan history (*historiographis*) is based upon time: firstly, that 3184 years from the Creation to the reign of Ninus have been neglected; and secondly, that from Ninus to the rule of Augustus 2015 years of history have passed, ‘in which between the performers and the writers the fruit of labours and occupations of all were wasted.’<sup>336</sup> (1.1.6, p. 6) The period of 3184 years between Creation and Ninus is a number derived from Eusebius-Jerome’s *Chronicon*.<sup>337</sup> The date is calculated by totalling the 2242 years from the creation of humanity to the Flood and 942 years from the Flood to the birth of Abraham. This becomes the main point from which dates are calculated in the *Chronicon*, expressed as *A Abr.*, ‘From Abraham’.<sup>338</sup> Rather than dating from the Creation, Eusebius’s Preface to the *Chronicon* translated by Jerome makes clear that only the birth of Abraham allows for an accurate system of dating to be developed.<sup>339</sup> Eusebius-

<sup>333</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 34, fn. 12. Fear highlights Justin’s *Epitoma* as beginning with the reign of Ninus, a work that is a major source for the *Historiae*. Fear, (2010), p. 33, fn. 11. The *Epitoma* commences with the authority of monarchy and Ninus as an exception who practised an expansionist policy of empire (1.1-10).

<sup>334</sup> 1.1.4, vol. 1, p. 10: *ego initium miseriae hominum ab initio peccati hominis docere institui, paucis dumtaxat isdemque breuiter delibatis*. The same writers are referred to again at 1.3.6 as *gentiles historici*, ‘pagan historians’.

<sup>335</sup> Wilcox. (1987), p. 141.

<sup>336</sup> 1.1.6, vol. 1, p. 11: *...se inter actores scriptoresque omnium otia negotiaque triuerunt*.

<sup>337</sup> Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, *praefatio*: *Uerum in curiositate ne cesses, et cum diuinam scripturam diligenter euolueris, a natiuitate Abraham usque ad totius orbis dilunium inuenies retrorsum annos DCCCCXLII, item a diluuiio usque ad Adam annos II CCXLII, in quibus nulla penitus nec Graeca nec barbara et, ut loquar in commune, gentilis inuenitur historia*. ‘Indeed, if you do not falter in carefulness and when you have diligently pored over the Divine Scripture, from the birth of Abraham back to the Flood of the whole earth, you will find 942 years, and from the flood back to Adam, 2242, in which no completely Greek, or barbarian or, to speak in general terms, gentile history is found.’

<sup>338</sup> For the choice of dating system and beginning with Abraham, see Burgess, (2011), p. 11 and p. 16. ‘He [Eusebius] chose Abraham, chiefly because he was regarded by Eusebius and other Christians as either the first Christian or as a proto-Christian. The *Chronicle* is, therefore, a history of the known world since the first coming of Christianity, and his ‘ann. Abr.’ chronology is therefore a proto-AD system.’ Burgess, (2011), (III) p. 16.

<sup>339</sup> For an alternative view, that the *Chronicon* began with Abraham because ‘Eusebius believed that human history really only began after the Fall’, see Croke, (1983), p. 7.

Jerome calculates from ‘Divine Scripture’ that there are 942 years between the flood and the birth of Abraham, and 2242 years between the flood back to Adam, ‘in which no completely Greek, or barbarian or, to speak in general terms, gentile history is found.’<sup>340</sup> For this reason the *Chronicon* relies on Jewish history in the birth of Abraham in order to most accurately calculate dates and time:

That is why the present little work traces the later years from Abraham and Ninus down to our time; and starts by displaying Abraham of the Jews, Ninus and Semiramis of the Assyrians, because at this time Athens was not a city, nor had the kingdom of the Argives received its name, as the Sicyonians alone were flourishing in Greece: they say that among them, in the days of Abraham and Ninus, Europs was the second to have reigned.<sup>341</sup>

Although the *Chronicon* offers the event of the birth of Abraham concurrently with the reign of Ninus as a starting point, as does Orosius, the *Chronicon* proper also begins with the Kingship of the Assyrians.<sup>342</sup> Orosius’s decision to begin his universal history at the point of Creation rather than the precedent of monarchy intentionally and significantly differentiates the *Historiae*. Orosius has broken and unravelled the circle of time to create the linear thread of history.

Complicit within this rejection the ignorance and deficiency of earlier writers demands that Orosius instead turn to the authority of Christian Scripture, specifically because it begins with the Creation:

Therefore, the subject itself demands that I touch upon briefly a few accounts from these books which, when speaking of the origin of the world, have lent credence to past events by the prediction of the future and the proof of subsequent happenings, not that we may seem to press their authority upon anyone, but because it is worthwhile to recall the general opinion which is common to all of us.<sup>343</sup> (1.1.7-9, p. 6)

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<sup>340</sup> Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, *Eusebii interpretata praefatio*: *Verum incuriositate ne cesses: et cum divinam Scripturam diligenter evolveris, a nativitate Abrahae usque ad totius orbis diluvium, invenies retrorsum annos CMXLII, item a diluvio usque ad Adam, MMCCXLII, in quibus nulla penitus Graeca, nec Barbara, et, ut loquar in commune, gentilis invenitur historia.*

<sup>341</sup> Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, *Eusebii interpretata praefatio*: *Quam ob rem praesens opusculum ab Abraham et Nino usque ad nostram aetatem inferiora tempora persequetur; et statim in principio sui Hebraeorum Abraham, Assyriorum Ninum et Semiramim proponet, quia neque Athenarum adhuc urbs, neque Argivorum regnum nomen acceperat, solis Sicyoniis in Graecia florentibus: apud quos temporibus Abrahae et Nini Europem secundum regnasse ferunt.* This is recognised by Humphries, (1996), p. 157.

<sup>342</sup> See 7.2.13-16 of the *Historiae* for parallels between the birth of Abraham and the birth of Christ.

<sup>343</sup> 1.1.7-9, vol. 1, p. 11: *Quapropter res ipsa exigit ex his libris quam breuissime uel pauca contingere qui originem mundi loquentes praeteritorum fidem adnuntiatione futurorum et post subsequa probabatione fecerunt: non quo auctoritatem eorum cuiquam uideamur ingerere, sed quo operae pretium sit de opinione uulgata quae nobis cum omnibus communis est commonere.*

Orosius denies the authority of pagan historical writing and replaces it with the Old Testament, aligning his work with Biblical rather than pagan models at this early stage in the text. Martin Heinzelmann has noted the significance of Orosius's historiographical decision:

Such an approach claimed a superiority for Christian historiography because of its greater completeness and, like the biblical writings, conferred an eminent moral context on the historiography: the creation of Adam, that is, the beginning of history, coincided with the Fall.<sup>344</sup>

Pre-dating the *Historiae* to begin at the point of Creation rather than the birth of Abraham or reign of Ninus correlates with the more general trend in the *Historiae* of a broadening out, extending the scope of the text in terms of time and space, but in association with the providential influence of the Christian God on all of history. Orosius's claim that the Old Testament is proved to be more credible by its reliable prediction of future events pointedly demonstrates the superiority of Scripture over the pagan account of time before Abraham and Ninus. It is possible to interpret Orosius's implicit meaning as a reference to the coming of Christ foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Pagan history cannot be relied upon to adequately or accurately cover the past; conversely Christian Scripture is comprehensive not only of earlier time but also of the future. Orosius is locating the narrative of the origin of the world and beginning of time exclusively within Scripture. The suggestion that the reality of the beginning of the world is a 'general opinion which is common to all of us' is based on Christian evidence and therefore necessitates the acceptance of Christian truths.<sup>345</sup> (1.1.8, p. 6)

The rejection of earlier historical writing is extended by the claim that previous authors began in the wrong place: 'Furthermore, those who begin with the middle period, although they never recall earlier times, have described nothing but wars and calamities.'<sup>346</sup> (1.1.11, p. 6) This provides a point of reference in chronological terms for Orosius to further differentiate the *Historiae*: 'What, then, prevents our unfolding the beginning of this story, the main body of which others have described, and demonstrating, by a very brief account, that earlier ages which were much more

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<sup>344</sup> Heinzelmann, (2001), p. 105.

<sup>345</sup> 1.1.8, vol. 1, p. 11: *non quo auctoritatem eorum cuiquam uideamur ingerere, sed quo operae pretium sit de opinione uulgata quae nobis cum omnibus communis est commonere.*

<sup>346</sup> 1.1.11, vol. 1, p. 11: *...porro autem cum etiam isti de mediis temporibus inchoantes, quamuis superiorum nusquam meminerint, nihil nisi bella cladesque descripserint.*



numerous endured similar miseries?’<sup>347</sup> (1.1.13, pp. 6-7) This important justification explains why the vast majority of the text focuses on time preceding the revelation of Christianity; in seven books of history it is not until the middle of Book Six that the Incarnation takes place.<sup>348</sup> This perhaps confutes the expectation that a Christian author would favour the period following the birth of Christ as the most important. History is written backwards, towards a significant event. The *Historiae* is no exception, the significant event in this case being the Incarnation of Christ. If this statement is accepted it must also be true that the outcome is already known. An alternative approach would have been to relegate the span of time before the advent of Christ as a dark period of irreligion and martial conflict, and focus solely on the amelioration of events subsequent to the Christian era. But the revolutionary choice to predate the text not only allowed the broadening of audience but enabled Orosius to give a new ideological interpretation to a period of history previously ignored by Christian writers.<sup>349</sup> The *Historiae* sees the deconstruction of empire in the first six books before its reconstruction once Augustus and Christ have assumed their positions in the narrative. The hindsight knowledge of Christ and Christianity Orosius possessed facilitated the literal re-writing of history from a Christian perspective.

### 2.1.6 Signposts

Where time has been traditionally dated using the regnal years of kings Orosius offers alternative Christian events as chronological ‘signposts’: the reign of Ninus with the birth of Abraham being one example, closely followed by another, the closing of the gates of Janus under the Emperor Augustus with the birth of Christ:

Now from Adam, the first man, to the King Ninus, so-called the ‘Great’, when Abraham was born, 3,184 years passed...from Ninus or Abraham to Caesar Augustus, that is, to the birth of Christ, which was in the forty-second year of the Caesar’s rule, when the Gates of Janus were closed, for peace had been made with the Parthians and wars had ceased in the whole world, 2,015 years have passed.<sup>350</sup> (1.1.5-7, pp. 5-6)

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<sup>347</sup> 1.1.13, vol. 1, p. 12: *quid impeditenti est nos eius rei caput pandere cuius illi corpus expresserint et priora illa saecula, quae multo numerosiora monstramus, uel tenuissimo testari relatu similes miseras pertulisse?*

<sup>348</sup> See Fear (2010), pp. 27-30 for a useful synopsis of the *Historiae*.

<sup>349</sup> Compare with Momigliano’s statement: ‘As far as I know, the Christians were unable to write their history for pagans.’ Momigliano, (1966b), p. 21.

<sup>350</sup> 1.1.5-7, vol. 1, pp. 10-11: *Sunt autem ab Adam primo homine usque ad Ninum <<magum>> ut dicunt regem, quando natus est Abraham, anni III CLXXXIII...A Nino autem uel Abraham usque ad Caesarem Augustum – id est usque ad natiuitatem Christi quae fuit anno imperii Caesaris quadragesimo secundo, cum facta pace cum Parthis Iani portae clausae sunt et bella toto orbe cessarunt – colliguntur anni II XV.*

The legitimacy of the reign of Ninus as a starting point for history writing in antiquity has already been questioned in the *Historiae*, and the further denigration of Ninus, ‘so-called the ‘Great’’, prepares the way for Orosius to effectively replace Ninus as a marker of historiography with the birth of Abraham. Once this has been established the two figures can be used interchangeably as temporal markers (‘from Ninus or Abraham’). Similarly the secular point of reference of the reign of Augustus is immediately given an alternative in the birth of Christ. Orosius contextualises the birth of Christ with a considerable level of detail of parallel events: in the forty-second year of Augustus’s rule, following peace with Parthia and a universal peace, and the closure of the gates of Janus, which comes 2015 years after Ninus.<sup>351</sup> The association between the birth of Christ and the beginning of the Roman empire with the end of war and the establishment of universal peace is made here for the first time and assumes a continued significance in the text. These events function similarly to the reign of Ninus and the birth of Abraham as markers of time and, in Orosius’s favoured practice of the synchronisation of historical events, they become synonymous with each other. The provision of alternative ‘sacred’ occurrences to ‘secular’ events can be understood as indicative of a wider ideological reinterpretation of history, providing an alternative Christianised version of time.

### 2.1.7 Division of Time and Space

Within the first book Orosius twice discusses in different terms how he intends to structure and organise the *Historiae*. The first instance is represented as a response to the neglect of time through the ignorance of other writers, and justifies the approach of his work not only as different but more comprehensive and therefore superior to these writers. The first example is explicitly organised around individual figures in history: Adam; Ninus and Abraham; Christ and Augustus. The exactitude and ordering of material is continued with the second instance in the organisation of the entire *opus* into a tripartite division:

Therefore, I intend to speak of the period from the founding of the world to the founding of the City; then up to the principate of Caesar and the birth of Christ, from

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<sup>351</sup> For an extended discussion of the image of the temple of Janus in the *Historiae*, see 3.1.2, ‘The Temple of Janus and Augustus’.

which time the control of the world has remained under the power of the City, down even to our own time.<sup>352</sup> (1.1.14, p. 7)

It has been noted that the division is not reflected as an even distribution within the text, but the apportioning of time itself is not equal so it is not necessary to expect the division of the text to be proportional.<sup>353</sup> Orosius's historiographical intention is inherently Romano-centric. From the beginning of the world as the starting point the text moves on to the founding of the city of Rome, then up to the beginning of the Roman empire and birth of Christ, down to the present time under which continues the universal dominance of Rome. Lozovsky has recognised the importance of Orosius's statement which serves to demonstrate

his view of the deep connection between historical events and the places where they occurred...he ties the story of the world and the story of man...to the story of the physical earth and the story of the human institution most important to Orosius – the Roman Empire.<sup>354</sup>

According to Lozovsky this passage expresses Orosius's 'concept of history', that 'the earth or the world is destined to be controlled by the City...and to accept Christianity.'<sup>355</sup> Orosius's statement does more than that; it neatly encapsulates the historiographical approach in structuring the *Historiae*, where the division between the origin of the world and Orosius's own time is bisected by the beginning of the Roman empire and the Incarnation of Christ. In this organisation the dominance of Rome is immediately apparent, reinforced by the almost casual admission of the universal hegemony the empire is still able to operate.

These two approaches, the first where history is organised around individual figures, and the second where time is divided in a tripartite structure, can be seen as distinct from the third and final approach Orosius records in the first book, which is articulated in geographical terms:

Insofar as I shall be able to recall them, I think it necessary to disclose the conflicts of the human race and the world, as it were, through its various parts, burning with evils, set afire with the torch of greed, viewing them as from a watchtower, so that first I shall describe the world itself which the human race inhabits, as it was divided by our

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<sup>352</sup> 1.1.14, vol. 1, p. 12: *Dicturus igitur ab orbe condito usque ad Urbem conditam, dehinc usque ad Caesaris principatum natiuitatemque Christi ex quo sub potestate Urbis orbis mansit imperium, uel etiam usque ad dies nostros*. In his choice of phrasing Orosius is punning on *urbis* and *orbis*. For a discussion of this pun see Lippold, (1976), vol. 1 p. 367. Also Varro, *De lingua latina*, 5.143.

<sup>353</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 35, n. 19.

<sup>354</sup> Lozovsky, (2000), p. 70.

<sup>355</sup> Lozovsky, (2000), p. 70.

ancestors into three parts and then established by regions and provinces, in order that when the locale of wars and the ravages of diseases are described, all interested may more easily obtain knowledge, not only of the events of their time, but also their location.<sup>356</sup> (1.1.15-17, p. 7)

The approach of the text is explicitly geo-political in the intention to describe ‘the world itself which the human race inhabits, as it was divided by our ancestors into three parts and then established by regions and provinces’. (1.1.16, p. 7) The ancient perspective of the world comprising Asia, Africa and Europe is readily accepted and replicated.<sup>357</sup> This organisation of space saw the Mediterranean at the heart of the scheme, with the subsequent hierarchy of regions, provinces, rulers, and the population. It has been noted that Orosius’s methodology is not original except in the way it consistently views the world from east to west, recognising the Christian importance of this orientation.<sup>358</sup> With this exception it must be observed how neglected the Christian significance of the east is in the *Historiae*. In favouring the division of the world based on the classical model Orosius deliberately neglects the tripartite division of the world found in Genesis where Noah’s three sons are ordered by God to ‘fill the earth’, a division which is used by Sulpicius Severus.<sup>359</sup> The Holy Land and the geographical context for the life of Jesus is pointedly elided. This not only conforms to Orosius’s version of Christian historiography which derives from secular rather than Scriptural models, but it also reorientates the narrative of history towards the west in the translation of empire from Babylon to Rome.

The passage quoted above which ends the Prologue to the text is fundamental to understanding the geographical description of the world which immediately follows, an inclusion in the work that has been considered critically to be problematic. A. T. Fear notes that the purpose of the description of the world is to provide a geographical context for the work, but no further use is made of it and it does not describe all the

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<sup>356</sup> 1.1.15-17, vol. 1, p. 12: *...et ueluti per diuersas partes ardentem malis mundum face cupiditas incensum e specula ostentaturus, necessarium reor ut primum ipsum terrarum orbem quem inhabitat humanum genus sicut est a maioribus trifarium distributum, deinde regionibus prouinciisque determinatum, expediam; quo facilius, cum locales bellorum morborumque clades ostentabuntur, studiosi quique non solum rerum ac temporum sed etiam locorum scientiam consequantur.*

<sup>357</sup> For the division in ancient writers, see Herodotus, 2.16; Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 3.1; Pomponius Mela, 1.1.

<sup>358</sup> Shepard, (2001), p. 224.

<sup>359</sup> Genesis, 9.1. See Olender, (1994), p. 10. Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, 1.4: ‘And the world was so divided to the sons of Noah, that Shem occupied the East, Japhet the West, and Ham the intermediate parts.’ *sed filiis Noë ita diuisus orbis fuit, ut Sem intra Orinetem, Iaphet Occidentem, Cham mediis contineretur.*

areas later found in the *Historiae*: 'It can be seen as establishing Orosius's universalist credentials but, beyond this, it is redundant.'<sup>360</sup> Lozovsky is less critical: 'The image of the world that emerges from Orosius' geographical chapter does not directly reflect any of the historical themes proclaimed in his statement of intent...It provides a broad framework of reference for the following historical events, rather than time-specific topographical layout.'<sup>361</sup> Yves Janvier is much more positive:

En bref, en matière de géographie, Orose est un amateur, mais un amateur doué...On ne peut que le féliciter, d'autre part, d'avoir voulu faire de ce tableau du monde le support de l'étude de l'histoire universelle, et sans le fragmenter en digressions comme on l'avait fait avant lui; d'avoir compris que "chronologie et géographie sont les deux fondements de toute historiographie authentique", qu'on ne peut raisonnablement apprendre et comprendre le passé de l'humanité qu'en le rapportant aux lieux qui en ont été le théâtre ; en somme, d'avoir su rappeler que l'histoire a été vécue sur la Terre, non dans un milieu immatériel ou un espace absolu.<sup>362</sup>

The function of the geographical description of the world known to Orosius is explained by the link to time in the crucial final sentence of the Prologue: 'all interested may more easily obtain knowledge, not only of the events of their time, but also their location.'<sup>363</sup> (1.1.17, p. 7) The geographical description allows the expansion of space and the enrichment of time in enabling multiple narratives to be developed simultaneously.<sup>364</sup> By assimilating the passage of time to the extension of space it is possible to combat what Peter Munz terms 'the depressing experience of deprivation through time', that is, the unilateral narrative of time where one event replaces another.<sup>365</sup> Through the geographical description of the world Orosius achieves the layering of time in the stratification of the narrative even within his representation of time as linear and directed by progress.<sup>366</sup> The broadening of time through the unfolding of space is

<sup>360</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 16

<sup>361</sup> Lozovsky, (2000), p. 70.

<sup>362</sup> Janvier, (1982), p. 262, quoting Lacroix, (1965), p. 52. For an assessment of the impact of Orosius as an ancient geographer, see Merrills, (2005), pp. 35-6: 'As a geographer, Orosius provided what was perhaps the single most influential delineation of the known world until the *Origines* of Isidore of Seville two centuries later'. Merrills also recognises that 'Orosius has habitually been included in a number of modern surveys of the history of geography and cartography, but chiefly as a moribund and barely competent regurgitator of classical truths.' Merrills, (2005), p. 36.

<sup>363</sup> This can be argued in spite of Goffart: 'The Christian universe of Orosius begins in timeless geography'. Goffart, (1988), p. 348. It seems likely that Goffart was referring not to the beginning of the *Historiae* but to Orosius's geographical description of the world known to him which was presented in temporal suspension. This has been noted by Lozovsky, (2000), p. 72.

<sup>364</sup> This argument builds on the theory of time and space developed by Peter Munz, (1977), pp. 37-8.

<sup>365</sup> Munz, (1977), p. 37.

<sup>366</sup> 'The circular-linear opposition has also been questioned on the basis that so-called "circular" (repetitive) time does not logically exclude "linear" sequencing because each repetition of a given "event" necessarily occurs later than previous ones. The analogy between time and a circle closing back on itself misleads here'. Munn, (1992), p. 101.

characterised in the text by the language of temporal transition, link words such as *interea*, 'in the mean time'; *tunc*, 'at that time'; *eodem tempore*, 'at the same time'; *post hoc*, 'after this'; *sed dum haec [Darius] agit*, 'Now, while [Darius] was accomplishing these things'.<sup>367</sup> In this way the extension of time is achieved through the expansion of space and it is therefore possible to represent multiple events happening at the same time in different places.

### 2.1.8 Division of Empire

The partition of time in Book One through periodisation demarcated by individual figures and the physical division of the world is further extended by a broader and more comprehensive categorization of time, history and space, in the rise and fall of empire.<sup>368</sup> Orosius's theory of successive empires, of Babylon, Macedonia, Africa, and Rome, not only provides an important structure to the narrative but also helps to demonstrate the apologetic of the text. The theory was designed to prove the first empire Babylon was the predecessor ultimately to Rome; one empire flourishing at the beginning of times, the other at the end:<sup>369</sup>

...if the kingdoms are hostile to one another, how much better it is if some one be the greatest to which all the power of the other kingdoms is subject, such as the Babylonian kingdom was in the beginning and, then, the Macedonian, afterwards also, the African and finally, the Roman which remains up to this day.<sup>370</sup> (2.1.4-5, p. 44)

The idea that Rome was founded in the year of Assyria's downfall can be found in Ennius, and is understood by Joseph Ward Swain and Gary Trompf to have been reproduced in Varro and subsequently Augustine.<sup>371</sup> Despite the secular presentation of the scheme in the *Historiae* it is often claimed that it originates in the Old Testament. This is questioned by Swain:

Orosius nowhere associates this philosophy with Daniel - he does not even record the celebrated dream and vision - and, while he knew Jerome personally and used Justin as

<sup>367</sup> 4.10.5, vol. 2, p. 37: *interea*; 4.10.5, p. 142: 'in the mean time'. 3.13.5, vol. 1, p. 158: *tunc*; 3.13.5, p. 96: 'at that time'. 4.21.4, vol. 2, p. 69: *eodem tempore*; 4.21.4, p. 168: 'at the same time'. 4.13.15, vol. 2, p. 45: *post hoc*; 4.13.15, p. 148: 'after this'. 3.16.11, vol. 1, p. 166: *sed dum haec [Darius] agit*; 3.16.11, p. 102: 'Now, while [Darius] was accomplishing these things'.

<sup>368</sup> For meaning within history connected with myth and the rise and fall of empire, see Munz, (1977), p. 115.

<sup>369</sup> Ennius, *Annales*, Fragment 501; Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.22.

<sup>370</sup> 2.1.4-5, vol. 1, p. 84: *...si autem regna diuersa, quanto aequius regnum aliquod maximum, cui reliquorum regnorum potestas uniuersa subicitur, quale a principio Babylonium et deinde Macedonicum fuit, post etiam Africanum atque in fine Romanum quod usque ad nunc manet...*

<sup>371</sup> Swain, (1940), p. 14; Trompf, (1979), pp. 222-3.

his principal source for secular history, his arrangement of the empires, including Carthage, indicates that he learned this philosophy of history elsewhere.<sup>372</sup>

The typology of the prophecies of the Book of Daniel concerning the four kingdoms is not directly quoted by Orosius but plays an important role as it constitutes the logical and chronological framework of the *Historiae*.<sup>373</sup> The eschatological vision of King Nebuchadnezzar of a statue made up of four parts is interpreted as four successive kingdoms that will rule over the world.<sup>374</sup> The significance of this philosophy of history for both pagan and Christian writers has been well established in an important article by Swain.<sup>375</sup> The usual interpretation of the four kingdoms in later historiography is that they refer to the Babylonian, Mede-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires.<sup>376</sup> Orosius's reinterpretation enabled a more western focus for the *Historiae*: the Persian and Babylonian empires are telescoped into one empire with Macedonia as the second empire, which allowed for the African or Carthaginian empire to take third place, naturally securing Rome's place as successor to Carthage and the final empire.<sup>377</sup> As Fear rightly concludes, the end result of Orosius's revised chronology remained unaltered but his 'new explanation of the vision would have seemed a far more credible version of historical development to his Roman readers than those offered by previous Christian interpretations, mired as they were in a narrow eastern perspective.'<sup>378</sup> The rhythm of the rise and fall of empire gave meaning to history in the *Historiae*, of 'steadily increasing strength from kingdom to kingdom and age to age, culminating in the setting of a seal of inescapable glory on the extreme west.'<sup>379</sup> The re-structuring of time in the *Historiae* simultaneously achieves a reorientation towards the west in the translation of empire principally from Babylon and ultimately to Rome. This lends strength to the polemic of the work where Rome is not only the fourth and final empire, but is the chosen empire for the continuation of time.

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<sup>372</sup> Swain, (1940), p. 21

<sup>373</sup> Paschoud, (1967), p. 279.

<sup>374</sup> Daniel, 2.28-46.

<sup>375</sup> Swain, (1940). Swain challenges the assumption that the philosophy of history is of primary importance for Christian writers by citing the significance of the theory for pagan writers, beginning with Velleius Paterculus (p. 2).

<sup>376</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 19.

<sup>377</sup> Swain points out that the four empire theory is fundamental to Pompeius Trogus's History, further suggesting a reliance by Orosius on Justin's Epitome of Trogus. Swain, (1940), pp. 16-18. In his discussion Marrou stresses the originality of Orosius in his manipulation of the four-empire theory: 'interprétation, on le voit, originale et qui repose sur une lecture attentive du chapitre concerné de Daniel.'

Marrou, (1970), p. 73.

<sup>378</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 19.

<sup>379</sup> Gerbi, (2010), p. 131.

### 2.1.9 Universalism and the Cardinal Points

The ordering of time according to the significance of empires provides a clear internal structure to the *Historiae*: Book One focuses on Assyria, Books Two and Three on Macedonia, Book Four on Carthage, and Books Five, Six and Seven with Rome.

Orosius extends the function of the four-empire theory by associating the four kingdoms with the four cardinal points of the compass:

...by the same ineffable plan at the four cardinal points of the world, four chief kingdoms preeminent in distinct stages, namely: the Babylonian kingdom in the East, the Carthaginian in the South, the Macedonian in the North, and the Roman in the West.<sup>380</sup> (2.1.5, p. 44)

This rhetorical discourse helps to represent the universalism first and foremost of the text, but also of the extent of God's influence as universal, and ultimately the hegemony of the Roman empire and Christianity:

So in the seven hundred and fifty-second year after the founding of the City, Caesar Augustus, when from the East to the West, from the North to the South, and over the entire circuit of the Ocean all nations were arranged in a single peace.<sup>381</sup> (6.22.1, p. 280)

The breadth of the East, the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the great islands are of my law and name because I, as a Roman and a Christian, approach Romans and Christians.<sup>382</sup> (5.2.3, p. 176)

Once the correlation between the kingdoms and compass points has been established at an early stage in the text the implication of the hegemony of Rome and Christianity over all other previous empires and religions is pervasive. The association between the west, Christianity and Rome is demonstrated in the important passage from Book Five excerpted above (5.2.3) where the west is absent from the list of the four points of the world but implied by the geographical context of Orosius's western perspective and identity as a Roman and Christian.

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<sup>380</sup> 2.1.5, vol. 1, p. 84-5: *eademque ineffabili ordinatione per quattuor mundi cardines quattuor regnorum principatus distinctis gradibus eminentes, ut Babylonium regnum ab oriente, a meridie Carthaginiense, a septentrione Macedonicum, ab occidente Romanum.*

<sup>381</sup> 6.22.1, vol. 2, p. 234: *Itaque anno ab Vrbe condita DCCLII, Caesar Augustus ab oriente in occidentem, a septentrione in meridiem ac per totum Oceani circulum cunctis gentibus una pace compositis.*

<sup>382</sup> 5.2.3, vol. 2, p. 86: *Latitudo orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissimae tutissimaeque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo.*



### 2.1.10 Babylon and Rome

Although the philosophy of history of the four empires provides an effective structure to the *Historiae*, the idea of ‘empire’ is most significant in polemical terms regarding the first and last empires, Babylon and Rome. Like Augustine, Orosius pares down the four-empire theory into two, creating a more streamlined concept of inheritance and succession. Augustine refers to Rome as the ‘second Babylon’ and expects Rome to exert a universal hegemony as the successor of Babylon.<sup>383</sup> The Assyrian or Babylonian empire functions as a point of comparison to Rome, as a device to demonstrate the superiority of the divinely chosen Roman empire when compared to the flaws and failings of Babylon. The concept of *translatio imperii*, the ‘translation of empire’, sees the authority of Babylon transferred to Rome. According to Trompf the medieval theory of *translatio* between empires began here with Orosius: ‘It was in fact Orosius’ representation of the two supreme and two “guardian” empires, as well as his account of the imperial inheritance, which formed the basis for what is known as medieval *translatio* theory.’<sup>384</sup> Using the metaphor of the family Babylon is represented as an ‘aged father’ to the ‘little son’ of Rome, and ‘the intervening and brief kingdoms’ of Africa and Macedonia are ‘protectors and guardians’.<sup>385</sup> (2.1.6, p. 44) The theme of the biological life cycle is extended and the rise of Rome at the expense of Babylon is specifically expressed in geographical terms, with the fall of the east and the rise of the west:

Indeed, at one and the same accord of time, the one fell, the other arose; the one, at the time, first endured the domination of foreigners; the other, at that time, also first rejected the haughtiness of her own princes; the one, at that time like a person at the door of death, left an inheritance; but the other, then attaining maturity recognized itself as the heir; at that time the power of the East fell, that of the West rose.<sup>386</sup> (2.2.10-11, p. 47)

The rhythm to history is combined with the synchronisation of empire in order to illustrate the omnipotence of the Christian God, that all events are directed by divine providence. The influence of the divine is more clearly visible in the manipulation of

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<sup>383</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.22.

<sup>384</sup> Trompf, (1979), p. 224.

<sup>385</sup> 2.1.6, vol. 2, p. 85: *...patrem senem ac filium paruum...tutor curatorque...*

<sup>386</sup> 2.2.10-11, vol. 1, pp. 87-8: *siquidem sub una eademque conuenientia temporum illa cecidit, ista surrexit; illa tunc primum alienigenarum perpessa dominatum, haec tunc primum etiam suorum aspernata fastidium; illa tunc quasi moriens dimisit hereditatem, haec uero pubescens tunc se agnouit heredem: tunc Orientis occidit et ortum est Occidentis imperium.*

time into a single linear series of events, a perspective enabled by the idea of successive empires.

### 2.1.10.1 Time and Decline

The presentation of the rise and fall of empire allows Orosius to establish a theme constantly returned to, of the vicissitudes of time and the mutability of human affairs. In Book Six this is related specifically to Rome:

Thus the status of Rome is constantly disturbed by alternating changes and is like the level of the Ocean, which is different every day, and is raised for seven days by increases growing less daily, and in the same number of days is drawn back by the natural loss and internal absorption.<sup>387</sup> (6.14.1 p. 257)

Within this philosophy human institutions will inevitably fail; only that which is ordained by God is secure and lasting. The Babylonian empire is the ultimate example of this philosophy, which is why Orosius simultaneously recognises the ‘greatness’ of Babylon before recounting the rhetorical narrative that sees the demolition of that empire:

It is not necessary at this point to amplify the unstable conditions of changing events. For whatever is made by the hand and work of man collapses and is consumed by the passage of time, as the capture of Babylon confirms. As soon as its power reached its peak, then it immediately declined, so that by a kind of law of succeeding generations due inheritance was passed on to posterity, which itself was to preserve the same law of inheritance. Thus, great Babylon and vast Lydia fell...And our people with unrestrained anxiety debate whether that powerful structure of the once very powerful Roman Republic is now trembling from the weakness common to old age rather than because it has been battered by foreign forces.<sup>388</sup> (2.6.13-14, p. 54)

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<sup>387</sup> 6.14.1, vol. 2, pp. 202-3: *Igitur Romani status agitur semper alterna mutatio, et uelut forma Oceani maris, quae omni die dispar, nunc succiduis per septem dies attollitur incrementis, nunc insequentibus totidem diebus naturali damno et defectur interiore subducitur*. Goetz has suggested that this theory of the changeable and transitory nature of history becomes important in later medieval historiography: ‘For the medieval chroniclers, historical change was primarily a cycle of political rise and fall, the growth and decay of regents and kingdoms.’ Goetz, (2002), p. 154. Goetz argues that the theory of what he terms *mutabilitas mundi* reaches its ‘most developed expression’ in the works of Otto of Freising. Otto followed the example of Orosius by writing his chronicle in seven ‘historical’ books but with the addition of an eighth book concerned with eternity and the end of time. Goetz, (2002), p. 154. On Orosius and Otto, see Goetz, (2002), p. 148, fn. 39.

<sup>388</sup> 2.6.13-14, vol. 1, p. 98: *Exaggerare hoc loco mutabilum rerum instabiles status non opus est: “quidquid enim est opere et manu factum, labi et consumi uetustate”, Babylon capta confirmat, cuius ut primum imperium ac potentissimum exstitit ita et primum cessit, ut ueluti quodam iure succedentis aetatis debita posteris traderetur hereditas, ipsis quoque eandem tradendi formulam seruaturis. Ita ad proxima aduentantis Cyri temptamenta succubuit magna Babylon et ingens Lydia...et nostri incircumspecta anxietate causantur, si potentissimae illae quondam Romanae reipublicae moles nunc magis inbecillitate propriae senectutis quam alienis concussae uiribus contremescunt*.

This image of extreme pessimism is reasonably rare in the *Historiae*; it is not often that Orosius defers so wholeheartedly to the omnipotent power of God at the expense of man, nor allows the front of optimism to slip in the admittance of doubt about the future of Rome. The concept of an empire reaching its greatest extent before declining and the articulation of this concern using the metaphor of a life-cycle was common in ancient literature, and is often attributed to a ‘pagan’ approach to the division of time.<sup>389</sup> It is possible to interpret this passage as Orosius’s acknowledgement of the pagan attack against Christianity following the Sack of Rome. It is ‘our people’ (*nostri*) who ‘with unrestrained anxiety’ (*incircumspecta anxietate*) debate the destruction or survival of the Roman empire.<sup>390</sup> ‘Our people’ can be understood in a broad sense of contemporary society in the early fifth century. The need to account for crisis is answered by Orosius in pessimistic terms, that history has proved the intransience and instability of human institutions, and only that which is ordained by God has any permanence. Orosius’s apologetic approach to pagan accusations against Christianity is demonstrated here by the short shrift they are given; specific or individual accusations are avoided, but in an implicit fashion the entire text functions as a response to hostile criticism.

#### 2.1.10.2 Auspicious Beginnings and Diverging Ends

The parallelism between Babylon and Rome is not only exemplified in the rise of empire but in their similar, and crucially different, ends. The synchronisation between the two powers is demonstrated in literal terms, relying on the calculation of the number of years the two empires ruled and were challenged in that rule. Orosius calculates that it was 1164 years after the foundation of Babylon that it was ‘despoiled’ by the Medes (2.3.2, p. 46).<sup>391</sup> It was after the same number of years that Rome suffered the Gothic sack and was similarly ‘despoiled of her riches’.<sup>392</sup> (2.3.3, p. 46) But Rome was not deprived of ‘her sovereignty’ and ‘still remains and rules unsubdued’.<sup>393</sup> (2.3.3, p. 46) Orosius juxtaposes the examples of the successful usurpation of Babylonian power by

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<sup>389</sup> The dichotomy between the ‘pagan’ cyclical concept of time and the ‘Christian’ linear concept of time is thoroughly discussed and deconstructed by Momigliano, (1966b).

<sup>390</sup> 2.6.14, p. 54; 2.6.14, vol. 1, p. 98.

<sup>391</sup> 2.3.2, vol. 1, p. 88: *Ita Babylon, post annos MCLX et propemodum quattuor quam condita erat, a Medis et Arbato, rege eorum, praefecto autem suo, spoliata opibus et regno atque ipso rege priuata est.*  
<sup>392</sup> 2.3.3, vol. 1, p. 88: *... inrupta et opibus spoliata non regno...*

<sup>393</sup> 2.3.3, vol. 1, p. 88: *Similiter et Roma post annos totidem, hoc est MCLX et fere quattuor, a Gothis et Alarico rege eorum, comite autem suo, inrupta et opibus spoliata non regno, manet adhuc et regnat incolumis.* This is reinforced at 2.3.5-10.

Arbatus and the unsuccessful usurpation of Roman authority by Attalus who was proclaimed emperor by the Gothic leader Alaric in AD 409 (2.3.4). The crucial difference between the fallen power of Babylon and the continuing dominance of Rome is centred on imperial authority: ‘yet in Rome alone was the impious attempt frustrated with the aid of a Christian emperor.’<sup>394</sup> (2.3.7, p. 47) Orosius juxtaposes the examples of history with the present in order to sustain his argument in favour of Christianity, clearly articulated by the claim that the ‘order of the whole parallelism’ was decreed and preserved by God.<sup>395</sup> (2.3.4, p. 46)

### 2.1.10.3 Reaffirmation, Synchronisation, and the Number Seven

The synchronisation that Orosius constructs between Babylon and Rome in Book Two is sustained throughout the work and recapitulated at the beginning of Book Seven:

...I consistently described many points of similarity between Babylon, a city of the Assyrians, at that time the first in the world, and Rome which today equally dominates the world. I pointed out that the former was the first and the latter the last empire; that the former gradually declined and the latter slowly gained strength; that the former lost its last king at the same time that the latter had its first...<sup>396</sup> (7.2.1-2)

As part of this scheme Orosius likens the expulsion of the Roman monarchy and restoration to independence of the Romans to the return of the Jews to Israel following the fall of Babylon to Cyrus:

...when Rome was claiming her independence then, too, the Jewish people, who were slaves under the kings at Babylon, regaining their freedom, returned to holy Jerusalem and, just as had been foretold by the prophets, rebuilt the temple of the Lord.<sup>397</sup> (7.2.3, pp. 285-6)

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<sup>394</sup> 2.3.7, vol. 1, p. 89: *quoniam ibi in rege libidinum turpitudine punita, hic Christianae religionis continentissima aequitas in rege servata est*. See Flower, (2013), p. 107: ‘When viewed against the background of Homeric heroes and Republican consuls, a Christian emperor was an unusual novelty, breaking with centuries of polytheistic tradition. However, when placed in the context of Christian history, he became the latest divinely sanctioned ruler in a narrative of growth and triumph.’ See Flower, (2013), pp. 16-17 for brief discussion of the impact of Christianity and imperial approval.

<sup>395</sup> 2.3.4, vol. 1, p. 88: *...quamuis in tantum arcanis statutis inter utramque urbem conuenientiae totius ordo seruatus sit...*

<sup>396</sup> 7.2.1-2, vol. 3, p. 17: *...multa conuenienter inter Babylonam urbem Assyriorum tunc principem gentium et Romam aequae nunc gentibus dominantem compacta conscripsi: fuisse illud primum, hoc ultimum imperium, illud paulatim cedens, at istud sensim conualescens: defluisse illi sub uno tempore nouissimum regem, cum isti primum fuisse.*

<sup>397</sup> 7.2.3, vol. 3, p. 17: *...uindicante libertatem suam Roma, tunc quoque Iudaeorum populus qui apud Babylonam sub regibus seruiebat sanctam Hierusalem recepta libertate redierit templumque Domini, sicut a prophetis praedictum fuerat, reformarit.*

Orosius intends his reader to understand that the Romans as a mirror to the Jews were also the ‘chosen people’ of God. Fear similarly interprets the desire to show Rome as playing an equally important part as Israel in God’s plans for mankind.<sup>398</sup> Within this section of reaffirmation, the correspondence between the four empires and the four compass points is reiterated, and the parallel life-spans of Babylon and Rome repeated. This provides the context for the extension of the four empire theory in finding further temporal coincidences, specifically using the number seven.

The number seven exerts a considerable influence on the imagination of the Christian Orosius. The universal history encapsulates the seven days of Creation, reflected in the seven books of the *Historiae*. The Macedonian as well as the Carthaginian empire lasted for seven hundred years: ‘both were terminated by the number seven, by which all things are decided.’<sup>399</sup> (7.2.9, p. 286) Although the Roman empire was continued for the purpose of Jesus’s Incarnation it similarly had ‘difficulty on meeting this number’: ‘For in the seven hundredth year of its foundation, a fire of uncertain origin destroyed fourteen of its districts, and, as Livy says, never was the City damaged by a greater conflagration’.<sup>400</sup> (7.2.10-11, pp. 286-7) In the Epitome of Livy the fire is recorded as a prodigy and similarly Orosius attributes significance to the event which heralds the beginning of civil war and provides a point of comparison for Rome with the three other empires.<sup>401</sup> Augustine similarly uses the example of Babylon to contrast Rome’s growth as an empire:

Rome, on the contrary, [to Babylon] did not so speedily and easily subdue all those nations of the East and the West which we now see beneath her Imperial sway, since her growth was a gradual process, and by the time she encountered them the nations were vigorous and warlike, in whatever direction she expanded.<sup>402</sup>

Babylon is distinguished within Orosius’s schema organised around the number seven in the *praeteritio* which indicates that Babylon survived for twice this number (1400 years): ‘I would be able also to show that twice this same number of years remained for

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<sup>398</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 320, fn. 7.

<sup>399</sup> 7.2.9, vol. 3, p. 18: *utrumque tamen septenarius ille numerus quo iudicantur omnia terminavit.*

<sup>400</sup> 7.2.10-11, vol. 3, pp. 18-9: *Roma ipsa etiam...tamen paululum et ipsa in occurso numeri huius offendit: nam septingentesimo conditionis suae anno, quattuordecim uicos eius incertum unde consurgens flamma consumpsit, nec unquam, ut ait Liuius, maiore incendio uastata est.*

<sup>401</sup> Obsequens, 65: *Incendium quo maxima pars urbis deleta est prodigii loco habitum.*

<sup>402</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.22: *Roma vero tot gentes et Orientis et Occidentis, quas imperio Romano subditas cernimus, non ea celeritate ac facilitate perdomuit, quoniam paulatim increscendo robustas eas et bellicosas, quaquā versum dilatabatur, inuenit.*

Babylon, which, after more than fourteen hundred years, was finally captured by King Cyrus, did not a consideration of present circumstances forbid.’<sup>403</sup> (7.2.12, p. 287)

Orosius strives to demonstrate that Rome did not fall and continues undeterred. Rome is distinguished from all other empires in preparation for the third chapter of Book Seven which, in triumphant terms and explicit recourse to Scripture, records the birth of Christ. The purpose of this numerical construction which gives meaning to history is treated as the evidence with which Orosius supports his apologetic argument. As a historiographical construction finding synchronism between events across the course of human history allows Orosius to direct his argument according to his apologetical motive. This liberates him from the constraints of the documentation of historical facts, accurate dates, or the chronological ordering of time. Orosius uses patterns of recurrent time within history, ‘too remarkable to be coincidental’, and the rise and fall of empire to prove God’s providence in history, but also to highlight his authorial position as one of privilege and omniscience.<sup>404</sup>

### 2.1.11 Time and Divine Providence

Orosius’s discussion of the division of time in Book Two and Book Seven are both contextualised by the providential design of God. Before the philosophy of the four empires is laid out Orosius opens Book Two with certain Christian ‘truths’: that ‘there is no one among men’ who does not know of the Christian Creation narrative; the sin of man effects punishment; that God, in his love for mankind, regulates and orders humanity through his divine foreknowledge of the future. From this Orosius concludes another universal truth, that that ‘all power and all ordering are from God, both those who have not read feel, and those who have read recognize.’<sup>405</sup> (2.1.3, p. 44) The dichotomy between knowing (*cognoscunt*) and reading (*legerunt*) implies a Scriptural foundation for the religious beliefs Orosius is advocating, an ignorance which he suggests is not automatically prevented by not actually reading Scripture. Underpinned by these Christian ‘certainties’, Orosius’s subsequent division of time through empire is shown to derive solely from God:

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<sup>403</sup> 7.2.12, vol. 3, p. 19: *Poteram quoque ostendere eundem duplicatum numerum mansisse Babyloniae quae post mille quadringentos et quod excurrit annos ultime a Cyro rege capta est, nisi praesentium contemplatione reuocarer.*

<sup>404</sup> Trompf, (1979), p. 224.

<sup>405</sup> 2.1.3. vol. 1, p. 84: *Quapropter omnem potestatem a Deo esse omnemque ordinationem et qui non legerunt sentiunt et qui legerunt cognoscunt.*

But if powers are from God, how much the more are the kingdoms, from which the remaining powers proceed; but if the kingdoms are hostile to one another, how much better it is if some one be the greatest to which the power of the other kingdoms is subject.<sup>406</sup> (2.1.3-5, p. 44)

The political dominion of 'empire' receives divine sanction and Orosius finds Christian meaning in the entirety of time in the providential influence of God on human affairs.

The distinctive role of empire in connection with divine providence is confirmed by Trompf:

God's providence was certainly reflected in history's continuity, especially in the transference of rôles and properties from one empire to another, the secondary régimes included. On the other hand, it was also confirmed by patterns of recurrence, by duplicated time lapses too remarkable to be coincidental, and by the repeated appearance and dissolution of the great states.<sup>407</sup>

Early in the *Historiae* God is established as the *auctorem temporum*, 'the author of Time'.<sup>408</sup> (1.3.4, p. 21) The terrestrial authority of empires and leaders is ultimately dependent on and enabled by the Christian God. This is reinforced in Book Seven by the justification Orosius offers within the affirmation of empire, specifically Babylon and Rome: 'But now to these remarks I add the following, to make it clearer that God is the one ruler of all ages, kingdoms, and places.'<sup>409</sup> (7.2.8, p. 286) Orosius's discourse on time functions ultimately to prove the divine influence of God on all of history, specifically through the proof of empire that the monotheistic supremacy of the Christian God is established throughout time and place.

### 2.1.12 Anti-Apocalypse Expectation: Rome and Continuing Time

It has been noted that universal chronology was bound to take into account not only the beginning, but also the end of time; Orosius had to 'accept or fight a belief in the apocalypse.'<sup>410</sup> However the overriding theme of improving times in the *Historiae* has been interpreted as explicitly anti-apocalyptic.<sup>411</sup> But a sense of the end of the world is

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<sup>406</sup> 2.1.3-5, vol. 1, p. 84: *Quod si potestates a Deo sunt, quanto magis regna a quibus reliquae potestates progrediuntur; si autem regna diuersa, quanto aequius regnum aliquod maximum, cui reliquorum regnorum potestas uniuersa subicitur.*

<sup>407</sup> Trompf, (1979), p. 224.

<sup>408</sup> 1.3.4, vol. 1, p. 42: *auctorem temporum.*

<sup>409</sup> 7.2.8, vol. 3, p. 18: *Nunc autem his illud adicio quo magis clareat unum esse arbitrum saeculorum regnorum locorumque omnium Deum.*

<sup>410</sup> Momigliano, (1963), p.82.

<sup>411</sup> Landes, (1989), p. 160.

brought to the attention of the reader by intermittent allusion; Orosius suggests that the end may not be far off, Roman civilisation is now suffering from ‘the infirmity of old age’ (2.6.13, p. 54), and he perceives himself as ‘placed at the end of time’ (4.5.12, p. 129).<sup>412</sup> According to Daley, these are ‘simply accepted turns of phrase, rhetorical concessions to an established apocalyptic tradition’.<sup>413</sup> They accordingly have ‘little effect on Orosius’ interpretation of history or of Christian institutions.’<sup>414</sup> In contrast with this approach it is possible to argue that an eschatological expectation of the end of the world does underlie the *Historiae*, in spite of Orosius’s anticipation of this event as deliberately vague and elusive. The subject of the Apocalypse is explicitly discussed in the Prologue, where Orosius echoes the common understanding that it will be a time of chaos and tribulation:

...those remote and very last days at the end of the world and at the appearance of Antichrist, or even at the final judgment when Christ the Lord predicted in Holy Scriptures even by his own testimony that distresses would occur such as never were before...approbation will come to the saints for the intolerable tribulations of those times and destruction to the wicked.<sup>415</sup> (Prologue, 15-16, p. 5)

A distinction should be made between the acknowledgement of the end of time as a reflection of contemporary Christian thinking and the active anticipation of the Apocalypse; the gulf in the *Historiae* is a very wide one.<sup>416</sup>

Crucial to an understanding of the sense of the Apocalyptic in the *Historiae* is the added dimension of the role of empire, specifically Rome. The text identifies Babylon as the empire that rules at the beginning of time and Rome as the empire that rules at the end: ‘the one God has so disposed the times in the beginning for the Babylonians and in the end for the Romans’.<sup>417</sup> (2.3.5, p. 47) Accordingly Orosius anticipates the destruction of the world within the life-span of the Roman empire. But significantly this does not necessarily determine an increased imminence of the event if Rome is considered to be

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<sup>412</sup> 4.5.12, vol. 2, p. 20: *...nos in ultimo temporum positi...*

<sup>413</sup> Daley, (1991), p. 152.

<sup>414</sup> Daley, (1991), p. 152.

<sup>415</sup> Prologue 15-16, vol. 1, p. 9: *...semotisque illis diebus nouissimis, sub fine saeculi et sub apparitione Antichristi uel etiam sub conclusione iudicii, quibus futuras angustias, quales ante non fuerint, dominus Christus per scripturas sanctas sua etiam contestatione praedixit...per intolerabiles tribulationes temporum illorum sanctos probatio, impios perditio consequetur.*

<sup>416</sup> For a similar view, see Trompf, (1979), p. 225: ‘In the main, Orosius was resigned to writing the history of vicissitudes, of “ups and downs” in affairs, with the eschaton as the only end of great moment. That was a position which took a grip on the medievals. It held on even when all Western rulers were avowedly Christian, because it linked biblical assumptions about temporal instabilities with continuing expectations of the Last Time.’

<sup>417</sup> 2.3.5, vol. 1, p. 89: *...unum Deum disposuisse tempora et in principio Babloniis et in fine Romanis...*



eternal. Unlike Augustine, who invoked the parallel between Babylon and Rome as an example of the transitory nature of the temporal state, Orosius was unable to divorce himself completely from a confidence in the divine permanence of the Christian empire.<sup>418</sup> The teleological position of Rome contradicts the suggestion by Swain that Orosius's interpretation included a fifth and final empire.<sup>419</sup> Although Swain argues that in Book Seven the fifth empire gradually replaces the fourth, he does not specify what the final empire is. The final empire is Rome, and any apocalyptic anticipation in the text must therefore be bound up with it.

But despite earlier apocalyptic allusions the reality of the denouement of the work in Book Seven does not actively envisage the end of time. Instead the birth of Christ at the beginning of Book Seven suggests a 'realized eschatology', where the hegemony of the Christian Roman empire will continue without the expectation of the end of time. The notion of a fifth empire to replace Rome in Athaulf's notorious suggestion of *Gothia* instead of *Romania* is immediately repressed:

...that he [Athaulf], at first, was ardently eager to blot out the Roman name and to make the entire Roman Empire that of the Goths alone, and to call it and to make it, to use a popular expression, *Gothia* instead of *Romania*, and that he, Athaulf, become what Caesar Augustus had once been. When, however, he discovered from long experience that the Goths, by reason of their unbridled barbarism, could not by any means obey laws...he chose to seek for himself the glory of completely restoring and increasing the Roman name by the forces of the Goths, and to be held by posterity as the author of the restoration of Rome.<sup>420</sup> (7.43.5-7, pp. 361-2)

Perhaps ironically following the Sack of Rome only seven years previously, Orosius's approach to the destruction of Rome and the end of time gives the western Roman empire a new lease of life, or at least 'a new mortgage on time'.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Fear identifies Orosius's apocalyptic views as postmillenarian, 'where the seventh millennium is again initiated by the birth of Christ, but what follows is a thousand-year reign of increasing peace and plenty as Christianity spreads across the world.' Fear bases this conclusion on the number seven, where the seven books reflect the seven days of creation, and that the seventh millennium will usher in Christ's reign of one thousand years followed by the final judgment: 'His seventh book therefore represents the seventh millennium that will last until the Second Coming...the general sense is that seven is the number of completeness and so marks the end of things.' Fear, (2010), pp. 10-11.

<sup>419</sup> Swain, (1940), p. 20; p. 21.

<sup>420</sup> 7.43.5-7, vol. 3, p. 128: *se inprimis ardentem inhiasse, ut, oblitterato Romano nomine, Romanum omne solum Gothorum imperium et faceret et uocaret, essetque, ut uulgariter loquar, Gothia quod Romania fuisset: fieret nunc Athaulfus quod quondam Caesar Augustus; at ubi multa experientia probauisset neque Gothos ullo modo parere legibus posse propter effrenatam barbariem neque reipublicae interdicti leges oportere, sine quibus respublica non est respublica, elegisse saltem ut gloriam sibi de restituendo in integrum augendoque Romano nomine Gothorum uiribus quaereret habereturque apud posteros Romanae restitutionis auctor, postquam esse non potuerat immutator.*

<sup>421</sup> Landes, (1988), p. 160.

## Part Two - Time and Dating

Although a sorely neglected topic, a consideration of the more technical aspects of dating and time in the *Historiae* is rewarding. The second part of this Chapter examines systems for recording time in terms of specific dating, particularly using *ab urbe condita*, Consular and Olympiad dating. Like the *Chronicon* of Eusebius-Jerome the *Historiae* offers an attempt at an accurate and comprehensive system of dating all events. The vast majority of chapters opens with the date according to *ab urbe condita* or some other method of temporal location. The chronological drive and concern with comprehensive coverage therefore means that the frequency of reference to time in an organising fashion is very high. But despite the significance of time in the *Historiae* Orosius's methodology for dating events and structuring time is ignored by those who study the text. This section hopes to move away from the prevailing critical indifference and offer something new to the subject of time and the *Historiae* within the context of ancient literature.

### 2.2.1 *Ab urbe condita*

A date is intended to signify a particular day, month or year of an event. But a date is in fact more than this; it is a synchronism, grounded on the correlation between past events.<sup>422</sup> Beyond this definition there is a distinction between 'relative dating' and a 'technical chronology'. Relative dating locates events within time by sporadic reference to significant events, and a 'technical chronology' organises time systematically where reference to dates are regularised.<sup>423</sup> This distinction is crucial to understanding the chronological innovation of the *Historiae*. The *Chronicon* of Eusebius-Jerome uses three main chronological systems of dating: the birth of Abraham, the Olympiads, and the regnal years of Kings and Emperors. Orosius modifies this arrangement by replacing *ab Abraham*, 'From Abraham', with *ab urbe condita*, 'From the Founding of the

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<sup>422</sup> Asheri, (1991-2), p. 52. Gell, (1992), p. 159, makes the related point that objects do not have dates, only events.

<sup>423</sup> The term 'technical chronology' follows Grafton and Swerdlow: 'Technical chronology establishes the structure of calendars and the dates of events; it is, as it were, the foundation of history, particularly ancient history.' Grafton and Swerdlow, (1985), p. 454.

City'.<sup>424</sup> This reorients the potentially Christian reader, forcing the audience to comprehend time through the pagan past.<sup>425</sup> The first technical date given is in this form: 'One thousand three hundred years before the founding of the City, Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians, as my opponents themselves wish to call him, because of his lust for power, waged war abroad'.<sup>426</sup> (1.4.1, p. 21) The *Historiae* dates the foundation of Rome as 752 BC, however the date varies significantly amongst the ancient sources.<sup>427</sup> (6.22.1) The more traditional date, 753 BC, originates with Varro. Declercq argues that modern historians prefer the Varronian system and 'it is often assumed that this was also the most widely used reckoning among Roman authors'.<sup>428</sup> Samuel argues, however, that Varro's computation of the date was 'not used as a chronographic basis for history' and that it is on the contrary the epoch deriving from the *fasti capitolini* which 'seems to have had the greatest acceptance in the empire'.<sup>429</sup> The absence of a fixed date arrived at through consensus has been highlighted as a reason why *ab urbe condita* was not used as a chronographic system.<sup>430</sup> But the birth of Christ, which is itself contested as a date, forms the basis for the dating of the Christian epoch using the *anno domini* system.<sup>431</sup> Most significantly it is Orosius's choice of year of 752 BC that enables Rome's first Millennium to be celebrated by a 'Christian emperor', Philip the Arab, in accordance with Orosius's Christianization of Roman history.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> *Ab urbe condita* is often abbreviated to *auc.* Although this abbreviation is not used in the *Historiae*, it will be sometimes be employed here.

<sup>425</sup> Compare with Paul the Deacon's approach to the beginning of his *Historia Romana* where the god Janus is cited as the first to rule Italy. Paulus Diaconus, *Historia romana: Primus in Italia, ut quibusdam placet, regnavit Ianus.*

<sup>426</sup> 1.4.1, vol. 1, p. 43: *Ante annos Urbis conditae MCCC Ninus rex Assyriorum, "primus" ut ipsi uolunt, propagandae dominationis libidine arma foras extulit...*

<sup>427</sup> Arnaud-Lindet, (1990), vol. 1, p. xlvi, fn. 81; Fear, (2010), p. 78 fn. 27. Fear highlights 752 BC as the date found in the *fasti capitolini*, 'the official list of Roman magistrates erected in the forum at Rome', and argues that Orosius chose the day to correspond his account of the Roman past with the 'official' version of the day. Fear, (2010), p. 18.

<sup>428</sup> Declercq, (2002), pp. 228-9, fn. 208.

<sup>429</sup> Samuel, (1972), p. 249.

<sup>430</sup> Samuel, (1972), pp. 249-50.

<sup>431</sup> For a further discussion of this issue, see Feeney, (2007), p. 8.

<sup>432</sup> 7.20.1-4, pp. 314-5: 'In the nine hundred and ninety-seventh year after the founding of the City, Philip...was the first of all the emperors to be a Christian and, after the third year of his rule, the thousandth year after the founding of Rome was fulfilled. Thus the most makes majestic of all past years, this anniversary year was celebrated with magnificent games by a Christian emperor. There is no doubt but that Philip obtained the favour of such devotion as this for Christ and the Church, since no author shows that there were any procession to the Capitol nor any sacrifice of victims according to custom.' 7.20.1-4, vol. 3, p. 55: *Anno ab Vrbe condita DCCCCLXLVII, Philippus uicensimus quartus ab Augusto imperator creatus Philippum filium suum consortem regni fecit mansitque in eo annis septem. Hic primus imperatorum omnium Christianus fuit ac post tertium imperii eius annum millesimus a conditione Romae annus impletus est. Ita magnificis ludis augustissimus omnium praeteritorum hic natalis annus a Christiano imperatore celebratus est. Nec dubium est quin Philippus huius tantae deuotionis gratiam et honorem ad Christum et Ecclesiam reportarit, quando uel ascensum fuisse in Capitolium immolatasque*

### 2.2.2 The Significance of *ab urbe condita*

The *Historiae* not only dates according to events that occurred after the founding of the City but also to those that happened before, for example: ‘In the sixty-fourth year before the founding of the City, Sardanapallus, the last of the Assyrian kings, ruled, a man more corrupt than any woman.’<sup>433</sup> (1.19.1, p. 38) Dating before and after the founding of Rome is fundamental to the chronographic system of the *Historiae*. A retrospective numerical reference to Rome’s origin opens the majority of the chapters throughout the work. This demonstrates the distinction between relative and occasional dating to the foundation of Rome, and the chronological systematisation of time according to a comprehensive dating system in the *Historiae*. The regularity of dating signals the realism of the historical narrative, in the intention to record ‘real’ rather than ‘mythical’ events.<sup>434</sup> The use of this dating system is significant on a number of levels. Firstly, a considerable amount of effort would have been required in order to recalculate the dating of events throughout history from the relative point of the foundation of Rome. This reveals the importance of chronology to Orosius, specifically a chronology based around the cultural, religious, physical and political centre of Rome. It also demonstrates Orosius’s reliance on chronographical works like Eusebius-Jerome’s *Chronicon*, that although the *Historiae* was not technically chronographical or annalistic it was influenced by the tradition of Christian chronography. The continual referencing back to *ab urbe condita* gives a reliable coherence and fullness to events recorded under the years in which they occurred. The sustained chronological dating in the *Historiae* can be seen as augmenting the approach of the text in finding evidence for the apologetic argument, and reinforces the polemical sense of this argument as unchallengeable. The impression of factual reliability and authority within the *Historiae* is made evident by comparison with a text like Justin’s Epitome of Trogus, where such a dating scheme is not included. If the *Historiae* is considered within the genre of Epitome the design of perpetual dating would make the work more useful as a point of

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*ex more hostias nullus auctor ostendit.* See Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 6.34: ‘He, [Philip] there is reason to believe, was a Christian, and on the day of the last Easter vigil he wished to share in the prayers of the Church along with the people...’.

<sup>433</sup> 1.19.1, vol. 1, pp. 68-9: *Anno ante Vrbe conditam LXIII nouissimus apud Assyrios regnauit Sardanapallus, uir muliere corruptior.*

<sup>434</sup> White, (1987), p. 8.

reference for Roman history.<sup>435</sup> This is suggested by the frequent joint use of *ab urbe condita* and consular dating, which would aid the verification of the chronology of events. The potential usefulness of the work was very possibly a conscious intention on the part of Orosius in providing an alternative version of Roman history, which included much Eastern material and Greek history, elided traditional pagan religion, and most significantly predated the influence of Christianity on human history.

### 2.2.3 Dating and the Choice of Rome

The most significant aspect of Orosius's chronological ordering by *auc* is the cultural, religious, political and spatial implications for the choice of Rome as a core of the work. As Haydn White has shown in relation to dating the Christian epoch, *anno domini* refers both to 'a cosmological story given in Scripture and to a calendrical convention that historians in the west still use to mark the units of their histories.'<sup>436</sup> Although *auc* has lost its equivalent modern resonance, the constant reference to the mythical beginnings of Rome remind the reader of the fundamental importance of the empire and the impact of Rome in history, as a revolutionary point within time. Dating from the birth of Abraham in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius-Jerome was a standardised method already worked out in some detail and would have offered Orosius a relatively straight forward option for recalibrating the historical record. This opportunity was rejected in preference for a different foundation myth not situated within Scripture, but nonetheless a cultural and religious choice that arguably contributed to the transformation of Rome as the centre of the Christian west. All of history, even that which is not western-orientated, is related back to the foundation of the city. The shared assumption of Rome as the crux of the Orosian historiographical perspective is revealing; Rome is not named but simply labelled as 'the City', establishing the fundamental primacy of Rome in the past, present and future of time.

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<sup>435</sup> For Orosius's *Historiae* as Epitome, see Momigliano, (1966), vol. 1, pp. 95-7. Similarly Lacroix, (1965), pp.51-2: 'De cette conscience qu'il faut au public moins cultivé des récits courts et directs, plutôt que des théories, est née l'*Historia adversus Paganos*. Orose est invité à écrire pour le peuple et dans le sens de Justin et d'Eutrope.'

<sup>436</sup> White, (1987), p. 8.

### 2.2.4 *Ab urbe condita* – A Modern or Ancient System of Dating?

Although the ordering of time through *auc* is presented as a standardised and consistent dating system in the *Historiae*, the more general reception of the scheme in modern criticism is not as cohesive, and on closer examination, a more confused picture emerges. Whilst the dating system has been accepted as ancient even for the Romans, the belief has also been challenged by the claim that it is essentially a modern invention, illustrated by the argument of E. J. Bickerman:

an era *ab urbe condita*, from the founding of the city of Rome, did not, in reality, exist in the ancient world, and the use of reckoning the years in this way is modern. The Romans used this epoch only to measure time distance from it to some subsequent event.<sup>437</sup>

Similarly Alan Samuel argues that:

A number of such systems were devised, but as Roman scholarship never reached a consensus in the founding date, each of the systems was at variance with the others, so that there was no era *ab urbe condita* which could by consensus be used for all, and which by designating years with numerals only, could satisfy a desire for brevity and at the same time identify those years precisely and without reference either to consuls or the deviser of the system.<sup>438</sup>

Georges Declercq suggests that dating using *auc* was a modern construction that has misled historians into the belief that it was a contemporary dating system.<sup>439</sup> Within this context Orosius is specifically highlighted as an exception by Declercq:

The only Christian author in late Antiquity to use this dating system was Orosius in his *Historiae adversus paganos* written at the beginning of the fifth century...Orosius places the nativity of Christ on 25 December AUC 752 (2 BC), the beginning of the reign of Tiberius in AUC 767 (AD 14) and the first year of Diocletian in AUC 1041 (AD 288).<sup>440</sup>

Eutropius's *Breviarium ab urbe condita* similarly employed the system, and should also be included within the exception.<sup>441</sup> This raises important considerations for Orosius's historiographical objectives. Eutropius is explicitly cited as a source twice in the *Historiae*, at 7.11.1 and 7.19.4. The conscious imitation of Eutropius ties the *Historiae* much more firmly to the genre of Epitome than previously could be supposed. It returns

<sup>437</sup> For *auc* as an ancient system of dating, see Hannah, (2005), p. 152. Similarly Teres who understands *auc* as the official method for calculating Roman time. Teres, (1984), p. 183. Bickerman, (1980), p. 77.

<sup>438</sup> Samuel, (1972), pp. 249-50.

<sup>439</sup> Declercq, (2002), p. 229. Similarly Gomme, (1945), vol. I, p. 7: 'Numbering years was a device half adopted by the Romans (A.U.C. together with the consular names), but by one of the curiosities of history, it long eluded the Greeks.'

<sup>440</sup> Declercq, (2002), p. 229.

<sup>441</sup> Unlike Orosius Eutropius dates the foundation of Rome following Varro (753 BC).

the reader to the fascinating question of genre for the *Historiae*, which is much debated. It also affects how the text is understood, specifically its significance within the contemporary world of the early fifth century and its reception in modern scholarship. The dating system *auc* often conceived of as ancient was a product of a specific period within history writing in the mid-fourth to the early-fifth centuries. Popularised by Orosius's *Historiae*, that the dating system is retrojectively applied to earlier literature arguably illustrates how pervasive the *Historiae* was on the historiographical consciousness of the west, but in a way that leaves the work largely unrecognised.

### 2.2.5 Relative and Systematic Dating

Despite such contradictions within criticism it seems that dating from the founding of Rome was not generally used as a standard chronographic system in earlier Roman literature. This does not, however, mean it was not used at all. Instead *ab urbe condita* was reserved for occasional relative dating, as measuring temporal distance from a specific event, not as the foundation for a calendar of years. For example, an inscription from the first century AD shows the newly elected emperor Nerva restored the liberty of Rome 'in the year of the city 848':

Libertati ab imp. Nerva Ca[es]ar[e] Aug., anno ab urbe condita DCCCXXXIIII XIII  
[k.] Oc[t.], restitu[tae] s. p. q. R.<sup>442</sup>

Similarly Velleius Paterculus, writing his Roman History in the first century AD, dates from the foundation of Rome in conjunction with the consulship and from the present day: '...and in the consulship of Aelius Catus and Gaius Sentius, on the twenty-seventh of June, he adopted him, seven hundred and fifty-four years after the founding of the city, and twenty-seven years ago.'<sup>443</sup> Locating events within time according to the benchmark of the foundation of Rome is not an innovation limited strictly to the *Historiae*; it is an existing literary device within Latin literature. However the distinction between relative and sporadic dating and an organised dating system is here crucial; the latter approach is comprehensibly developed in the *Historiae* and is centred on the foundation of Rome in a way that previous works were not. Like Eutropius's

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<sup>442</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VI 472; Dessau, (1892), vol. I, 274, p. 74. 'The senate and the people of Rome to Liberty restored on the 18th of September in the year of the City 848 by Imperator Nerva Caesar Augustus'.

<sup>443</sup> Velleius Paterculus, 2.103.3: *et eum Aelio Cato C. Sentio consulibus V. Kal. Iulias, post urbem conditam annis septingentis quinquaginta quattuor, abhinc annos septem et viginti adoptaret.*

*Breviarium*, dating according to *auc* was a way of regulating and ordering time in a consistent and sustained manner, not simply as a relative and occasional point of temporal contact. What must be emphasised is that the function of *auc* in the *Historiae* is distinct from sporadic relativism; it is the foundation of Orosius's chronographic system.

### 2.2.6 Consular and Olympiad Dating

Although the dating system *ab urbe condita* is the most widespread in the text, Orosius also dates much of his history using the successive reigns of Roman consuls.<sup>444</sup> For example the year 146 BC is introduced:

In the six hundredth and sixth year after the founding of the City, that is, in the same year as that in which Carthage was destroyed, in the consulship of Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus and Lucius Mummius.<sup>445</sup> (5.3.1, p. 177)

In addition to the use of the consulship as a dating scheme, like many historians in late antiquity Orosius uses the Olympiad designation, a four-year period associated with the Olympic Games.<sup>446</sup> The year 751 BC is given a long epithet, situating it firmly within the ancient Classical tradition:

In the four hundred and fourteenth year after the overthrow of Troy, moreover in the sixth Olympiad, which precisely in the fifth year, after the intervening four years had been completed, was customarily celebrated in Elis, a city of Greece, the city of Rome was founded on Italy by Romulus and Remus, twin originators.<sup>447</sup> (2.4.1, p. 48)

The record of Roman consuls has been described as 'the principal mechanism for charting the past time of the city' and as providing 'a base for the Roman's distinctive

<sup>444</sup> The universal historian Diodorus Siculus similarly used consular designations for years along with Athenian archons and Olympiads. An important source for the *Historiae*, Livy also dates by the consular year. Bickerman, (1968), p.69; p. 77. Samuel compares consular dating to the Athenian system of archons or the Olympiads, and describes it as 'cumbersome and inefficient'. Samuel, (1972), p. 249. Compare Salzman (1990), p. 35-42.

<sup>445</sup> 5.3.1, vol. 2, p. 87: *Anno av Vrbe condita DCVI, hoc est eodem anno quo et Carthago deleta est, Cn Cornelio Lentulo L. Mumio consulibus.*

<sup>446</sup> For further examples, see 2.13.2, p. 63: '...in the three hundredth year, that is, in the ninety-fifth Olympiad, the *potestas* of the consuls, being given over to the decemvirate to establish laws of Attica, brought great destruction on the Republic.'; 2.13.2, vol. 1, p. 110: *Ipsa autem trecentesimo anno, hoc est olympiade nonagensima quinta, potestas consulum decemuiris tradita constituendarum legum Atticarum gratia magnam perniciem reipublicae inuexit.* 2.13.8, p. 64: 'In the one hundred and third and one hundred and fifth Olympiads, so frequent and so severe earthquakes took place in Italy for almost the entire year'. 2.13.8, vol. 2, p. 111: *Tertia et quinta post centesimam olympiade per totum fere annum tam crebi tamque etiam graues in Italia terrae motus fuerunt...*

<sup>447</sup> 2.4.1, vol. 1, p. 90: *Anno post euersionem Troiae CCCCXIII olympiade autem sexta – quae quinto demum anno quattuor in medio expletis apud Elidem Graeciae ciuitatem agone et ludis exerceri solet – urbs Roma in Italia a Romulo et Remo geminis auctoribus condita est.*



form of annalistic historiography.<sup>448</sup> The use of the consulship as a dating mechanism continued until the sixth century AD when it eventually died out.<sup>449</sup> The list of Olympic victors, first drawn up at the end of the fifth century BC, has not survived antiquity, and the most comprehensive record is found in Eusebius-Jerome's *Chronicon*. By dating according to *auc*, the Consular year, the Olympiads, and sporadic past events like the Fall of Troy, Orosius is eschewing the Christian calendar in favour of secular historical chronology. This deliberate approach precludes the potential for criticism of a circular Christian argument based on Scripture, and avoids alienating a pagan readership. But most significantly it is a subtle and repeated element in the ideological re-formation of the past, of making Christian history that was previously pagan, but without relying on exclusively Christian material.

### 2.2.7 Ancient and Modern Time

In his important work on Time, Denis Feeney examines the ancient approach to time in comparison with modern sensibilities towards the past. Feeney argues for the distinction between the ancient organisation of time through proximity to significant events and the modern method of temporal orientation which relies upon the numerical date:

...correlating Greek and Roman *dates* means correlating Greek and Roman *events*. There is, in fact, no Greek or Latin word for "date." An ancient date is an event – or to be more precise, any date is a relationship between two or more events. As inhabitants of the B.C.E/C.E grid, we simply cannot help thinking of ancient writers as working with dates, which to us are numbers. But they are not connecting numbers; they are connecting significant events and people. In so doing they are not placing events within a preexisting time frame; they are constructing a time frame within which events have meaning. Again, the *ultimate* foundation of our modern chronological system is, likewise, the connecting of events, but that event-based substratum is almost always hidden from us by the apparent abstraction of the numbers within their own coherent framework, and this "absolute time" has an autonomy that can all too easily exempt us from the difficult but rewarding work in which the ancients were inescapably involved, of apprehending past time as a set of relationships between events, people, and places, or as parallel series – discrete or interpenetrating – of such relationships.<sup>450</sup>

Feeney contends that the ancient approach was not to 'date' in the modern numerical sense, but to organise time according to 'canonical historical events...from which

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<sup>448</sup> Feeney, (2007) p. 6.

<sup>449</sup> Bagnall et al, (1987), p. 7.

<sup>450</sup> Feeney, (2007), p. 15.

intervals forwards or backwards could be counted'.<sup>451</sup> This signals a significant departure from accepted critical ideas about dating and time in the ancient world.<sup>452</sup> It also necessitates a reconsideration of the place of the *Historiae* within its literary and historiographical context; for even though Orosius dates from the 'event' of the founding of Rome, this is his equivalent of a date in the same way that the date and number '2014' represents two-thousand and fourteen years since the event of the birth of Christ. Not only is Orosius's use of *auc* innovatory but the entire concept of a numerical dating system represents a departure from the ancient historiographical approach to time. This is significant as it highlights the correspondence between Orosius's dating *auc* and the modern method of dating BC/AD, specifically because of the concentration on numerical dating and the constant reference to 'the foundation of the city' in a numerical form. The comparison requires the repositioning of the *Historiae* more closely aligned to the modern approach, and arguably as an important link between the genres of Chronicle and historiography, in the transference of numerical dating system from Chronicles into historical text.

### 2.2.8 Dating, Division and the Incarnation

The synchronistic and determined system of dating utilised by the *Historiae* is not the only means of organising time in the text. Time is coordinated by a fixed point which functions as a pivot around which the apologetic argument is constructed. The most important temporal division of the work is the bisection of history by the seminal event of the birth of Christ. The pre-Christian world was a dark place illuminated only by the fires of its own destruction, but following the birth of Christ or the 'Incarnation', in the Christian Roman empire everything is better than it used to be and is getting better still.<sup>453</sup> All wars are ended and a peace that includes 'every nation from east to west,

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<sup>451</sup> Feeney, (2003), p. 13. For a more elaborate explanation of the ancient approach to organising time, see p. 16. See also P.-J. Shaw, (2003), p. 29. See Munn, (1992), pp. 102-3, for her definition of 'Time-reckoning'.

<sup>452</sup> This is recognised by Feeney; the difficulty of thinking about time without numerical dates is a theme throughout Chapter One of Feeney's work, specifically pp. 7-16. For example: 'A number of important recent studies have shed light on the profound differences between our modern "absolute time" and their "relative time,"...These scholars have made it easier for their successors to grasp the fact that ancient writers are not working with "dates" under another guise, but with relative frames of time that are always being reconstructed in each project, even if many anchoring points stay constant. Nonetheless, it remains an imaginative challenge of the first order to attempt to intuit how the Romans and Greeks were able to move around in past time without numerical coordinates.' Feeney, (2003), p. 15.

<sup>453</sup> 2.5.10, p. 52: 'Not only were such events as these taking place in Rome, but every province was blazing forth with its own fires, and what a distinguished poet has described in one city, I shall express in regard to the whole world.' 2.5.10, vol. 1, p. 95: *Ad haec non Romae tantum talia gerebantur, sed*

from north to south, and all around the encircling ocean' is established.<sup>454</sup> (6.22.1, p. 280) Even Mount Etna, which 'in the past boiled over in frequent eruptions' now only 'smokes in an innocent manner to give faith to its activity in the past.'<sup>455</sup> (2.14.3, p. 65) Although the universal Christian *Historiae* is really a Roman history, indicated by the dating system *auc*, the text is ultimately intent on demonstrating the divine providence of God on human history and pre-dating Christianity within time.<sup>456</sup> For this reason the Incarnation and not the foundation of Rome is the crucial point on which everything depends. Orosius's universal scheme of dating by the founding of Rome and division according to the Incarnation foreshadows the invention of the standard *anno domini* method of dating by Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century.<sup>457</sup> Dating according to the birth of Christ did not suit the purposes of the text; the *Historiae* is not ecclesiastical history, it is Roman history in content and form but rewritten from a Christian theological perspective. Therefore dating the *Historiae* by the foundation of Rome but dividing the work by the Incarnation achieved the recalibration of time and synthesised the Roman and Christian historiographical traditions in one text.<sup>458</sup>

### 2.2.9 Conclusion

Where the perspective of Chapter One is expansive in its perspective and range, this Chapter has concentrated more closely on a historiographical approach to the topic of time in the *Historiae*. The first part of the Chapter explores the abstract philosophy of time and the temporal organisation of the text, and the second part examines the

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*quaque prouincia suis ignibus aestuabat et quod poeta praecipuus in una urbe descripsit, ego de toto orbe dixerim: "crudelis ubique/ Luctus, ubique pauor et plurima mortis imago".*

<sup>454</sup> 6.22.1, vol. 2, p. 234: *...ab oriente in occidentem, a septentrione in meridiem ac per totum Oceani circulum...*

<sup>455</sup> 2.14.3, vol. 1, p. 112: *Aethna ipsa quae tunc cum excidio urbium atque agrorum crebris eruptionibus aestuabat, nunc tantum innoxia specie ad praeteritorum fidem fumat.*

<sup>456</sup> For something of an opposing view, but one that nonetheless recognises the important assimilation of pagan and Christian historiography by Orosius, see Lacroix, (1965), p. 55: 'La naissance du Christ, sa passion, les persécutions, il les insère à l'intérieur d'un vaste ensemble dominé par une conception de l'histoire, élargies par des données judéo-chrétiennes, mais précisées par les chiffres païens. Ainsi, à côté de la date des victoires d'Alexandre ou de Jules César, les événements chrétiens prennent leur place dans l'histoire.'

<sup>457</sup> Eusebius's method of dating in the *Chronicon* is similarly highlighted: 'He [Eusebius] chose Abraham, chiefly because he was regarded by Eusebius and other Christians as either the first Christian or as a proto-Christian. The *Chronicle* is, therefore, a history of the known world since the first coming of Christianity, and his 'ann. Abr.' chronology is therefore a proto-AD system.' Burgess, (2011), (III) p. 16.

<sup>458</sup> The interpretation by Wilcox does not recognise Orosius's synthesis of the division of time by the Incarnation and the dating of time by the foundation of Rome, and understands Augustine and Orosius's approaches as opposite. 'He [Orosius] created a new dating system, one that could locate all human events on a single line but could not organise them around the major turning point in history.' Wilcox, (1987), p. 133.

structured and rigorous dating systems utilized by the work. Time as multidimensional within the *Historiae* makes the subject particularly difficult to engage with; time is a philosophy and a concept, but it is also practical and tangible, and is necessarily progressive as the structure to the linear text. Orosius uses the past to rewrite the present and the present to rewrite the past. The structuring of time irrevocably binds together the empire of Rome and the worship of Christianity, ordained by the divine ordination of the *auctorem temporum*, ‘the author of Time’, the Christian God.<sup>459</sup> (1.3.4, p. 21) Orosius's discourse on time functions to prove the divine influence of God on all of history throughout time and place, not just time after the Incarnation. This is achieved through the proof of empire, where the terrestrial authority of empires and rulers is ultimately dependent on God. The *Historiae* represents a historiographical shift in the relationship of Roman history to world history and, most significantly, Christian history. Christian history, which is now all of time, is reoriented around Rome through the dating system *ab urbe condita*, and in the broader structuring of time around empire, where the rhythm of the rise and fall of empire reveals a wider purpose to history, beginning with Babylon and the east, and concluding with the final culmination in Rome and the west. But despite the importance of empire it is the Incarnation of Christ that ultimately determines the construction of the *Historiae*; it is more than a historical philosophy, and operates in practical terms as a crucial point of division, leaving a very literal impression on the text. Although a technical system that dates from Christ's birth is absent, Orosius's management of time can be justifiably perceived as a precursor to the BC/AD scheme in the organisation of the work around the Incarnation. Orosius's comprehension of time therefore diverges from ancient approaches and is arguably more closely aligned with the modern tradition of dating. But the critical lack of recognition Orosius's innovation suffers illustrates the tendency not to acknowledge the importance of the text and its influence on subsequent historical thought, contributing to the disparity between ideas and their origin, and leaving the *Historiae* further sidelined.

### 3. Monotheism, Imperial Power, and Augustus

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<sup>459</sup> 1.3.4, vol. 1, p. 42: *auctorem temporum*.

### 3.1.1 Introduction

Following the geographical description of the known world, the *Historiae* opens with a statement on the wicked and sinful nature of mankind. After the creation of man whom God had made ‘upright and immaculate’, the human race became ‘depraved by lusts’ and ‘sordid with sins’.<sup>460</sup> (1.3.1, p. 20) The theme of the fall of the first man and the condemnation of humankind established at the outset occupies the first six Books of the seven-book *Historiae*.<sup>461</sup> The infamous ‘catalogue of disasters’ Orosius promises to relay in the Prologue (Prologue 10) runs on and on: even by the close of Book Five wrongs are still following wrongs.<sup>462</sup> (5.24.21) Only half-way through the sixth Book is the figure of redemption presented. Octavian, the militaristic Roman General who defeated Anthony at the battle of Actium, once his rise to sole power and transformation into Augustus is complete, provides the political context for the Incarnation of Christ to occur. Augustus is arguably the most important figure in the *Historiae*. His reign, together with the beginning of the Roman Empire, is the crucial pivot for the entire work. The pre-Christian world was a dark place illuminated only by the fires of its own destruction, but following his accession and the Incarnation in the Christian Roman Empire everything is better than it used to be and is getting better still. (2.5.10) Even Mount Etna, which ‘in the past boiled over in frequent eruptions’ now only ‘smokes in an innocent manner to give faith to its activity in the past.’<sup>463</sup> (2.14.2, p. 65) However the role of Augustus within this scheme has not always been fully recognised. Either less emphasis is given than is deserved, or the philosophy of history that sees the providential coincidence of Christ and Augustus is described as ‘Eusebian’, an adjective frequently used to encompass a depth and complexity of meaning, without further explanation or analysis.<sup>464</sup> This Chapter situates the Emperor firmly within the centre of

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<sup>460</sup> 1.3.1, vol. 1, p. 42: *rectum atque immaculatum...ac perinde humanum genus, libidinibus deprauatum peccatis obsorduisset.*

<sup>461</sup> Although *humanum genus*, ‘human race’, is used to describe humanity at the beginning of Book Three and throughout the text, the noun *homo*, *hominis*, is much more frequently used and is invariably translated as ‘man’ or ‘mankind’. While this is an exclusive translation it is one that will be followed as Orosius’s *Historiae* is not gender inclusive; the textual attention that women are given is exceptional, for instance the description of Amazonian women burning off their right breasts in order to better shoot arrows (1.15.3), or the numerous incidents of Vestal sexual transgression and punishment: 3.9.5; 2.8.13; 4.2.8; 4.5.9; 5.15.22. On the representation of Vestal virgins in the *Historiae*, see Leonard, (2011).

<sup>462</sup> 5.24.21, vol. 2, p. 153: *...et malis sequacibus cohaeserunt.*

<sup>463</sup> 2.14.3, vol. 2, p. 112: *Aethna ipsa quae tunc cum excidio urbium atque agrorum crebris eruptionibus aestuabat, nunc tantum innoxia specie ad praeteritorum fidem fumat.*

<sup>464</sup> For the former, see Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 130, p. 163; Markus, (1970), pp. 161-2. For the latter, see Merrills, (2005), p. 58; Schiffman, (2011), p. 118. This is in contrast to the analysis of Mehl, (2011), p. 234, and Peterson, (2011), p. 102.

the political theology Orosius develops through a close analysis of the construction of Augustus and the parallel construction of Christ. The significance of the emperor in the text does not function independently; it is deliberately, arduously, and precisely interwoven with the concept of a universal peace, the birth of Christ, the role of empire, and a monotheism that transcends heaven and earth. The imagery of the temple of Janus, the titling of Augustus, and various miracles associated with his accession, are crucial layers to the construction of the emperor, and will be explored in this Chapter with particular attention to Book Six of the *Historiae*.

### 3.1.2 The Temple of Janus and Augustus

The imagery of the temple of Janus is utilised throughout the *Historiae* as an important signifier of the inherent peacefulness of Augustus's reign, operating in stark contrast to all previous periods of Roman history which were dominated by warfare.<sup>465</sup> The condition of the temple of Janus principally denotes the martial status of the empire: the doors of the temple were opened in times of war to release the god in defence of Rome and closed in times of peace to keep the god inside the City.<sup>466</sup> The temple of Janus referred to is a small pagan temple located in the Roman Forum. Janus was the two-headed god of doors, arches, gates and beginnings: accordingly all things are begun and ended by Janus, with the month of January (*Ianuarius*) named after him from 153 BC.<sup>467</sup> Described by Filippo Coarelli as 'the oldest and most important sanctuary', the precise location of the temple in Rome is contested.<sup>468</sup> According to tradition the temple

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<sup>465</sup> 1.1.6; 3.8.2; 3.8.4; 4.12.4; 4.12.6; 6.20.1; 6.20.8; 6.21.1; 6.21.11; 6.22.1; 7.2.16; 7.3.7-9; 7.9.9; 7.19.4. Syme described Janus as 'a theme of predilection in Orosius from the outset...and close to his general design and demonstration.' Syme, (1979), p. 197.

<sup>466</sup> For the temple in the ancient sources, see Procopius *De bello gothico*, 5.25; Plutarch, *Numa*, 20.1; Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.19.2; Varro, *Lingua latina*, 5.165; Servius *Ad aeneid*, 7.607; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.9.17-18; Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 34.33; Cassius Dio, 74.14; Seneca, *Divi Claudii apocolocyntosis*, 9; Ovid, *Fasti*, I.258. The opening and closing of the doors has an alternative origin, that during battle against the Sabines a great force of hot water originating from the temple repelled the enemy, establishing the custom of opening the doors of the temple in a time of war. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.9.17-18; Servius, *ad Aeneid*, 8.361. Taylor, (2000), considers the possible forms and locations of the temple. For a reinterpretation of the significance of Janus in Roman history informed by Orosius, see Paul the Deacon's *Historia romana* which begins not with the foundation of Rome or the rule of the kings but with Janus ruling Italy. Paulus Diaconus, *Historia romana*.

<sup>467</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.1. See Taylor (2000), p. 1.

<sup>468</sup> Coarelli, (2007), p. 51. A small structure located on the south-eastern corner of the basilica Aemilia in the Forum has been suggested, but is disputed by Amanda Claridge as being part of a later and larger structure built over the steps of the porticus Gaius and Lucius. Claridge, (1998), p. 69. Coarelli explains the location adjacent to the basilica Aemilia as the final reconstruction of the temple after the Gothic sack of Rome in AD 410, following which the basilica was also restored. See Coarelli, (2007), p. 49. The final

was founded as an *indicem pacis bellique* ('indication of peace and war') by Numa, the second king of Rome.<sup>469</sup> Throughout Numa's reign the doors of the temple were closed but were not again closed until after the first Punic war in the consulship of Titus Manlius.<sup>470</sup> Traditionally they were closed again in 235 BC, in 30 BC following the battle of Actium,<sup>471</sup> and three times in the reign of Augustus.<sup>472</sup> Orosius treats the motif characteristically, giving a literal fact or event an increased figurative value and often an additional Christian dimension. The imagery of the temple functions as evidence which definitively proves the extraordinary pacifism that characterised Augustus's reign, legitimating the polemical division of the text into ante-Christ and post-Christ history, signified by the accession of Augustus. The motif builds meaning in its association with other pieces of history manipulated to suit Orosius's apologetic of the synchronisation of Rome and Christ, such as the formal adoption of the title Augustus, the triple *adventus* of Augustus on his return to Rome, the foundation of the Roman empire and nascence of the Roman monarchy, and the celebration of the Epiphany (6.20.1-5).

### 3.1.2.1 Pre-Christian History and the Temple of Janus

The imagery of Janus's temple facilitates Orosius's polemical reinterpretation of history, which is particularly evident in Book Three. According to the schema of the text monarchical and then Republican Rome were characterised by war, violence, misfortune and misery. Rome's conflicts are amalgamated to give the impression of constant warfare: after the Samnite war came the war against Pyrrhus, which was 'closely followed' by the Punic wars. (3.8.1-3) The gates of Janus are described as 'ever-open', indicating that 'never, after the death of Numa, was there a cessation from the slaughters of wars, yet from that time on, the heat of misfortunes glowed as if pressed down at noon from the entire sky.'<sup>473</sup> (3.8.2, p. 88) Deploing Rome's

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reference to the physical temple is given in the sixth century. Procopius *De bello gothico*, 1.25. For an image of the temple the numismatic evidence from the reign of Nero is most useful.

<sup>469</sup> Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.19. Similarly see Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 34.33; Plutarch, *Numa*, 18.

<sup>470</sup> Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.19; Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.281

<sup>471</sup> Varro, *Lingua latina*, 5.165; Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.19; Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.281.

<sup>472</sup> *Res Gestae divi Augusti*, 42-45; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 22. Richardson, (1992), pp. 207-8. The doors of the temple were opened and closed at numerous subsequent times, but it is primarily the earliest activity up until Augustus that is of most significance in the *Historiae*.

<sup>473</sup> 3.8.2, vol. 1, p. 148: *...et quamvis numquam post mortem Numae a bellorum cladibus fuisse cessatum patentes semper Iani portae indicent, ex eo tamen ueluti per meridiem toto inpressus caelo malorum feruor incanduit.*

belligerence creates the opportunity for a polarised juxtaposition with the *Christiana tempora*:

Furthermore, when the Punic War had once begun, let anyone who thinks that Christian times should be branded with infamy inquire, discover, and proclaim whether at any time wars, slaughters, destruction, and all manner of infamous deaths ever ceased except when Caesar Augustus ruled.<sup>474</sup> (3.8.3, p. 88)

The exception comes only with the Emperor Augustus, when for the first time ‘after the peace with the Parthians, the whole world having laid down its arms and abandoned its discords, composed in a general peace and new quiet’.<sup>475</sup> (3.8.5, p. 88) Roman law is universally adopted and the hegemony of Rome is actively welcomed in a ‘single will with a free and honest zeal to serve the peace and consult the common good of all nations’.<sup>476</sup> (3.8.6, p. 88) Imbued with a religious significance, the material of history is being framed around the central axis of Augustus’s rule and the beginning of the Roman empire using the temple of Janus as evidence for Christian revelation but derived from pagan sources.

### 3.1.2.2 Janus and Augustus

The centrality of the trope of Janus within the construction of Augustus is most evident towards the end of Book Six in the culmination of the presentation of the redemptive Augustus, providentially favoured by the Christian God. The point of transition for Augustus to assume this role is proclaimed by a sequence of what can be termed crudely as ‘secular’ events that are given a theological significance. On the sixth of January Augustus triumphantly returned to Rome having established his sole authority following his success in the civil wars. He entered the City and celebrated a triple triumph, and was first given the title ‘Augustus’.<sup>477</sup> It is ‘from this same day, the highest power in the state began to be in one man and has remained so’.<sup>478</sup> (6.20.2, p. 275) That the

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<sup>474</sup> 3.8.3, vol. 1, p. 148: *Porro autem, inchoato semel bello Punico utrum aliquando bella caedes ruinae atque omnia infandarum mortium genera nisi Caesare Augusto imperante cessauerint, inquirat, inueniat, prodat quisquis infamanda Christiana tempora putat.*

<sup>475</sup> 3.8.5, vol. 1, p. 149: *...post Parthicam pacem uniuersum terrarum orbem positis armis abolitisque discordiis generali pace et noua quiete conpositum...*

<sup>476</sup> 3.8.6, vol. 1, p. 149: *...postremo omnibus gentibus, cunctis prouinciis, innumeris ciuitatibus, infinitis populis, totis terris unam fuisse uoluntatem libero honestoque studio inseruire paci atque in commune consulere.*

<sup>477</sup> Dated to 29 BC. Syme, (1979), p. 197.

<sup>478</sup> 6.20.2, vol. 2, p. 227: *...atque ex eadem die summa rerum ac potestatum penes unum esse coepit et mansit.*



Epiphany, 'the Apparition or the Manifestation of the Sacrament of the Lord', is also represented as happening on the same day is given a spectacular *praeteritio*, which only increases the impact of such a synchronisation:

Neither reason nor the opportunity demand that we now speak more fully about this sacrament which we observe most faithfully, so that we seem neither to have left it to interested inquirers nor to have pressed it upon the indifferent. But it was proper to have recorded this event faithfully for this reason, that in every respect the Empire of Caesar might be proven to have been prepared for Christ's coming.<sup>479</sup> (6.20.4, p. 275)

In correspondence with the beginning of the Roman empire and the Incarnation of Christ is the closure of the gates of Janus:

In the seven hundred and twenty-fifth year after the founding of the City, when the emperor himself, Caesar Augustus, for the fifth time, and L. Apuleius were consuls, returning from the East as victor, on the sixth of January entered the City with a triple triumph and, then, for the first time, since all civil wars had been put to sleep and been ended, he himself closed the gates of Janus.<sup>480</sup> (6.20.1, p. 274)

That Augustus's triumphs were not held in January but in August, and the gates of Janus had been closed by the Senate on 11 January, are not impassable obstacles to the concordance of secular and sacral events in Orosius's manipulation of history.<sup>481</sup> The motif of Janus is part of the essential Augustus according to Orosius; the universal peace achieved under the Roman empire was divinely ordained and signified the pre-eminence of Rome above all other empires, a philosophy epitomized in the figure of Augustus.

The synchronisation between the closure of the gates of Janus and the assumption of the name 'Augustus' is reinforced following an exposition of the Epiphany and numerous miracles (6.20.3-8):

Then, thirdly, when he entered the City in triumph as consul for the fifth time, on that very day which we have mentioned above, he himself had the gates of Janus closed for the first time after two hundred years and assumed that most famous name of Augustus. What can more faithfully and truthfully be believed and recognised, when peace, name, and day concur in such a manifestation, than that this man had been predestined, indeed,

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<sup>479</sup> 6.20.3, vol. 2, p. 227: *...hoc est apparitionem siue manifestationem Dominici sacramenti, obseruamus...* 6.20.4, vol. 2, p. 227: *De quo nostrae istius fidelissimae obseruationis sacramento uberius nunc dicere nec ratio nec locus flagitat, ut et quaerentibus reseruasse et neglegentibus non ingessisse uideamur. Hoc autem fideliter commemorasse ideo par fuit, ut per omnia uenturi Christi gratia praeparatum Caesaris imperium conprobetur.*

<sup>480</sup> 6.20.1, vol. 2, pp. 226-7: *Anno ab urbe condita DCCXXV, ipso imperatore Caesare Augusto quinquies et L. Apuleio consulibus, Caesar uictor ab Oriente rediens, VIII idus Ianuarius Urbem triplici triumpho ingressus est ac tunc primum ipse Iani portas sopitis finitisque omnibus bellis ciuilibus clausit.*

<sup>481</sup> Described by Fear as a 'concatenation of errors'. Fear, (2010), p. 308, fn. 300. Whether this is perpetrated through ignorance or a deliberate act on Orosius's part is irrelevant.

by a hidden order of events for the service of His preparation, who, on that day on which a little later He was to be made manifest to the world, chose the banner of peace, and assumed the name of power.<sup>482</sup> (6.20.8, p. 276)

It is explicitly the concurrence between the appellation of Augustus, the Epiphany, and the universal peace symbolized by the motif of Janus that enables the Orosian portrayal of Augustus: the emperor's accession to sole imperial authority was predestined by God in order to facilitate the Incarnation and serve Jesus Christ. After the Cantabrian war and the 'pacifying of all nations' Augustus 'brought back this reward for his Cantabrian victory: that he should order the gates of war to be closed fast.'<sup>483</sup> (6.20.9, p. 276) The number of times that the gates of the temple had been closed since the foundation of the City, this being the fourth time and the second time by Augustus, is again emphasised in order to highlight the extraordinary pacifism of Augustus.

### 3.1.2.3 Janus and Synchronisation

The function of the *Historiae* extends beyond the reinterpretation of history from a Christian perspective; events that previously had no Christian significance are Christianised and individual historical episodes are tied together in an arduous exercise of coincidence and parallelism designed to build meaning. This is illustrated by the motif of Janus's temple: the first time the gates were closed it is emphasised that this had not happened for two hundred years, the third time the gates were closed for twelve years. The first closure ended all civil war, the third established a universal peace. The first time coincided with the acceptance of the title 'Augustus', the third saw Augustus's rejection of the title 'Lord'. The only source that provides a date for the third closure of the temple of Janus is the *Historiae*, and the date coincides with the year of Christ's birth. These contrived coincidences are indicative of a wider stylistic habit of synchronisation in the *Historiae* which is pervasive in an absolute sense, not only between larger periods of time, peoples and empires in a polarising fashion, but within

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<sup>482</sup> 6.20.8, vol. 2, p. 229: *Tertio autem, cum Urbem triumphans quinto consul ingressus est, eo scilicet die quem supra nominavimus, cum et Ianum post ducentos annos primum ipse clausit et clarissimum illud Augusti nomen adsumpsit, quid fidelius ac uerius credi aut cognosci potest, - concurrentibus ad tantam manifestationem pace, nomine, die, - quam hunc occulto quidem gestorum ordine ad obsequium praeparationis eius praedestinatum fuisse, qui eo die quo ille manifestandus mundo post paululum erat, et pacis signum praetulit, et potestatis nomen adsumpsit?*

<sup>483</sup> 6.21.11, vol. 2, p. 231: *Cantabricae uictoriae hunc honorem Caesar detulit ut tunc quoque belli portas claustro cohiberi iuberet.*

the reign of a single emperor.<sup>484</sup> The final chapters of Book Six are concerned solely with the emperor Augustus, and the continual return to the trope of the temple imbues the narrative with the obvious influence of divine providence. In addition it allows the crescendo of the apologetic to show the inexorable progress of improvement, not only as a general characteristic of the work but within the specific period of Augustus's rule, building towards the pinnacle of this presentation at the close of Book Six. The culmination of this apologetic is evident at the opening of Book Seven, where Orosius is able to make the ultimate claim that: 'In the whole world there was one peace among all, not because of the cessation of war, but because of their abolition; the twin gates of Janus were closed since the roots of war had been torn out and not repressed' (7.2.16, p. 287).<sup>485</sup> The peace of Augustus, demonstrated by the silence and rust of the closed temple of Janus, is universal and uniting; war has not only been ended but has been eradicated.<sup>486</sup>

### 3.1.3 Augustus, Peace, and Monotheism

The universal peace that is established by Augustus on his accession to power is characterised by a singularity that is paralleled not only in the sole authority of the emperor but in the cohesion of the one empire and ultimately in the one God:

...there was a single will with a free and honest zeal to serve the peace and consult the common good of all nations, entire provinces, innumerable cities, countless peoples, and the whole world, which formerly not even one city nor one group of citizens nor, what is worse, one household of brothers had been able to possess continually, moreover, if also when under the rule of Caesar these things came to pass, it is manifest that the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ had begun to illuminate this world with the brightest approbation.<sup>487</sup> (3.8.6-8, pp. 88-89)

The shift in authority from Republic to empire is represented as having wider geographical and political repercussions. The variety of nations, governments and

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<sup>484</sup> The discussion of synchronism by Van Nuffelen is useful but not comprehensive. Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 47-50.

<sup>485</sup> 7.2.16, vol. 3, p. 20: *toto terrarum orbe una pax omnium non cessatione sed abolitione bellorum, clausae Iani gemini portae extirpatis bellorum radicibus non repressis...*

<sup>486</sup> Compare with Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 138: 'It is clear, then, that Orosius' panegyric does not pretend that times are absolutely good now nor that a reign of perfect peace is announcing itself'.

<sup>487</sup> 3.8.6-8, vol. 1, p. 149: *postremo omnibus gentibus, cunctis prouinciis, innumeris ciuitatibus, infinitis populis, totis terris unam fuisse uoluntatem libero honestoque studio inseruire paci atque in commune consulere – quod prius ne una quidem ciuitas unuse populus ciuium uel, quod maius est, una domus fratrum iugiter habere potuisset -; quodsi etiam, cum imperante Caesare ista prouenerint, in ipso imperio Caesaris inluxisse ortum in hoc mundo Domini nostri Iesu Christi liquidissima probatione manifestum est.*

people is reduced to the universal rule of Rome which now encompasses ‘the whole world’. Political diversity is elided within a ‘single will’ characterised by good and peaceful intention, which is directly contrasted with the political, social and even familial multiplicity that perpetuated conflict and warfare. However the attribution for the achievement of universal peace is made carefully and deliberately: ‘this peace and most tranquil serenity of the whole world existed, not by the greatness of Caesar, but by the power of the Son of God’.<sup>488</sup> (3.8.8, p. 89) The argument is clear that the nascence of the Roman empire under Augustus heralded the Messiah does not necessitate the precedence of Imperial over Divine power in any way: the ‘greatness of Caesar’ provided the context for the Incarnation, allowing the spread of Christianity and the predominance of peace. Rome and the Emperor are firmly subordinate to the omnipotent power of the Creator God: ‘...that the world itself, according to general knowledge obeyed, not the ruler of one city, but the Creator of the whole world.’<sup>489</sup> (3.8.8, p. 89) However this assertion of political and theological supremacy can be made whilst still favouring Rome as the chosen empire and Imperial authority as the closest proximate to the divine.<sup>490</sup>

### 3.1.4 Augustus in Book Six

The introduction of Augustus within the narrative of history occurs towards the end of Book Six. As a foil to Augustus, much of the Book previously is occupied with Julius Caesar, focusing on his Gallic wars, the civil war with Pompey, and Caesar’s assassination (6.7-18). The portrayal of Caesar is overtly militaristic, concentrating on civil war and the expansion of the empire in a negative sense.<sup>491</sup> Rome is ‘almost disembowelled and devoured to the very marrow’ by civil war, which is juxtaposed in an equally negative sense with the expansion of Rome’s empire, ‘extended almost to the

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<sup>488</sup> 3.8.8, vol. 1, p. 149: *...pacem istam totius mundi et tranquillissimam serenitatem non magnitudine Caesaris, sed potestate filii Dei...*

<sup>489</sup> 3.8.8, vol. 1, p. 150: *...exstitisse nec unius urbis imperatori sed creatori orbis uniuersi orbem ipsum generali cognitione paruisse...*

<sup>490</sup> Compare with Pocock, (1999), p. 80, who argues the direct opposite in his overestimation of the similarity between Augustine and Orosius: ‘Both writers – Orosius from Roman Spain, Augustine in Roman Africa, two provinces under Vandal attack – were faced with pagans blaming Christianity for the disasters of the times and responded with lengthy demonstrations that there had been just as many disasters in the ages before Christian revelation...It entailed the contention that Roman empire [*sic*] had not in fact brought peace to mankind, or been necessary to the coming of Christ and the growth of his salvific church.’

<sup>491</sup> For the archetypal portrayal of the destructive impact of Rome’s empire within this context, see the presentation of Gaul, 6.12.

outermost boundaries of the earth'.<sup>492</sup> (6.14.3. p. 258) The detached and factual style in the accounting of war and concentration on military tactics contrasts considerably with the often emotive presentation of Augustus in the rise of the empire and Christianity. The focus on warfare, specifically civil war, the martial expansion of empire, and the disasters that are caused by war, are juxtaposed with the reduction of power to one ruler in the Imperial authority of Augustus:

...and when the supreme power of the whole empire is reduced to one man, all submit to a far different mode of life, so that all humbly strive to please and not insolently offend. But for so healthy a doctrine of humility there was need of a master. Thus opportunely, when the affairs of Augustus Caesar had been arranged, the Lord Christ was born...<sup>493</sup> (6.17.9-10, p. 266)

This radical shift initiates a transformation in the narrative away from the pessimism of war, misery and disaster. With the advent of monotheism in Christianity and monarchy in Augustus from this point onwards the times are ever-improving.

### 3.1.5 Pride and Humility

Orosius returns to war and the causes of conflict to illustrate the changing direction of the apologetic argument. Reflecting on disasters under Caesar, Orosius attributes 'the beginning of all these evils' to pride, *superbia*: 'from it civil wars blazed forth, from it they again multiplied.'<sup>494</sup> (6.17.9, p. 266) Following the assumption of power by one ruler pride is eradicated and replaced with humility as all people 'submit to a different mode of life', that is an autocratic government, and 'humbly strive to please and not insolently offend.'<sup>495</sup> (6.17.9, p. 266) From the context the 'offence' seems to be a reference to civil war and the pride that drives individual ambition and the collective empire in the aggressive subordination of others. The 'doctrine of humility' that Orosius identifies is administered by Christ, but it is only following 'Augustus Caesar' that Christ could be born: 'Thus opportunely, when the affairs of Augustus Caesar had been

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<sup>492</sup> 6.14.3, vol. 2, p. 203: *Rursus post hanc domesticam intestinamque perniciem qua usque ad medullas paene euiscerata et exesa est, paribus propemodum spatiis temporum non solum reparata, uerum etiam extenta est...Romanumque imperum usque ad extremos propemodum terrae terminos propagatum est.*

<sup>493</sup> 6.17.9-10, vol. 2, pp. 215-6: *...summaque imperii totius ad unum redacta longe aliud omnes homines uiuendi genus subeant, ut omnes humiliter placere studeant, non insolenter offendere. Sed ad tam salubrem humilitatis doctrinam magistro opus est. Itaque oportune conpositis rebus Augusti Caesaris natus est Dominus Christus...*

<sup>494</sup> 6.17.9, vol. 2, p. 215: *Et tamen horum omnium malorum initium superbia est.*

<sup>495</sup> 6.17.9, vol. 2, p. 215: *...summaque imperii totius ad unum redacta longe aliud omnes homines uiuendi genus subeant, ut omnes humiliter placere studeant, non insolenter offendere.*

arranged, the Lord Christ was born, who, although he was in the image of God, humbly took on the image of a servant'.<sup>496</sup> (6.17.10, p. 266) Orosius plays on the antithesis here between the master and the servant, the divine and the terrestrial, the humble and the proud, war and peace. As the image of God Christ is the supreme and divine 'master' but assumes the image of servitude as an example to humanity. During the rule of Caesar pride was a necessary part of individual and national ambition in the expansion of empire, but following Augustus and the birth of Christ it is 'throughout the whole world the punishment of pride might be a warning to all.'<sup>497</sup> (6.17.10, p. 267) Humility is represented as a valorised characteristic of the universal Christian community whereas pride is associated with individual ambition and will inevitably be punished.

### 3.1.6 The *princeps* and Julius Caesar

As discussed above the political and belligerent figure of Julius Caesar occupies a considerable part of Book Six as a precursor to the transformed Augustus. However the representation of Caesar as the first Roman Emperor is conspicuous by its absence within the text. Orosius chooses to elide the status of Caesar as the first emperor in order to preserve the synchronisation between Augustus and Christ.<sup>498</sup> This is a deliberate departure from Eusebius-Jerome's *Chronicon*, where the major political shift in Roman history from Republic to Empire is recorded in the 67th Olympiad:

After the kings had been expelled, first two consuls began to exist at Rome, from Brutus; then tribunes of the plebs and dictators, and then consuls again controlled the Republic for close to 464 years, until Julius Caesar, who was the first to seize sole rule, in the 183rd Olympiad.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> 6.17.10, vol. 2, pp. 215-6: *Itaque oportune conpositis rebus Augusti Caesaris natus est Dominus Christus qui, cum in forma Dei esset, formam serui humiliter adsumpsit...*

<sup>497</sup> 6.17.10, vol. 2, p. 216: *...quando iam per totum mundum poena superbiae omnibus esset exemplo.*

<sup>498</sup> For an additional view, see Pocock, (2003), p. 203: 'Orosius and Augustine were not much interested in what we are terming Gibbon's 'first decline and fall', the Tacitean narrative of how the principate set up by Augustus failed to keep control of its succession problem and its armies; this was one reason why Julius rather than Augustus Caesar came to be imprecisely considered the first *princeps et imperator* who had destroyed the republic.'

<sup>499</sup> Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, 67th Olympiad: *Romae post exactos Reges primum consules duo a Bruto esse coeperunt; deinde tribuni plebis ac dictatores, et rursus consules rempublicam obtinuerunt per annos ferme CDLXIV usque ad Julium Caesarem, qui primus singulare arripuit imperium olympiade CLXXXIII.* The significance of Caesar to the dating of the *Chronicon* is reinforced in other places: the 183rd Olympiad (48 BC) opens with 'Gaius Julius Caesar was the first among the Romans to attain sole power, from whom Romans holding first rank are called "Caesars".' Caesar is titled the 'first of the Romans' and is recorded as ruling for four years and seven months, with the heading of the column changing from 'Consuls' to 'Romans'.

For Orosius, Caesar is a ‘surveyor’ (*metator*) of the empire rather than an emperor himself: ‘Then, in the time of that first of all the emperors, Caesar Augustus, although his father, Caesar, was more a surveyor of the Empire than emperor’.<sup>500</sup> (7.2.14, p. 287) The recognition of Caesar as anything more than another Roman military leader is noted by Fear as only included to demonstrate a synchronicity between the Babylonian kings Ninus and Belus and the Roman emperors Augustus and Caesar.<sup>501</sup> (7.2.13-4) The treatment of Julius Caesar in the *Historiae* is characteristic of Orosius’s more general historiographical approach. A more serious accusation of fabrication is avoided but the manipulation of history is evident in the elision of Caesar as the first Roman emperor. Caesar is not erased from the narrative but he is equally not entirely represented either, allowing the focus to be directed towards Augustus in accordance with Orosius’s apologetic.

### 3.1.7 Augustus Transformed

Although the correlation between the beginning of the Roman empire and the birth of Christ is an integral part of the apologetic of the *Historiae*, it is necessary for the figure of Augustus to be transformed textually from a young man consumed with the evils of civil war (6.18.1-3) into the most divine earthly ruler under which the Incarnation can occur (6.20.5). This is achieved instantly by a concentration on naming and titling. The predisposition of the text towards Augustus as central to the spread of Christianity and peace is directly juxtaposed with the identity of Octavian: while ‘still a young man, [he] dedicated his genius to civil wars. For to unfold an accumulation of evils briefly, he carried on five civil wars.’<sup>502</sup> (6.18.1-2, p. 267) As a precursor to Augustus Octavian is a purely political figure and successor to Julius Caesar, demonstrated by his inheritance and adoption of Caesar’s name ‘in accord with the will of his uncle’.<sup>503</sup> (6.18.1, p. 267) ‘Octavian’ is represented as yet another ambitious political military leader within a narrative that revolves around historical individual personalities like Caesar, Anthony and Cleopatra, and the wars they fought; conversely ‘Augustus’ as a political leader is

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<sup>500</sup> Fear translates the description of Caesar as an ‘architect’ rather than Deferrari and Raymond’s ‘surveyor’. Fear, (2010), p. 322. 7.2.14, vol. 3, p. 19: *deinde nunc primi istius imperatorum omnium Augusti Caesaris – quamvis et pater eius Caesar metator imperii potius quam imperator exstiterit.*

<sup>501</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 322, fn. 19.

<sup>502</sup> 6.18.1-2, vol. 2, p. 216: *...simul et Romam adulescens admodum uenit, indolem suam bellis ciuilibus uouit. Nam, ut breuiter coaceruationem malorum explicem, bella ciuilia quinque gessit.*

<sup>503</sup> 6.18.1, vol. 2, p. 216: *...Octauianus qui testamento Iulii Caesaris auunculi et hereditatem et nomen adsumperat...*

sanitized for the purpose of the Incarnation of Christ. The supersession of ‘Octavian’ and ‘Caesar’ and adoption of the name ‘Augustus’ is a key element in the political theology of Orosius, immediately converting the status of the emperor from a belligerent and ruthless general into the divinely chosen ruler under whom Christ was born and universal peace was achieved.<sup>504</sup>

### 3.1.8 Titling and the *Historiae*

The metamorphosis of Octavian or Caesar into Augustus is instantaneous and is specifically dated to the sixth of January 27 BC:<sup>505</sup>

In the seven hundred and twenty-fifth year after the founding of the City, when the emperor himself, Caesar Augustus...on the sixth of January entered the City with a triple triumph and, then, for the first time, since all civil wars had been put to sleep and been ended, he himself closed the gates of Janus. On this day, Caesar was first saluted as Augustus, which name had been inviolate up to that time by all, and up to the present had not been presumed by other rulers, and declares that the supreme power to rule the world is lawful. From this same day, the highest power in the state began to be in one man and has remained so, which the Greeks call monarchy.<sup>506</sup> (6.20.1-3, pp. 274-5)

The sixth of January is a date imbued with a series of significant events; it is the day that Augustus is first saluted or greeted (*consalutatus est*) with his new title. From this point there is no reversion back to Octavian. The name ‘Augustus’ is distinguished as one that had been previously ‘inviolate’ (*inviolatum*) to all other rulers, giving an almost sacral significance to the name, and a sense of predestination in the titling of Augustus. It was reserved exclusively for the founder of the Roman empire, and ‘up to

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<sup>504</sup> For the choice of the name ‘Augustus’ see Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.591-616; Florus, *Epitoma*, 34; Cassius Dio, 53.16.8. See also Taylor, (1915); Haverfield, (1915).

<sup>505</sup> The precise date was 13 January, 27 BC, and is recorded in the *Res gestae* (34): ‘In my sixth and seventh consulships, after I had extinguished all civil wars, and by universal consent gained control over all affairs, I restored the *res publica* from my power to the full discretion of the Senate and People of Rome. For this service, by decree of the senate I received the name of Augustus, and the doorposts of my house were decked with laurels, a civic crown was fixed above my door, and a golden shield was set up in the Curia Julia’. *In consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia exstinxeram, per consensum universorum potitus rerum omnium, rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populi que Romani arbitrium transtuli. Quo pro merito meo senatus consulto Augustus appellatus sum et laureis postes aedium mearum vestiti publice corona que civica super ianuam meam fixa est et clipeus aureus in curia Julia positus*

<sup>506</sup> 6.20.1-3, vol. 2, pp. 226-7: *Anno ab urbe condita DCCXXV, ipso imperatore Caesare Augusto...VIII idus Ianuarius Urbem triplici triumpho ingressus est ac tunc primum ipse Iani portas sopitis finitisque omnibus bellis civilibus clausit. Hoc die primum Augustus consalutatus est: quod nomen, cunctis antea inviolatum et usque ad nunc ceteris inausum dominis, tantum Orbis licite usurpatum apicem declarat imperii, atque ex eadem die summa rerum ac potestatum penes unum esse coepit et mansit; quod Graeci monarchiam uocant.*



the present had not been presumed by other rulers'.<sup>507</sup> The significance of the title is demonstrated by its stated function of legitimising the authority of the emperor as 'the supreme power to rule the world'. It is 'from this same day', *ex eadem die*, that 'the highest power in the state' began and remained (*coepit et mansit*) in one man in a political rule that is explicitly identified as a monarchy. Beginning with Augustus Orosius identifies the rule of monarchy as continuing through the Imperial genealogical succession 'up to the present'.<sup>508</sup> The narrative of Augustus is not constructed without the self-interest of the author; Orosius is driving the reader towards a predetermined conclusion ultimately demonstrating the convergence of Roman authority and Christianity, of which the titling of Augustus is a crucial element.

### 3.1.9 The Epiphany

Orosius brings together the titling of Augustus and beginning of the Roman monarchy with the manifestation of universal peace occurring at the same time, specifically the sixth of January, explicitly recognised in the text as the Epiphany of Christ.<sup>509</sup> These events are presented as evidence: the synchronicity in which Orosius finds in them is intended to reinforce the argument of the divinely ordained authority of Rome under Augustus and the Emperor as a precursor to Christ.<sup>510</sup>

In the seven hundred and twenty-fifth year after the founding of the City, when the emperor himself, Caesar Augustus, for the fifth time, and L. Apuleius were consuls,

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<sup>507</sup> Although the title 'Augustus' became a standard element of Imperial titulature in the succession of emperors following Augustus, Orosius's observation that the name 'up to the present had not been presumed by other rulers' is in one sense correct; as Fear points out, there is no 'Augustus II'. Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 302. For the sacral significance of the name Augustus and the wider focus on his titling, see Florus: 'For all these great achievements he was named Perpetual Imperator and Father of his Country. It was also discussed in the senate whether he should not be called Romulus, because he had established the empire; but the name of Augustus was deemed more holy and venerable, in order that, while he still dwelt upon earth, he might be given a name and title which raised him to the rank of a deity.' Florus, *Epitoma*, 65-67. ...*ob haec tot facta ingentia dictus imperator perpetuus et pater patriae. Tractatum etiam in senatu an, quia condidisset imperium, Romulus vocaretur; sed sanctius et reverentius visum est nomen Augusti, ut scilicet iam tum, dum colit terras, ipso nomine et titulo consecraretur.*

<sup>508</sup> Tacitus, a source frequently excerpted in the *Historiae*, distinguishes between the rule of monarchy and the rule of *princeps*: 'Yet he [Augustus] organized the state, not by instituting a monarchy or a dictatorship, but by creating the title of First Citizen.' Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.9. ...[ut] *ab uno regeretur, non regno tamen neque dictatura, sed principis nomine constitutam rem publicam.*

<sup>509</sup> Fear identifies the synchronisation between the Epiphany and the beginning of the Empire under Augustus as unique, a view which is discounted by Mommsen's attention to Apponius's corresponding interpretation in his Exposition on the Song of Songs. Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 303. Mommsen, (1959a).

<sup>510</sup> 'The attractiveness of the universal monarchy and the universal religion being 'born' on the same day was simply too hard for the determined Orosius to resist.' Onica, (1987), p. 129. Similarly Syme: 'To the Spanish presbyter the Nativity (it was axiomatic) at once ushered in a period of profound peace.' Syme, (1979), p. 197.

returning from the East as victor, on the sixth of January entered the City with a triple triumph and, then, for the first time, since all civil wars had been put to sleep and been ended, he himself closed the gates of Janus. On this day, Caesar was first saluted as Augustus, which name had been held inviolate up to that time by all, and up to the present had not been presumed by other rulers, and declares that the supreme power to rule the world is lawful. From this same day, the highest power in the state began to be in one man and has remained so, which the Greeks call monarchy. Furthermore, there is no believer, or even one who contradicts the faith, who does not know that this is the same day, namely, in the sixth of January, on which we observe the Epiphany, that is the Apparition or the Manifestation of the Sacrament of the Lord. Neither reason nor the opportunity demand that we now speak more fully about this sacrament which we observe most faithfully, so that we seem neither to have left it to interested inquirers nor to have pressed it on the indifferent. But it was proper to have recorded this event faithfully for this reason, that in every respect the Empire of Caesar might be proven to have been prepared for Christ's coming.<sup>511</sup> (6.20.1-5, pp. 274-5)

The crux of the political theology, or more accurately, the 'Augustus-Theologie' of Peterson, is here brought to a climax.<sup>512</sup> The context is crucial to an understanding of this passage and it is therefore necessary to quote extensively from the text. Numerous strands are drawn together within the crucible of the Epiphany. The formal adoption of the title Augustus, the triple *adventus* of Augustus on his return to Rome, the closing of the gates of Janus and inauguration of peace, and the foundation of the Roman empire, all according to divine providence concur with the feast of the Epiphany: 'there is no believer, or even one who contradicts the faith, who does not know that this is the same day, namely, in the sixth of January, on which we observe the Epiphany, that is, the Apparition or the Manifestation of the Sacrament of the Lord.'<sup>513</sup> (6.20.3, p. 275) Combined with the metamorphosis of Augustus into a divinely appointed monarch the Epiphany is a crucial juncture within the text, and has wider repercussions especially for

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<sup>511</sup> 6.20.1-5. vol. 2, p. 226-7: *Anno ab Vrbe condita DCCXXV, ipso imperatore Caesare Augusto quinquies et L. Apuleio consulibus, Caesar uictor ab Oriente rediens, VIII idus Ianuarius Vrbem triplici triumpho ingressus est ac tunc primum ipse Iani portas sopitis finitisque omibus bellis ciuilibus clausit. Hoc die primum Augustus consalutatus est: quod nomen, cunctis antea inuiolatum et usque ad nunc ceteris inausum dominis, tantum Orbis licite usurpatum apicem declarat imperii, atque ex eadem die summa rerum ac potestatum penes unum esse coepit et mansit; quod Graeci monarchium uocant. Porro autem hunc esse eundem diem, hoc est VIII idus Ianuarias quo nos Epiphania, hoc est appartitionem siue manifestationem Dominici sacramenti, obseruamus, nemo credentium siue etiam fidei contradicentium nescit. De quo nostrae istius fidelissimae obseruationis sacramento uberius nunc dicere nec ratio nec locus flagitat, ut et quaerentibus reseruasse et neglegentibus non ingessisse uideamur. Hoc autem fideliter commemorasse ideo par fuit, ut per omnia uenturi Christi gratia praeparatum Caesaris imperium conprobetur.*

<sup>512</sup> Peterson, (1935), p. 88.

<sup>513</sup> 6.20.3, vol. 2, p. 227: *Porro autem hunc esse eundem diem, hoc est VIII idus Ianuarias quo nos Epiphania, hoc est appartitionem siue manifestationem Dominici sacramenti, obseruamus, nemo credentium siue etiam fidei contradicentium nescit.*

the understanding of the early Christian development of liturgical festivals.<sup>514</sup> Orosius's approach to the Epiphany reveals his aims in writing the *Historiae* and how far he would go to achieve those aims, and has been interpreted as indicative of the pressure to adhere or reject the traditions of his contemporaries like Jerome and Augustine.<sup>515</sup>

### 3.1.9.1 The Epiphany: Meaning and Interpretation

Despite the centrality of the Epiphany to the apologetic argument there is only one reference to the festival in the *Historiae*, contained in the quotation above. Subsequent references are euphemistic: 'on that very day which we have mentioned above'.<sup>516</sup> (6.20.8, p. 276) Partly due to the brevity of the above passage and the deliberate ambiguity of language what precisely is being commemorated is obscure; it is difficult to know what Orosius means in the *apparitionem siue manifestationem Dominici sacramenti*.<sup>517</sup> In one sense this reflects the continuing development of the Epiphany as a festival in the early fifth century, that the significance was not an established tradition but had various interpretations.<sup>518</sup> Mommsen proposes a division of interpretation between East and West, but the tradition of the Epiphany seems more complex.<sup>519</sup> One interpretation, the *tria miracula*, saw the Epiphany as a commemoration of the visit of

<sup>514</sup> See Mommsen, (1959), pp. 313-4, who uses the evidence of the *Historiae* to challenge the idea that the celebration of Christ's baptism on the Epiphany did not start in Spain before the sixth or seventh centuries. In light of a different interpretation of what Orosius designates the Epiphany as, Mommsen's argument retains its validity (assuming also that Orosius was Hispanic), but what the Epiphany in Hispania was in the early fifth century is contested.

<sup>515</sup> For an emphasis on the latter, see Mommsen, (1959a).

<sup>516</sup> 6.20.8, vol. 2, p. 229: *...eo scilicet die quem supra nominauimus...*

<sup>517</sup> 6.20.3, vol. 2, p. 227. This ambiguity is reflected more generally in the ancient sources and history of the festival: 'Owing no doubt to the vagueness of the name *Epiphany*, very different manifestations of Christ's glory and Divinity were celebrated in this feast quite early in its history, especially the Baptism, the miracle at Cana, the Nativity, and the visit of the Magi...It seems fairly clear that the Baptism was the event predominantly commemorated.' Martindale, (1909), p. 506.

<sup>518</sup> For a detailed exploration of the early history of the Epiphany which covers many of the sources, see the important article by Mommsen, (1959a), pp. 299-325. The multiplicity of interpretation in the ancient sources is reflected in modern criticism. Jungmann states that the basic concept of the Epiphany was the coming of Christ into the world, the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the terminology used by Orosius. Jungmann goes on to argue that the baptism of Christ and the miracle of Cana are secondary. Jungmann, (1959), p. 150. For a different explanation see Baldovin and Johnson, (2000), p. 345: '...the baptism of Jesus, apparently understood as *birth*, was most solemnly celebrated. This made room for a shift in emphasis to his birth in Bethlehem to which initially, however, his baptism in the Jordan still remained attached...The continuing oscillation between the emphasis on either the birth or the baptism of Jesus as leitmotifs for the Feast of the Epiphany has to be understood as a preliminary step to the ultimate separation of the two themes of Epiphany during the fourth century: January 6 established itself predominantly as the feast of the baptism of Jesus, and a new separate feast was introduced, namely, the celebration of the birth of Jesus on 25 December.'

<sup>519</sup> An example being the disparity between the Epiphany according to Ambrose of Milan and other North-Italian bishops. See Connell, (1992).

the Magi, the baptism of Jesus, and the miracle at Cana.<sup>520</sup> In the West the sixth of January ultimately developed to commemorate almost exclusively the visitation of the Magi.<sup>521</sup> Confirmed by his six sermons on the Epiphany this is the view held by Augustine, which is given considerable significance by Mommsen:<sup>522</sup>

The Church of Rome, supported by the great authority of St. Augustine, was gradually, in the course of the following centuries, to succeed in enforcing the almost complete exclusion of the liturgical commemoration both of Christ's baptism and of the foundation of the sacrament itself, and in reducing the significance of the feast of the Epiphany to the celebration of the adoration of the Magi.<sup>523</sup>

It is difficult to discern how far Augustine's beliefs concerning the Epiphany affected a wider acceptance of this view in the west, but Orosius's cautious hesitancy in presenting an opposing view has been interpreted as clear evidence that his opinion transgressed Augustine's belief in the Epiphany exclusively as the visit of the Magi.<sup>524</sup> An alternative Oriental view gave the Epiphany a deeper meaning; the sixth of January commemorated the Baptism of Christ in the river Jordan, the miracle of Cana, and, as opposed to the twenty-fifth of December, the birth of Christ.<sup>525</sup> Mommsen interprets Orosius's statement on the Epiphany, 'that is, the Apparition or the Manifestation of the Sacrament of the Lord', as referring not to the birth of Christ but as the celebration of

<sup>520</sup> Leaver and Zimmerman, (1998), p. 25. In Ambrose's *Illuminans altissimus* (Epiphany Hymn) the feast commemorates the baptism of Jesus, the visit of the Magi, the miracle at Cana and the miracle of the multiplication of bread.

<sup>521</sup> Mommsen, (1959a), p. 300. For Filastrius of Brescia (9.304) the Epiphany celebrates the visit of the Magi. Similarly see Augustine's *Sermones* on the Epiphany.

<sup>522</sup> See Mommsen, (1959a), p. 300. Augustine, *Sermo* 200: 'The Magi came from the East to adore the Virgin's Child. Today we celebrate this event; we pay our respects and deliver a sermon in keeping with the feast. This day first shone resplendently for the Magi; its anniversary is renewed by us with festal rejoicing.' *Ad partum Virginis adorandum Magi ab Oriente venerunt. Hunc diem hodie celebramus, huic debitam solemnitatem sermonemque persolvimus. Illis dies iste primus illuxit, anniversaria nobis festivitate rediit.*

<sup>523</sup> Mommsen, (1959a), p. 301.

<sup>524</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 303; Mommsen, (1959a), pp. 314-5. Perhaps this is unsurprising considering Augustine's invective against the Donatists for not celebrating the Epiphany: 'The Donatist heretics have never desired to celebrate this feast with us, and rightly so, for they neither love unity nor do they unite in fellowship with the Church of the East where the star appeared. But we, in the unity of the Gentiles, celebrate the Manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ where He gathered His first-fruits of the Gentiles.' *Merito istum diem nunquam nobiscum haeretici Donatistae celebrare voluerunt: quia nec unitatem amant, nec Orientali Ecclesiae, ubi apparuit illa stella, communicant. Nos autem manifestationem Domini et Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi, qua primitias Gentium delibavit, in unitate Gentium celebremus.* Augustine, *Sermo* 202.2.

<sup>525</sup> Mommsen, (1959), p. 300. Mommsen takes John Cassian's *Conferences* as the best illustration for understanding the Epiphany. 'In the Egyptian region there is an old custom that when Epiphany is over, that day which the priests of the area claim is the day of the Lord's baptism and of His birth (and this is why these two events are not, as in the West, celebrated on two solemn occasions but as one feast day)...' *Intra Aegypti regionem mos iste antiqua traditione servatur, ut peracto Epiphaniorum die, quem provinciae illius sacerdotes uel dominici baptismi uel secundum carnem natiuitatis esse definiunt et idcirco utriusque sacramenti sollemnitatem non bifarie ut in occiduus provinciis, sed sub una diei huius festiuitate concelebrant...* John Cassian, *Conferences* 10 (*On Prayer*) 2.

his baptism: 'This passage [6.20.3-5] shows clearly that the feast of the Epiphany signified to Orosius the celebration of the establishment of the sacrament of Baptism: it commemorated the day on which Christ, through his baptism by John, was manifested to mankind by the voice from heaven'.<sup>526</sup>

However nowhere in the *Historiae* is the baptism of Christ nor the visit of the Magi mentioned, making it unlikely that Orosius would be referring to either of these events in his understanding of the Epiphany, especially when the birth of Christ is a central part of the work.<sup>527</sup> Rohrbacher identifies the Epiphany as celebrating the appearance of the Magi, but except for the fact that this is ultimately how the Western tradition of the Epiphany developed there is no evidence that Orosius understood the Epiphany in these terms.<sup>528</sup> Mommsen's assumption of the Epiphany as the baptism of Christ is presumably based upon the reference to the festival as the 'Sacrament of the Lord', *Dominici sacramenti*.<sup>529</sup> Although this is a reasonable conclusion, a literal interpretation of the terminology Orosius uses may not be the most accurate; there is evidence within the text that contradicts Mommsen's inference. Crucially at the very beginning of the text Orosius dates the birth of Christ to the forty-second year of Augustus's rule:

But from Ninus or Abraham to Caesar Augustus, that is, to the birth of Christ, which was in the forty-second year of the Caesar's rule, when the gates of Janus were closed, for peace had been made with the Parthians and wars had ceased in the whole world, 2,015 years have passed...<sup>530</sup> (1.1.6, p. 6)

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<sup>526</sup> Mommsen, (1959), p. 313. Fear adopts a similar interpretation: 'While Augustine saw the epiphany as purely a commemoration of the visit of the magi to the infant Christ, others, including the Eastern church and, from Orosius's words, we may assume a substantial part of the Spanish church...saw the epiphany primarily as the commemoration of Christ's own baptism and that baptism's revelation of His mission on earth.' Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 303.

<sup>527</sup> The same argument is used by Mommsen but applied to Apponius when discussing his understanding of the Epiphany: 'which event in Christ's life did Apponius have in mind when he spoke of "the day of his *apparitio*, which is called Epiphany"? From the context it is evident that he meant the day of Christ's birth...in the whole context there is to be found not the slightest reference either to the adoration of the Magi or to Christ's baptism by John. It is certain, therefore, that to Apponius the word Epiphany, or its Latin equivalent *apparitio*, signified the birth of Christ in the flesh.' Mommsen, (1959), pp. 306-7. In the *Historiae* 'Magi' are mentioned in an earlier and very different context, as Persian priests killed by Darius. 2.8.3-5.

<sup>528</sup> Rohrbacher, (2002), p. 142. Peterson offers no comment on what Orosius meant the Epiphany to be besides 'the day on which Christ appeared', which is technically more accurate than Fear as this reflects the ambiguity and use of language in the *Historiae*. Peterson, (2011), p. 100.

<sup>529</sup> 6.20.3, p. 275; 6.20.3, vol. 3, p. 227.

<sup>530</sup> 1.1.6, vol. 1, pp. 10-11: *A Nino autem uel Abraham usque ad Caesarem Augustum – id est usque ad natiuitatem Christi quae fuit anno imperii Caesaris quadragesimo secundo, cum facta pace cum Parthis Iani portae clausae sunt et bella toto orbe cessarunt – colliguntur anni II XV...*

The quotation that opened this section (pp. 132-3) illustrates the context of Orosius's statement on the Epiphany (6.20.1-5), which dates the event to the seven hundred and twenty-fifth year from the founding of the City when Augustus was consul for the fifth time, celebrated a triple triumph, and for the first time, 'since all civil wars had been put to sleep and been ended, he himself closed the gates of Janus.'<sup>531</sup> (6.20.1, p. 274) When examined together with the reference to the birth of Christ in Book One which is dated by the closure of the gates of Janus, peace with the Parthians, and the universal cessation of all wars, it is clear that both incidences in the text refer to the same event, namely the feast of the Epiphany. This demonstrates that according to Orosius here at least the Epiphany celebrates the birth and not the baptism of Christ.<sup>532</sup>

Yet perhaps focusing on the precise date of the birth and baptism of Christ misrepresents Orosius's approach. The synchronisation between the Roman empire and Christianity which centres on the Epiphany is elsewhere referred to using a veiled terminology, often simply as the birth of Christ: 'when the affairs of Augustus Caesar had been arranged, *the Lord Christ was born*, who, although he was an image of God, humbly took on the image of a servant'.<sup>533</sup> (6.17.10, p. 266) Again in Book Six Orosius poses the question, 'What could be more obvious that this sign [the portent of oil] declared that *the birth of Christ* would occur when Caesar ruled the whole world?'<sup>534</sup> (6.20.6, pp. 275-6) At the conclusion of Book Six it is 'by the ordination of God' that when Augustus 'achieved the strongest and truest peace...*Christ was born*, upon whose coming that peace waited and at whose birth as men listened, the angels in exultation sang'.<sup>535</sup> (6.22.5, p. 281) Orosius is encouraging the reader to understand the 'coming' and 'birth' of Jesus as synonymous; the Incarnation and the birth of Christ are not separate festivals within the Church: '...God deemed it right to be seen as, and become, a man. Christ was therefore born at this time'.<sup>536</sup> (6.22.6, p. 281) Close analysis of the

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<sup>531</sup> 6.20.1, vol. 2, pp. 226-7: *...ac tunc primum ipse Iani portas sopitis finitisque omnibus bellis ciuilibus clausit.*

<sup>532</sup> Apponius, also writing in the early fifth century, similarly interpreted the Epiphany. Apponius, *In Canticum Canticorum expositio*. See Mommsen, (1959), pp. 306-7.

<sup>533</sup> My italics. 6.17.10, vol. 2, pp. 215-16: *Itaque oportune conpositis rebus Augusti Caesaris natus est Dominus Christus qui, cum in forma Dei esset, formam serui humiliter institutio...*

<sup>534</sup> My italics. 6.20.6, vol. 2, p. 228: *Quo signo quid euidentius quam in diebus Caesaris toto Orbe regnantis futura Christi natiuitas declarata est?*

<sup>535</sup> My italics. 6.22.5, vol. 2, p. 235: *Igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam uerissimamque pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar conposuit, natus et Christus cuius aduentui pax ista famulata est, in cuius ortu audientibus hominibus exultantes angeli cecinerunt...*

<sup>536</sup> 6.22.6, vol. 2, p. 236: *...quando et Deus homo uideri et esse dignatus est. Tunc igitur natus est Christus...*

text reveals that Orosius works hard to create a great significance in the Epiphany by attributing many events within it, and eliding the twenty-fifth of December as the celebration of the Nativity. The point within Book Six where the argument is forced to be made explicitly (6.20.3-5) reveals its difficulty, most likely because of Orosius's knowledge that he was proposing an argument that many fellow Christians including Augustine would disagree with, despite Orosius's assertion to the contrary.<sup>537</sup>

### 3.1.9.2 The Epiphany and the Nativity

The representation of the birth of Christ as the Epiphany on the sixth of January and the elision of the twenty-fifth of December within the text is not quite comprehensive. In one place, at the beginning of Book Seven, is the date of the Nativity as the twenty-fifth of December included, for the evident purpose of achieving a protracted synchronisation between the reigns of Ninus and Belus with Augustus and Caesar:

I very gladly add this, that in the forty-third year of Ninus, the first of all the kings, although his father Belus, is vaguely reported to have reigned first, in the reign of Ninus, then, in the forty-third year after he ascended to the throne, that holy Abraham was born, to whom promises had been renewed, and from whose seed Christ was promised. Then, in the time of that first of all the emperors, Caesar Augustus, although his father, Caesar, was more a surveyor of the Empire than an emperor, so in the time of that Caesar, almost at the close of the forty-second year after he began to rule, Christ was born, who had been promised to Abraham in the rule of Ninus, the first king. Now He was born on the twenty-fifth of December, as soon as all the increase of the coming year begins. So it happened that, although Abraham was born in the forty-third year, the birth of Christ took place toward the end of the forty-second, so that He Himself was born, not in a part of the third year, but rather the third year was born in Him. With how great and how new and unusual blessings that year abounded, I think, is held sufficiently known without my setting them forth.<sup>538</sup> (7.2.13-17, p. 287)

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<sup>537</sup> 6.20.3, p. 275: 'Furthermore, there is no believer, or even one who contradicts the faith, who does not know that this is the same day, namely, in the sixth of January, on which we observe the Epiphany...' 6.20.3, vol. 2, p. 227: *Porro autem hunc esse eundem diem, hoc est VIII idus Ianuarias quo nos Epiphania, hoc est apparitionem siue manifestationem Dominici sacramenti, obseruamus, nemo credentium siue etiam fidei contradicentium nescit.*

<sup>538</sup> 7.2.13-17, vol. 3, p. 19: *Illud sane libenter adicio quia primi illius regum omnium Nini – quamuis et pater eius Belus obscure primus regnasse referatur – illius ergo Nini anno, postquam regnare coeperat, quadragesimo tertio natus est sanctus ille Abraham, cui dictae sunt repromissiones, ex cuius semine repromissus est Christus; deinde nunc primi istius imperatorum omnium Augusti Caesaris – quamuis et pater eius Caesar metator imperii potius quam imperator exstiterit – istius ergo Caesaris, posteaquam imperare coepit, emenso propemodum anno quadragesimo secundo natus est Christus, qui Abrahae sub Nino primo rege fuerat repromissus. Natus est autem VIII kalendas Ianuarias, cum primum incrementa omnia anni uenientis incipiunt. Ita factum est ut, cum Abraham quadragesimo tertio anno natus sit, sub fine quadragesimi secundi natiuitas Christi conueniret, ut iam non ipse in parte tertii anni, sed in ipso potius tertiu annus oreretur. Qui annus quantis, quam nouis quamque inusitatis bonis abundauerit, satis etiam me proferente compertum haberi arbitror: toto terrarum orbe una pax omnium non cessatione sed abolitione bellorum, clausae Iani gemini portae extirpatis bellorum radicibus non repressis census ille*

The birth of Abraham took place in the forty-third year of Ninus's rule, and Christ was born in the forty-second year of Augustus's reign. The monarchical rule of Ninus and Augustus therefore provide the context for the providential events of Abraham's birth, from whom Christ is descended, and Christ's birth. The principal importance of the rulers of empire here is to provide a secure dating system for events within sacred history. As Ninus is the 'first of all the kings' so Augustus is the 'first of all the emperors', with the added dimension of Belus tentatively presented as a predecessor to his son Ninus, and Julius Caesar, represented as Augustus's father, similarly as 'more a surveyor of the Empire than an emperor'. These parallels function as evidence for the representation of the Old Testament fulfilled by the New Testament, demonstrating the reliability of Christian Scriptural prophecy. In the providential and progressive Christian teleology that dominates the apologetic of the work Ninus and the birth of Abraham is echoed by Augustus and the birth of Christ, but all events are eclipsed by the coming of the Messiah, demonstrated by the exact chronological point of the Nativity on the twenty-fifth of December.<sup>539</sup> Christ pre-empts the synchronisation with Abraham and Ninus in his birth occurring 'not in a part of the third year, but rather the third year was born in Him'. An echo of Pauline theology is discernible, that 'Christ is all in all'; in this sense time is made anew in Christ.<sup>540</sup> The chronological preoccupation of the text here functions to demonstrate not only that 'all things have been created through him and for him', but that the birth of Christ necessitates a fundamental shift in time and perspective; a new age has begun.<sup>541</sup> Orosius is striving to prove this as a theological truth but also as an inherent and crucial part of the apologetic structure of the *Historiae*.

In Book Seven the sudden reversal in the twenty-fifth of December unquestioningly referred to as the Nativity, the birth of Christ, in opposition to the Epiphany, is revealing about Orosius's authorial and historiographical approach. The willingness with which dates, times and events are manipulated for the convenience of the argument illustrates that nothing is more important than the creation of a persuasive rhetoric. It also exposes

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*primus et maximus, cum in hoc unum Caesaris nomen uniuersa magnarum gentium creatura iurauit simulque per communionem census unius societatis effecta est.* For a discussion of the temporal synchronisation between empires, see Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 47-50.

<sup>539</sup> The nativity of Christ is first mentioned as occurring on the twenty-fifth of December in the *Chronograph of 354*. See Salzman, (1990); Declercq, (2002), p. 225.

<sup>540</sup> *Colossians*, 3:11. Also 1:17: 'He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.'

<sup>541</sup> *Colossians*, 1:16.



the conscious deliberation in Orosius's representation of the most important events within Christianity. There can be no question over Orosius's understanding of the Epiphany or the Nativity; a different tradition was not being followed in the earlier account of the Epiphany as a festival that celebrated the birth of Christ. The importance of the accuracy of representing historical events even within the life of Christ is transcended by the necessary shaping of the historical material around the apologetic argument. Orosius's ease in this authorial approach suggests that a multiplicitous or two-dimensional version of history may not be as anathema in the early fifth century as modern historiographical expectations would suppose.<sup>542</sup> The Nativity and the Epiphany are both crucial events to a Christian history but are mentioned specifically once only, revealing the strain under which Orosius is exposing his narrative and the rhetorical integrity of his argument. It is possible to argue that the desire to obscure certain key logical elements of the text contributed to the work extending beyond its self-imposed boundaries of brevity in order to make such alterations to the material of history appear inconspicuous.<sup>543</sup>

### 3.1.9.3 Hidden in Plain View: Dating, Chronology and the Epiphany

Where critical attention is paid to Orosius's representation of events signified by the terms 'the Epiphany' and 'the Nativity', it is usually concluded that the ambiguity Orosius cultivates around these key Christian festivals can be explained by his unwillingness to contradict what established tradition designates these events as.<sup>544</sup> This extends specifically to the dedicatee of the text, Augustine, and his firm views on what the Epiphany was.<sup>545</sup> However an alternative view can be proposed. Orosius incorporates the Epiphany into the tissue of synchronisms at the transitional moment for the depiction of Augustus, which is dated seven-hundred and twenty-five years after the founding of Rome (6.20.1-4). But the third and final closure of the temple of Janus,

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<sup>542</sup> This is discussed by Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 13: 'The repeated rhetorical interjections and elaborations have made scholars doubt if the *Historiae* really are history at all: its apologetic intention, calling forth polemic and rhetoric, seems to impinge on the value of objectivity that one expects of a historian...such views betray the assumption that a text must be objective and neutral in content and form alike to count as a work of history. In that case, much ancient historiography would disqualify. Having an agenda does not disqualify someone from being a historian: most historians were highly partisan and not a few of their modern colleagues fail to live up to the lofty ideal of objectivity.'

<sup>543</sup> Supported by Van Nuffelen's statement that 'Large tracts of the *Historiae* are hardly ever read, or make no impact on the overall interpretation of the work.' Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 19.

<sup>544</sup> Mommsen, (1959a), pp. 314-5, p. 317; Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 303.

<sup>545</sup> Established above, 'The Epiphany: Meaning and Interpretation'.

dated seven-hundred and fifty-two years *ab urbe condita* coincides expressly with the year of Christ's birth: 'So at that time, that is, in that year in which, by the ordination of God, Caesar achieved the strongest and truest peace, Christ was born'.<sup>546</sup> (6.22.5, p. 281) The Epiphany of Christ, a term whose ambiguity is positively encouraged at this point in the text, therefore predates the birth of Christ by twenty-seven years. The impossibility in this chronology has not been previously acknowledged. In light of this it seems much more likely that Orosius hoped to link the birth of the Roman empire with the Epiphany in 725 and 752 *ab urbe condita* but briefly in order to conceal the lack of logic in the chronology rather than to avoid contradicting contemporary ideas as to what the feast of the Epiphany correctly celebrated. The purpose of this analysis is not to deconstruct the text in order to demonstrate the flaws and failings of Orosius as a historian, but instead to reveal the concealed detail and veiled authorial motivations that have so far passed unrecognised.

Syme has previously suggested that the confusion in the text is deliberate: 'Confusion may be multiple, as happened when Orosius assigned various transactions to a single day of January in 29 B.C.-not that time innocent or inadvertent.'<sup>547</sup> But the question of why Orosius would risk exposing the text in such a way, of potentially weakening the conviction of the argument, is significant. Paradoxically the purpose seems to be to strengthen the rhetorical argument of Book Six. Orosius wants to find the synchronisation that is so important in more than one place. The repetition achieves this aim, that an initial synchronisation in the Epiphany then provides a platform to reach higher levels of synchronisation in the Nativity. This is illustrated by the use of peace in both instances. The first synchronisation (6.20.1-4) sees the end of all civil war; the synchronisation at the conclusion to Book Six (6.22.1-9) sees the establishment of a universal peace. The *Historiae* is built around the certainty of constant improvement and renewal from the point of the Incarnation. This upward trajectory necessitates a particular emphasis on consolidation and supersession, a fact that is constant throughout the text. It is for this reason then, in the necessity to constantly build upon and exceed, that Orosius constructs this repetition. His reticence concerning the Epiphany at 6.20.4 can therefore be explained in alternative terms, as a deliberate policy that avoided

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<sup>546</sup> 6.22.5, vol. 2, p. 235: *Igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam uerissimamque pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar composuit, natus est Christus...*

<sup>547</sup> Syme, (1979), p. 201. Orosius's calculation of time according to the foundation of Rome in 752 *Ab urbe condita* makes 725 *Ab urbe condita* 27 BC and not 29 BC.

drawing attention to the event of the Incarnation preceding the birth of Christ within the construction of this questionable chronology.<sup>548</sup> But the repetition of the evidence Orosius finds in associating Roman secular history with key Christian events that is intended to strengthen the rhetorical conviction of the argument makes the risk expedient. And indeed, the lack of critical notice this has generated makes Orosius's risk arguably a calculated one.

The ambiguity of Orosius's conception of the Epiphany is reflected in the interpretation of later sources. Writing in the seventh century Isidore of Seville frames his discussion of the Epiphany in the *Etymologiae* in very similar terms to Orosius, making it likely that the *Historiae* was his source: 'The Greek term 'Epiphany' (*Epiphania*) is 'appearance' (*apparitio*) in Latin, for on that day, when the star led the way, Christ appeared to the Magi to be worshipped.'<sup>549</sup> Although initially Isidore suggests that the Epiphany primarily commemorated the visitation of the Magi, it is added that the Epiphany includes the baptism of Christ and the miracle of water into wine.<sup>550</sup> Then Isidore states that there were in fact 'two epiphanies', when the newborn Christ appeared to the Shepherds heralded by an angel, and when the star guided the Magi to Christ.<sup>551</sup> In emphasising the visit of the Magi Isidore departs from the Orosian interpretation of the Epiphany, and his creation of an additional 'Epiphany' illustrates one way of dealing with the numerous traditions that require integration. If Isidore's approach to the Epiphany originates with the *Historiae* this demonstrates the obscurity of the tradition in Orosius's presentation, an obscurity that is deliberate in enabling a variety of interpretations. This ambivalence suits Orosius as it allows the text flexibility; in other places the same event can be referred to as the Nativity or the Coming of Christ rather than the Epiphany, reducing the potential alienation for the reader by proposing a strong definition that was not widely held, and concealing contradiction within the text.

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<sup>548</sup> 6.20.4, p. 275: 'Neither reason nor the opportunity demand that we now speak more fully about this sacrament which we observe most faithfully, so that we seem neither to have left it to interested inquirers nor to have pressed it on the indifferent.' 6.20.4, vol. 2, p. 227: *De quo nostrae istius fidelissimae obseruationis sacramento uberius nunc dicere nec ratio nec locus flagitat, ut et quaerentibus reseruasse et neglegentibus non ingessisse uideamur.*

<sup>549</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 6.18.6. *Epiphania Graece, Latine apparitio [sive manifestatio] vocatur. Eo enim die Christus sideris indicio Magis apparuit adorandus.*

<sup>550</sup> This is confirmed in Isidore's *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, 27.1-3.

<sup>551</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 6.18.6: *Duae sunt autem epiphaniae...*

### 3.1.10 Evidence in the Miraculous: the Rainbow

The Epiphany is closely related to miraculous occurrences which function as evidence to reinforce the providential synchronisation of Rome with Christ. Orosius engages with what are traditionally pagan signs and portents but in a way that Christianizes their significance. Rather than portending the divine favour of the pagan gods towards Augustus these ‘prophetic utterances’ have been interpreted as foretelling the coming of Christ.<sup>552</sup> The portent of a rainbow encircling the sun heralding Augustus’s return to Rome is given a deeper theological interpretation:

...as if to point out Augustus as the one and the most powerful man in this universe and the most renowned man in the world, in whose time He was to come who alone had made the sun itself and the whole world and was ruling them.<sup>553</sup> (6.20.5, p. 275)

Fear translates the relation of the miracles associated with Augustus in evidential terms. Where Deferrari translates *Nam cum primum* as ‘For when, in the first place’, Fear has ‘The first proof is’, (*Deinde cum secundo*) ‘The second proof is’, (*Tertio autem*) ‘The third proof is’.<sup>554</sup> Although this is not strictly literal, it does convey a sense of the argument being set out systematically and according to the evidence identified, arguing that ‘in every respect the Empire of Caesar might be proven to have been prepared for Christ’s coming.’<sup>555</sup> (6.20.8, p. 276) The same portent is found in other ancient sources which help to explain the significance of the event in the *Historiae*.<sup>556</sup> The rainbow illuminating Augustus as a universal ruler is more explicitly evident in other pagan sources such as Velleius Paterculus where the appearance of the rainbow is similarly providential and likened to a coronation of Augustus: ‘...at the moment of his entering the city, men saw above his head the orb of the sun with a circle about it, coloured like the rainbow, seeming thereby to place a crown upon the head of one destined to greatness.’<sup>557</sup> Orosius takes the event as part of the historical narrative of Augustus as

<sup>552</sup> Wessel, (2008), p. 366. See also Mommsen, (1959), p. 320; Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 303.

<sup>553</sup> 6.20.5, vol. 2, pp. 227-8: *...quasi eum unum ac potissimum in hoc mundo solumque clarissimum in orbe monstraret, cuius tempore uenturus esset, qui ipsum solem solus mundumque totum et fecisset et regeret.*

<sup>554</sup> 6.20.5, vol. 2, p. 227; 6.20.6, vol. 2, p. 228; 6.20.8, vol. 2, p. 229. Deferrari: 6.20.5, p. 275; 6.20.6, p. 275; 6.20.8, p. 276. Fear: 6.20.5, p. 309; 6.20.6, p. 309; 6.20.8, p. 310.

<sup>555</sup> 6.20.8, vol. 2, p. 229: *...quam hunc occulto quidem gestorum ordine ad obsequium praeparationis eius praedestinatum fuisse...*

<sup>556</sup> Julius Obsequens, 68; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 95; Velleius Paterculus, 2.59.

<sup>557</sup> Velleius Paterculus, 2.59: *Cui adventanti Romam inmanis amicorum occurrit frequentia, et cum intraret urbem, solis orbis super caput eius curvatus aequaliter rotundatusque in colorem arcus velut coronam tanti mox viri capiti imponens conspectus est.* The phrasing in the *Historiae* of the event is very similar to that found in Suetonius: ‘When he returned from Apollonia, after the death of Caesar, and entered the city, all at once, although the sky was clear and calm, a circle appeared around the sun, like a

recorded in earlier sources and bestows an additional level of meaning in the portrayal of Augustus as a universal secular ruler mirroring the universal divine rule of Christ.

### 3.1.11 Evidence in the Miraculous: the Fountain of Oil

Identified by Fear as ‘the second proof’, Augustus’s entry into the city of Rome is heralded by ‘a most abundant spring of oil’ which ‘flowed for a whole day from an inn.’<sup>558</sup> (6.20.6, p. 275) Associated with the miracle are the annulment of all debts of the Roman populace, the restoration of 30,000 slaves, and the distribution of legions ‘for the protection of the world’, all designed to reinforce Augustus not as a local or even a national but a universal monarch. The *fons olei* or fountain of oil is a reference to the miracle of Santa Maria in Trastevere in Rome.<sup>559</sup> The same miracle is found in other sources, notably the *Chronicon* of Eusebius-Jerome, from which Orosius derives his narrative: ‘Oil erupts out from the earth from a *taberna meritoria* on the other side of the Tiber, and flowed all the day without interruption, signifying the Grace of Christ from the nations.’<sup>560</sup> In accordance with the other miracles, this episode is found in earlier pagan sources where the significance is different, but Orosius appropriates it as evidence that ‘the future nativity of Christ was declared in the time when Caesar was ruling the whole world’.<sup>561</sup> (6.20.6, p. 275) The fountain of oil is intended to portend both the coming of Christ and the impending transition of ‘Caesar’ to ‘Augustus’. The link is made by Orosius between the fountain of oil in Rome and the etymology of

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rainbow’. Suetonius, *Augustus*, 95. *Post necem Caesaris reverso ab Apollonia et ingrediente eo urbem, repente liquido ac puro sereno circulus ad speciem caelestis arcus orbem solis ambiit.*

<sup>558</sup> 6.20.6, vol. 2, p. 228: *in diebus ipsis fons olei largissimus, sicut superius expressi, de taberna meritoria per totum diem fluxit.*

<sup>559</sup> See Cecchelli, (1933), pp. 7-10, for the sources of this tradition. The miracle is referred to again later in the *Historiae*, 7.39.11, p. 354: ‘O sacred and ineffable discernment of Divine Judgment! O What a holy river of salvation, which rose in a small home, and, as it ran its blessed course to the seats of the saints, piously snatched up wandering souls in danger and carried them off to the bosom of salvation!’ 7.39.11, vol. 3, pp. 115-6: *O sacra et ineffabilis diuini iudicii discretio! O sanctum istud et salutare flumen quod parua exortum domo, dum beato alueo in sanctorum sedes tendit, oberantes periclitanteque animas in salutis sinum pia rapacitate peruexit!* The miracle can be interpreted as a foil to the myth associated with the temple of Janus, when a great force of hot water originating from the temple repelled the Sabine enemy under Titus Tatius, establishing the custom of opening the doors of the temple in a time of war. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.9.17-18; Servius, *ad Aeneid* 8.361. Richardson, (1992), p. 233.

<sup>560</sup> Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, A Abr. 1976: *E taberna meritoria trans Tiberim, oleum terra erupit, fluxitque toto die sine intermissione, significans Christi gratiam ex gentibus.* The terminology Orosius uses closely follows the *Chronicon*, 6.18.34, vol. 2, p. 222: *His diebus trans Tiberim e taberna meritoria fons olei terra exundauit, ac per totum diem largissimo riuo fluxit.*

<sup>561</sup> See Cassius Dio, 48.43.4. 6.20.6, vol. 2, p. 228: *Quo signo quid euidentius quam in diebus Caesaris toto Orbe regnantis futura Christi natiuitas declarata est?*

‘Christ’, *χριστός* meaning ‘anointed’ in Greek, ‘the language of his people’<sup>562</sup> (6.20.6, p. 275) Significantly this is one of the few hints of the biblical narrative of Jesus’s birth, death and resurrection as non-western. The ‘signs in the heavens and prodigies on earth’, including the spring of oil, are designed to demonstrate that:

under the principate of Caesar and under the Roman Empire throughout a whole day, namely throughout the duration of the entire Roman Empire, Christ and from Him, Christians, that is, the Anointed ones, would come forth in abundance and without cessation from an inn – from the hospitable and bountiful Church.<sup>563</sup> (6.20.7, p. 276)

This statement does not encourage the reader to make an independent inference; the meaning is clearly stated in Orosius’s location of the literal in the metaphorical. One day reflects the history of the Empire, Christ represents Christians, and like the fountain of oil Christians are destined to forever perpetuate from the institution of the Church. This type of syllogistic reasoning is characteristic of Orosius in its design not to demand the reader to make a leap of understanding but to accept the comprehensive argument presented in the text.

### 3.1.12 *domini appellationem*: Augustus and Titling

One of the final proofs which Orosius employs before the close of Book Six to corroborate the concurrence between Christ and Augustus sees a return to the preoccupation with Imperial titulature, in Augustus’s refusal of the title *dominus*, ‘Lord’ or ‘Master’:

As a man, he shunned the title of ‘lord’. For when, while he was watching a play, the following line was pronounced in the mime: ‘A gracious and good lord indeed,’ and all, as if it had been said of him, approved with loud shouting, immediately with a gesture and a look he checked the unseemly flattery and, on the following day, rebuked them with a very severe edict, and thereafter he did not permit himself to be called lord either by his children or grandchildren either in earnest or in jest.<sup>564</sup> (6.22.4, p. 281)

This anecdote is a close paraphrase of Suetonius’s *Divus Augustus* but is imbued with a different level of Christian meaning.<sup>565</sup> The purpose of the excerpt is subsequently

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<sup>562</sup> 6.20.6, vol. 2, p. 228: *Christus enim lingua gentis eius, in qua et ex qua natus est, unctus interpretatur.*

<sup>563</sup> 6.20.7, vol. 2, p. 228: *...sub principatu Caesaris Romanoque imperio per totum diem, hoc est per omne Romani tempus imperii, - Christum et ex eo Christianos, id est unctum atque ex eo unctos, - de meritoria taberna, hoc est de hospita largaque Ecclesia...*

<sup>564</sup> 6.22.4, vol. 2, p. 235: *Domini appellationem ut homo declinauit: nam cum eodem spectante ludos pronuntiatum esset in mimo “O dominum aequum et bonum” uniuersique, quasi de ipso dictum esset, exultantes adprobauissent, et statim quidem manu uultuque indecoras adulationes repressit et insequenti die grauissimo corripuit edicto dominumque se posthac appellari ne a liberis quidem aut nepotibus suis uel serio uel ioco passus est.*

<sup>565</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus*, 53: ‘He always shrank from the title of ‘Master’ as an insult and a reproach. On one occasion at the games when he was watching a farce, the line was spoken: “O good and just master!”

revealed: ‘At the same time, this man to whom universal supremacy was conceded, did not permit himself to be called “lord of men”, rather dared not, when the true Lord of the whole human race was born among men.’<sup>566</sup> (6.22.5, p. 281) The strict reservation of *dominus* as an equivalent of the Greek *kyrios* referring to the Christian God is represented by Orosius as a conscious deference to Christ by Augustus rather than a false or sincere modesty for personal political motivations. It is possible that *dominus* was associated too strongly with the dichotomy between master and slave to be palatable to Augustus.<sup>567</sup> The acceptance or refusal of the title became a marker of imperial character. Seemingly modest emperors like Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius rejected the title *dominus*, while autocratic emperors like Caligula, Domitian and Commodus insisted on its use.<sup>568</sup> It is possible to see the further paralleling of Christ and Augustus in reading the earlier statement that Christ adopted the image of a servant ‘although he was in the image of God’ as an anticipation of this coming anecdote, justifying the titling of Christ as *dominus* whilst attesting to his humility.<sup>569</sup> (6.17.10, p. 266) The pagan religious affiliations of the emperor are elided in the portrayal of Augustus as an unwitting Christian, the *princeps* or ‘first man’ as the first Christian even without his knowledge.<sup>570</sup> Orosius is reaching extreme lengths to secure the credibility of his argument, in appropriating events in the life of Augustus from earlier pagan sources and manipulating them to demonstrate the allegiance of Augustus to

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and the whole audience indicated their enthusiastic agreement, as if the words were addressed to the emperor. He immediately called a halt to their unbecoming adulation with his gesture and expression and, on the next day, reproached them most severely in an edict. Thereafter he would not even allow his children and grandchildren to call him “master”, whether jokingly or in earnest, and forbade them to use such obsequious titles even among themselves.’ *Domini appellationem ut maledictum et obprobrium semper exhorruit. Cum spectante eo ludos pronuntiatum esset in mimo: "O dominum aequum et bonum!" et universi quasi de ipso dictum exsultantes comprobassent, et statim manu vultuque indecoras adulationes repressit et insequenti die gravissimo corripuit edicto; dominumque se posthac appellari ne a liberis quidem aut nepotibus suis vel serio vel ioco passus est atque eius modi blanditias etiam inter ipsos prohibuit.*

<sup>566</sup> 6.22.5, vol. 2, p. 235: *Eodemque tempore hic ad quem rerum omnium summa concesserat dominum se hominum appellari non passus est, immo non ausus, quo uerus dominus totius generis humani inter homines natus est.*

<sup>567</sup> For Augustus’s rejection of the title see Suetonius, *Augustus*, 53; Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.142; Cassius Dio, 57.8.

<sup>568</sup> Noreña, (2011), p. 293.

<sup>569</sup> 6.17.10, vol. 2, pp. 215-16: *Itaque oportune conpositis rebus Augusti Caesaris natus est Dominu Christus qui, cum in forma Dei esset, formam serui humiliter adsumpsit...*

<sup>570</sup> On this idea, see Mehl, (2011), p. 234: ‘Concretely and within the space of a short time Rome came to realize the fourth universal empire with the birth of Jesus and the simultaneous rule of Rome by Augustus...Although Orosius knew full well that the former adhered to traditional religion, neither Augustus nor the Christian Constantine I represent for Orosius personalities who act on their own, but they much rather act as instruments of God.’ Van Nuffelen takes a more negative view of this: ‘The ignorance of pagans of what drives history is symbolized in the fact that whilst Augustus is indeed raised because a series of his actions announce the birth of Christ, he himself is unaware of their significance. Strikingly, Augustus, as a sign in history, ignores his own meaning.’ Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 163.

Christ. At the close of Chapter Six the body of evidence presented must be as convincing as possible, which is arguably achieved through the combination of Augustus's rejection of the title *dominus* and the inclusion of Christ on the Roman census.

### 3.1.13 Christ and the Census

If the *Historiae* achieves the 'Christianisation' of Augustus through the adoption or rejection of titles, Christ is similarly 'Romanized' through a similarly formal designation of status in the Roman census.<sup>571</sup>

So at that time, that is, in that year in which, by the ordination of God, Caesar achieved the strongest and truest peace, Christ was born...Also in this same year, when God deigned to be seen as man and actually to be man, Caesar, whom God had predestined for this great mystery, ordered that a census be taken of each province everywhere and that all men be enrolled. So at that time, Christ was born and was entered on the Roman census list as soon as he was born. This is the earliest and most famous public acknowledgement which marked Caesar as the first of all men and the Romans as lords of the world, a published list of all men entered individually, on which He Himself, who made all men, wished Himself to be found as man and enrolled among men.<sup>572</sup> (6.22.5-8)

Orosius either deliberately or mistakenly ignores that the decree of universal citizenship, the *constitutio Antoniniana*, was not made until AD 212 by the Emperor Caracalla, and that prior to this Christ would not have been recognised as a Roman citizen.<sup>573</sup> Whereas up to this point the text echoes the Gospel of Luke which records that 'In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered', Orosius elaborates on the Gospel account that Jesus was actually entered onto the

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<sup>571</sup> Echoing Peterson, (2011), p. 102: 'he [Orosius] clearly Christianized Augustus, and Christ, in becoming a Roman citizen, has been Romanized. The political meaning of this construction is patent.' Orosius's interpretation of the census contrasts with Hippolytus's in his *Commentary on Daniel* (4.9): 'And therefore the first census also occurred under Augustus, when the Lord was born in Bethlehem, so that the men of this world were enrolled and were named "Romans", whereas those who believe in the heavenly king were named Christians, and bear the sign of the victory over death on their brows.'

<sup>572</sup> 6.22.5-8, vol. 2, pp. 235-6: *Igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam uerisimamque pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar composuit, natus est Christus cuius aduentui pax ista famulata est...Eodem quoque anno tunc primum idem Caesar quem his tantis mysteriis praedestinauerat Deus censum agi singularum ubique prouinciarum et censeri omnes homines iussit, quando et Deus homo uideri et esse dignatus est. Tunc igitur natus est Christus, Romano censui statim adscriptus ut natus est. Haec et prima illa clarissimaque professio quae Caesarem omnium principem Romanosque rerum dominos singillatim cunctorum hominum edita adscriptione signauit, in qua se et ipse qui cunctos homines fecit inueniri hominem adscribique inter homines uoluit...*

<sup>573</sup> Fear interprets Orosius's designation of Christ as a Roman citizen as showing how 'Orosius has developed not the pessimistic thinking of his contemporaries, but rather the optimism of a previous generation of Christian writers, and sees the empire is almost the instantiation of heaven upon earth.' Fear, (2010), p. 21.



census record.<sup>574</sup> It is not only Orosius's version of the census that begins with the Gospel of Luke, but also the Orosian version of the Nativity and visitation of the Magi. This is absent from the *Historiae* as it is from Luke, but is recorded in Matthew.<sup>575</sup> Orosius's close following of Luke is also demonstrated by the inclusion of a biblical quotation from the Gospel when the angels sang to glorify the birth of Christ:

So at that time, that is, in that year in which, by the ordination of God, Caesar achieved the strongest and truest peace, Christ was born, upon whose coming that peace waited and at whose birth as men listened, the angels in exultation sang: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.'<sup>576</sup> (6.22.5, p. 281; Luke 2.14)

Just as Augustine favours one Gospel narrative over another concerning the meaning of the Epiphany so Orosius's exegetical interpretation involves a selection and elision of competing Biblical accounts of the life of Christ moulded within a new historical and apologetical context of Romano-Christian history.

The notion of Christ as a Roman citizen, although not widely adopted and reproduced, did not originate with Orosius, as Tertullian's oblique reference in his *Adversus Marcionem* makes clear:

And yet how could He have been admitted into the synagogue – one so abruptly appearing, so unknown; one, of whom no one had as yet been appraised of His tribe, His nation, His family, and lastly, His enrolment in the census of August – that most faithful witness of the Lord's nativity, kept in the archives of Rome?<sup>577</sup>

The assertion of Christ as a citizen of Rome fulfils the same function for Tertullian and Orosius in that it provides evidence of Christ's birth and Incarnation as well as civil allegiance, substantiated by the physical evidence of the census records in archives in Rome.<sup>578</sup> The political impact of this claim made by both Tertullian and Orosius, but with much greater emphasis in the *Historiae*, is far-reaching and significant.<sup>579</sup>

<sup>574</sup> Luke, 2:1. The context in which Pocock discusses the birth of Christ and Augustus's decree is Virgilian. Pocock, (2003), p. 69

<sup>575</sup> Matthew, 2:1-13.

<sup>576</sup> 6.22.5, vol. 2, p. 235: *Igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam uerissimamque pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar composuit, natus est Christus cuius aduentui pax ista famulata est, in cuius ortu audientibus hominibus exultantes angeli cecinerunt "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae uoluntatis"*.

<sup>577</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 7.7: *Et tamen quomodo in synagogam potuit admitti tam repentinus, tam ignotus, cuius nemo adhuc certus de tribu, de populo, de domo, de censu denique Augusti, quem testem fidelissimum dominicae nativitatis Romana archiva custodiunt?*

<sup>578</sup> The same notion is not found in the writings of Eusebius, which have in certain instances provided a link between the material in Tertullian and Orosius, like the proposal by the Emperor Tiberius to deify Jesus Christ as a pagan deity.

<sup>579</sup> This is perhaps in contradistinction to Peterson's claim 'the political meaning of this construction is patent'. Peterson, (2011), p. 102.

From the foundation of the world and from the beginning of the human race, an honour of this nature had absolutely never been granted in this manner, not even to Babylon or to Macedonia, not to mention any lesser kingdom. It is undoubtedly clear for the understanding of all, from their faith and investigation, that our Lord Jesus Christ brought forward this City to this pinnacle of power, prosperous and protected by His will; of this City, when he came, He especially wished to be called a Roman citizen by the declaration of the Roman census list.<sup>580</sup> (6.22.7-9, pp. 281-2)

The testimony of Christ as a Roman citizen is deliberately interpreted as evidence of the providential will of God, that Rome as a political institution and as an empire was favoured above all others in history. Here the political and religious hegemony of Rome and Christianity are tied together; it is as a Christian Roman empire that Orosius sees the past, present and future of the success of Rome. The earlier prominence of the Orosian theory of the four empires comes back into currency where the Babylonian, Macedonian, and ‘any lesser kingdom’ are absorbed into the supremacy of the Roman Empire substantiated by the status of Christ as a Roman citizen. The theory continues to function within the apologetical structure in the perpetual demonstration of the providential monotheism of Christianity and providential monism of Rome. The physical, cultural, and martial superiority of the Roman empire has already been proved in the earlier books of the *Historiae*. Now from the Creation the entirety of human history is encompassed and subsumed within the apologetical schema of the authority of the Empire.

### 3.1.14 Mirroring the Divine: Christ and Augustus

This Chapter has been fundamentally concerned with the figure of Augustus, exploring the construction of the emperor and the role he is accorded in the *Historiae*.<sup>581</sup> Initially this constituted the political reality of Augustus, his transformation from Octavian, his ascendance to Imperial authority, and his titling as emperor. As the representation is developed the miraculous Epiphany transforms Augustus from simply a political figure into a ‘tool’ of God, an instrument of divine providence whose unique investment is

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<sup>580</sup> 6.22.7-9, vol. 2, p. 236: *quod penitus numquam ab Orbe condito atque ab exordio generis humani in hunc modum, ne Babylonio quidem, uel Macedonico, ut non dicam minori cuiquam regno, concessum fuit. Nec dubium quoniam omnium cognitioni fidei inspectionique pateat quia Dominus noster Iesus Christus hanc urbem nutu suo auctam defensamque in hunc rerum apicem prouexerit, cuius potissime uoluit esse cum uenit, dicendus utique ciuis Romanus census professione Romani.*

<sup>581</sup> The importance of Augustus in Orosius’s philosophy is not a position universally shared. Markus, (1970), pp. 161-2. Similarly Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 151-2. In contrast to the analysis of Mehl, (2011), p. 234.

portended by fountains of oil and rainbows in the sky.<sup>582</sup> This notion is substantiated by Mehl:

...neither Augustus nor the Christian Constantine I represent for Orosius personalities who act on their own, but they much rather act as instruments of God. Jesus and Augustus serve as the decisive turning point in world history's progress from evil toward the good.<sup>583</sup>

Within the profound juxtaposition of Christ and Augustus the subordination of Imperial to divine authority is made evident, a hierarchy that is reinforced throughout the work. For instance, following the discussion of the Epiphany: '...in every respect the Empire of Caesar might be proven to have been prepared for Christ's coming.'<sup>584</sup> (6.20.4, p. 275) This is further demonstrated by the statement which follows Augustus's completion of his rise to authority as the sole Imperial power governing the Roman empire:

What can more faithfully and truthfully be believed and recognized, when peace, name, and day concur in such a manifestation, than that this man [Augustus] had been predestined, indeed, by a hidden order of events *for the service of His preparation*.<sup>585</sup> (6.20.8, p. 276)

It is arguable that the rise of Augustus prefigures the Incarnation of Christ, shown most clearly by the miracles of the rainbow and the fountain of oil that portend his assumption of Imperial authority, and events such as his rejection of *dominus* as a title and the decreed census. Specifically through the figure of Augustus the Roman empire provides the context for the Incarnation to occur and for that reason the emperor is given special prominence in accordance with divine providence. Augustus can be seen as a mirror of Jesus Christ, suggested by the panegyric treatment of the emperor, the extended focus on monism within the text in the elision of authority from the many gods to the one god, the many forms of government to the one emperor, and the divine providence of God in the rule of Augustus on earth and Christ in heaven.

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<sup>582</sup> Although a commonplace statement, the Roman empire as a 'tool' or 'instrument' of God is accurate in this context. For example, Fear, (2010), p. 17: 'It is therefore God's design to unite all peoples together under one empire to enable Christianity to spread more rapidly, and his chosen instrument for doing this is the Roman Empire.' Similarly Wessel, (2008), p. 366: 'Orosius saw in this well-timed alliance the providence of God declaring war upon the pagan deities and making the world an appropriate vehicle for the spread of Christianity.'

<sup>583</sup> Mehl, (2011), p. 234.

<sup>584</sup> 6.20.4, vol. 2, p. 227: *...ut per omnia uenturi Christi gratia praeparatum Caesaris imperium conprobetur.*

<sup>585</sup> My italics. 6.20.8, vol. 2, p. 229: *quid fidelius ac uerius credi aut cognosci potest, - concurrentibus ad tantam manifestationem pace, nomine, die, - quam hunc occulto quidem gestorum ordine ad obsequium praeparationis eius praedestinatum fuisse...*

It is significant that Augustus's transformation occupies the greater part of Book Six in contrast with the Incarnation of Christ, which despite being a constant point of reference, is not elucidated in the same way. Whether the Incarnation refers to the appearance of Christ, the manifestation of the divine in the figure of Christ, or to the birth of Christ, is ambiguous in the text. Despite this the reality of Christ as the Son of God and his sacrifice for humankind is treated with unquestioning authority – it is axiomatic and requires no explanation or justification. In contrast Orosius works hard to justify the synchronisation of Augustus and the empire with Christ; this is where the emphasis lies. This is clearly evident at the end of Book Six (6.22.5-7) in a passage which has already received much critical attention within this Chapter.<sup>586</sup> Orosius ties God and Christ with Augustus and Rome. The *pax romana*, the universal peace under Augustus is ordained by God in preparation for the birth of Christ and the census is divinely intended to coincide with the year of Christ's birth to mark Augustus as the 'first of all men' and the Romans as 'lords of the world'.<sup>587</sup> (6.22.7, p. 281) This point indicates the height of Orosius's polemic regarding the coming of Christ and the Roman Empire, evident in his recognition that 'From the foundation of the world and from the beginning of the human race, an honour of this nature had absolutely never been granted in this manner, not even to Babylon or to Macedonia, not to mention any lesser kingdom.'<sup>588</sup> (6.22.7, p. 281) Here Rome is marked as unique in geographical and

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<sup>586</sup> 6.22.5-7, p. 281: 'So at that time, that is, in that year in which, by the ordination of God, Caesar achieved the strongest and truest peace, Christ was born, upon whose coming that peace waited and at whose birth as men listened, the angels in exultation sang: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will."...Also in this same year, when God deigned to be seen as man and actually to be man, Caesar, whom God had predestined for this great mystery, ordered that a census be taken of each province everywhere and that all men be enrolled. So at that time, Christ was born and was entered on the Roman census list as soon as he was born. This is the earliest and most famous public acknowledgement which marked Caesar as the first of all men and the Romans as lords of the world, a published list of all men entered individually, on which He Himself, who made all men, wished Himself to be found as man and enrolled among men.' 6.22.5-7, vol. 2, p. 235: *Igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam uerissimamque pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar composuit, natus est Christus cuius aduentui pax ista famulata est, in cuius ortu audientibus hominibus exultantes angeli cecinerunt "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae uoluntatis"...*Eodem quoque anno tunc primum idem Caesar quem his tantis mysteriis praedestinauerat Deus censum agi singularum ubique prouinciarum et censeri omnes homines iussit, quando et Deus homo uideri et esse dignatus est. Tunc igitur natus est Christus, Romano censui statim adscriptus ut natus est. Haec est prima illa clarissimaque professio quae Caesarem omnium principem Romanosque rerum dominos singillatim cunctorum hominum edita adscriptione signauit, in qua se et ipse qui cunctos homines fecit inueniri hominem adscribique inter homines uoluit...

<sup>587</sup> 6.22.7, vol. 2, p. 236: *Haec est prima illa clarissimaque professio quae Caesarem omnium principem Romanosque rerum dominos singillatim cunctorum hominum edita adscriptione signauit, in qua se et ipse qui cunctos homines fecit inueniri hominem adscribique inter homines uoluit*

<sup>588</sup> 6.22.7, vol. 2, p. 236: *quod penitus numquam ab Orbe condito atque ab exordio generis humani in hunc modum, ne Babylonio quidem, uel Macedonico, ut non dicam minori cuiquam regno, concessum fuit.*

empirical world history regarding the divine favour of God. It is also arguable that the parallelism between Christ and Augustus intentionally creates an implicit ambiguity that encourages a lack of distinction between the two figures in the mind of the reader. This ambiguity is reflected in the secondary literature: Fear sees Augustus as ‘the divinely ordained secular precursor’ to Christ;<sup>589</sup> Mommsen argues that Augustus is credited with a ‘mundane Epiphany’;<sup>590</sup> and Inglebert understands Augustus as the image of Christ.<sup>591</sup> Although this intersection between the two figures is of great significance it is not made explicit as this would risk over-extending the juxtaposition, a position that would not find contemporary favour.

### 3.1.15 Conclusion

The fundamental purpose of this Chapter has been to demonstrate the centrality of the figure of Augustus within Orosius’s Christian History. Although this has been previously acknowledged within criticism, the tendency has been either to downplay the significance of the imperial authority encapsulated in Augustus or to overlook it as obvious and banal. Markus’s approach to the issue is disdainful; similarly Van Nuffelen devalues the role of the emperor and the empire in favour of God and Christianity.<sup>592</sup> The synchronism between Rome and Christianity is ‘axiomatic’ for Syme, and although Peterson recognises Orosius as unique in the extent of his association between Augustus and Christ, his discussion is limited by the concluding statement: ‘The political meaning of this construction is patent.’<sup>593</sup> However it is through the association of Christ with Augustus that Orosius ties together the Roman empire and Christianity, which is the fundamental purpose of the text. Augustus’s function as a narrative tool in order to generate Christian meaning in history is not banal but is a bold approach which is sustained throughout the *Historiae*. Perhaps either to avoid alienating his pagan reader or to assimilate pagan and Christian history for his Christian audience, Orosius is

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<sup>589</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 309, fn. 303.

<sup>590</sup> Mommsen, (1959a), p. 320.

<sup>591</sup> Inglebert, (1996), p. 572. This is explicitly countered by Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 190, fn. 23.

<sup>592</sup> Markus, (1970), pp. 161-2: ‘The Empire founded by Augustus was the providentially established vehicle of Christianity, and the history of the period since the Incarnation (under Augustus!) could be read as the progressive realisation of divine purpose. The spreading and establishing of Christianity over the world inaugurated by Augustus, was being completed under the Christian emperors of the fourth century.’ Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 130.

<sup>593</sup> Syme, (1979), p. 197; Peterson, (2011), p. 102. For criticism that gives a fuller perspective, see Mehl, (2011), p. 234, and Fear, (2010), pp. 20-1.

unwilling to engage with the coming of Christ on its own terms: he does not write ecclesiastical or theological history. Instead the focus is on Augustus, sanitized by the favouring of divine providence and appropriated within Christian history. The apologetic of the *Historiae* compliments by assimilation the pagan version of Roman history which emphasises the centrality of the first emperor, but for Orosius the success of empire is a consequence of Christianity and owes nothing to the pagan gods. The anti-religious establishment approach of the text in preference for political institutions and religious affiliation allows the elision of paganism and the Church in favour of a purified version of Christianity where Christ is all, the political authority of the Emperor on earth mirrors the divine authority of Christ in heaven, and the world is united in a Christian commonwealth of peace, harmony, and political accord. Enabled by Augustus, this philosophy of history is consolidated by the emperor Theodosius I, the focus of Chapter Four.

## 4. Monotheism, Imperial Power, and Theodosius

### 4.1.1 Introduction

The comparison between former times as very bad and current times as very good is a standard rhetorical trope in the *Historiae* and one that is continually returned to. In relating the cruelty of the tyrants Phalaris and Aremulus in Book One, Orosius poses the hypothetical situation of allowing the unfortunate Latins and Sicilians the choice between living under tyranny or *his temporibus Christianis* ('these Christian times'):

Let the Latins and Sicilians now choose, if it seems good, whether they would have preferred to live in the days of Aremulus and Phalaris, who extorted the lives of the innocent by punishments, or in these Christian times when the Roman emperors, among the first to be converted to the Christian religion, did not even exact punishment for the injuries committed by the tyrants themselves after their tyrannies had been crushed.<sup>594</sup>  
(1.20.6, p. 41)

The tension between the uncivilised past and the peaceful present is premised on rulership; it is the Christianity of the Roman emperors that makes the difference. The universal conversion to Christianity is preceded by their example, a conversion which necessarily demands pacifism, presented here with the implication of the end of civil war. This conceit is established early in the *Historiae* and is reinforced throughout the text until Book Seven. Book Seven sees the development of Christianity away from the abstract community of worshippers towards a concentration on the individual in the convenient embodiment of piety and religiosity in the Emperor. This critical shift enables the culmination of imperial authority in Theodosius as an ideal of Christian rulership, a development which is ultimately dependent on the representation of the first emperor Augustus. The divine coincidence of the birth of Christ and the rise of Rome's empire is the crucial turning point of the work, where the apologetic design shifts from the misery of the Roman pagan world to the harmony of the Christian commonwealth. The reign of Theodosius is represented as the consummation of this scheme, in the

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<sup>594</sup> 1.20.6, vol. 1, p. 72: *Eligant nunc, si uidetur, Latini et Siculi, utrum in diebus Aremuli et Phalaridis esse maluissent innocentum uitas poenis extorquentium, an his temporibus Christianis, cum imperatores Romani, ipsa in primis religione conpositi, post comminutas reipublicae bono tyrannides ne ipsorum quidem iniurias exigunt tyrannorum.*

divinely-ordained emperor and his dynasty established in harmony with the Gothic barbarians settled within the fully Christian empire.

Like the analysis of Augustus in Chapter Three, this Chapter explores the methodological authorial approach towards Theodosius, specifically how he is presented as an imperial paradigm, unchallengeable in terms of authority, divinely chosen, and a reflection of Christ. The Chapter begins by examining the inclusion and suppression of historical detail within this narrative. The Chapter then contrasts the Theodosian imperial model of authority with previous models of rulership such as Alexander the Great, and investigates how the portrayal of Theodosius builds upon earlier archetypes of Roman rule like Trajan, which are pointedly exceeded with the exceptional Christianity of the emperor. The Chapter considers Orosius's construction of legitimate authority, especially in relation to the usurper Maximus, before examining the idealised passivity of Theodosius which culminates in the trope of bloodless war. This Chapter concludes with a consideration of Theodosius and the place of the barbarian in the *Historiae* and the western Roman empire in the late fourth and early fifth century. This Chapter understands the figure of Theodosius as a point of culmination in the text; the apologetic integrity and conviction of the *Historiae* is reliant on Orosius's portrayal of Theodosius as necessarily compelling and indisputable, a polemical position ultimately strengthened by Theodosius's association with the divine.

#### 4.1.2 Historical Methodology in Book Seven

Book Seven sees a change in the form of the *Historiae*, from the relation of history based on events ordered by empire and war in the previous books, to the organisation of time through the imperial biographies of the Roman emperors, beginning with Augustus and ending with Honorius. This shift in methodology is crucial for the triumphant culmination of the work. In the majority of the work Christianity is an abstract community of worshippers; with the elision of the institution of the Church, unity is based upon a shared religious identity but nothing more concrete than that.<sup>595</sup> The pinnacle of Roman Christian identity is elucidated in Book Five within Orosius's

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<sup>595</sup> According to Boyarin's observation, the *Historiae* arguably reflects a real transformation within Christianity: 'At the end of the fourth century and in the first quarter of the fifth century, we can find several texts attesting how Christianity's new notion of self-definition via "religious" alliance was gradually replacing self-definition via kinship and land.' Boyarin, (2008), p. 152.



universalising discourse of a Christian commonwealth.<sup>596</sup> Although the strength and conviction of the rhetoric cannot be disputed, it is nonetheless limited; it cannot be developed using individual examples of holy men and women, acts of Christian piety, or specific details of Christian worship, as these would digress from the political and the secular focus and infringe on the ecclesiastical. However the divergence of Book Seven in its organisation and direction of history through individual imperial biographies not only demonstrates the preference for political secular authority above all other forms, but also enables a greater focus on divine providence. Orosius no longer has to work hard to demonstrate the influence of God on history, such as Hannibal's submission to Rome despite his military victory related in Book Four: 'Let the detractors of the true God now tell me at this point, whether Roman bravery prevented Hannibal from seizing and overthrowing Rome or Divine compassion.'<sup>597</sup> (4.17.8, p. 157) Instead the emperor, whether in reality a Christian or not, can function as an instrument for the will of God. The retelling of history through the figure of the Roman emperor sees the narrative reduced to a clarified and simpler form based on the religiosity of rulership – either the emperor fulfils divine providence and is received positively, or acts in opposition to the will of God and is portrayed in overtly negative terms.

#### 4.1.3 Construction and Suppression: The Narrative of Theodosius

The construction of Theodosius in the *Historiae*, like the relation of any event or account of a historical figure, has two analytical perspectives: what is included, and what is absent. The strong apologetic directs the authorial treatment of the emperor, an apologetic which necessarily demands the suppression of events in order to preserve the fabricated Theodosius, a Christian emperor whose portrayal borders the saintly and Christ-like. The elision of historical detail also points to a wider concern within the text to elide ecclesiastical affairs and maintain a focus on the secular and political. To

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<sup>596</sup> 5.2.1-4, p. 176: 'The breadth of the East, the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the great islands are of my law and name because I, as a Roman and a Christian, approach Christians and Romans...the one God...is both loved and feared by all; the same laws, which are subject to one God, prevail everywhere; and where I shall go unknown, I do not fear sudden violence as if I be unprotected.' 5.2.1-4, vol. 2, p. 86: *Mihi autem prima qualiscumque motus perturbatione fugienti, quia de confugiendi statione securo, ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est. Nunc me Africa tam libenter exceptit quam confidenter accessi...Latitudo orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissimae tutissimaeque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo.*

<sup>597</sup> 4.17.8, vol. 2, p. 54: *Respondeant nunc mihi obtrectatores ueri Dei hoc loco: Hannibalem a capessenda subruendaque Roma utrum Romana obstitit fortitudo an diuina miseratio?*

summarize Orosius's account of Theodosius's reign, Orosius includes the ascension of Theodosius to Imperial rule, the wars in Thrace, the death of Athanaric and the Gothic treaty, the usurpation and suppression of Maximus and restoration of Valentinian II, the challenge of Arbogastes and Eugenius culminating in the battle of Frigidus, the death of Theodosius and the succession of the Theodosian dynasty. Notably absent is the edict of 27 February 380 which imposed Nicene Christianity on the Roman Empire, a clear statement of how Christian orthodoxy was to be defined, and the ban on pagan sacrifice issued by Theodosius in a series of laws from 391.<sup>598</sup> Similarly Theodosius's baptism by Bishop Acholius as a result of severe illness in the same year is not discussed.<sup>599</sup> It has been argued that Theodosius was the first emperor to reject the title *pontifex maximus* on his accession in 379, but nowhere is this recorded in the *Historiae*.<sup>600</sup> In 380 after 'a great sequence of battles' defeating the Alans, Huns, and Goths, Theodosius enters Constantinople 'in triumph', but there is no mention of the expulsion of the 'Arian' Bishop Demophilus of Constantinople and immediate replacement with Gregory Nazianzen by Theodosius only two days after his arrival.<sup>601</sup> (7.34.5-7) The convention of a major council of eastern bishops in Constantinople under Theodosius in 381 is not evident from the *Historiae*. Theodosius's interaction with and authority within the institutional Christian church is omitted to facilitate the creation of a distinct narrative of the emperor's reign that prioritises secular and political events but through the filter of Christian faith and divine providence.

The argument that Orosius simply neglected to include these events through ignorance or carelessness is not sustainable; approbation for the anti-pagan and anti-heterodox Theodosian legislation is found in other contemporary and later sources.<sup>602</sup> According to Augustine in *De ciuitate Dei*, 'among all these anxieties Theodosius, from the beginning of his reign, never relaxed his endeavours to help the Church against the ungodly by just and compassionate legislation'.<sup>603</sup> Jerome understood that 'the utility of

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<sup>598</sup> *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.1.2, 27, February 380; 16.10.10, 24 February 391; 16.10.11, 16 June 391; 16.10.12, 8 November 392.

<sup>599</sup> See Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.6; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 7.4.

<sup>600</sup> For the supporting and contrary arguments as well as relevant bibliography, see Al. Cameron, (1968); (2007).

<sup>601</sup> 7.34.5, vol. 3, p. 94: ...*magnis multisque proeliis*...; 7.34.6, vol. 3, p. 94: *Vrbem Constantinopolim uictor intrauit*...

<sup>602</sup> An alternative view is proposed by McLynn, (1994), pp. 330-35, who argues that the significance of the Theodosian legislation has been greatly exaggerated. Similarly Errington, (1997b).

<sup>603</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26. *Inter haec omnia ex ipso initio imperii sui non quieuit iustissimis et misericordissimis legibus aduersus impios laboranti ecclesiae subuenire*...

his laws' should be enshrined for generations.<sup>604</sup> In opposition to Orosius Rufinus's version of Theodosius is orientated around the theological and ecclesiastical aspects of his leadership, concentrating on the spiritual rectitude, orthodoxy, and church patronage of Theodosius:

[Theodosius] showed the greatest care and eagerness...in driving out the heretics and handing over the churches to the Catholics...he behaved unpretentiously toward the priests of God...Through his exhortation and generosity churches in many places were amply furnished and magnificently built. Idolatry...collapsed during his reign. For these reasons he was so dear to God that divine Providence granted him special favour.<sup>605</sup>

The elision of this material in the *Historiae* is deliberate, preserving a more secular focus in a way that consciously disregards ecclesiastical history.<sup>606</sup> Orosius determines not to reproduce existing historical narratives of Theodosius, concentrating instead on the political but pervaded with Christian faith and divine influence, creating a purified and uncomplicated version of Christian imperial authority. Orosius strives to maintain a simple narrative that best enables the elucidation of the divine providence of God within time, and Theodosius as the representative of God on earth. The anti-paganism of Theodosius and the tension between his imperial and religious authority is elided. The desired synthesis of pagan and Christian cultures in the *Historiae* negates the representation of Theodosius directing the organised Christian Church, concerned with ecclesiastical politics and enforcing uniform Christian belief in the empire, prohibiting paganism and reacting against heterodoxy. A reader sympathetic to paganism would not want to be reminded that Theodosius was responsible for the closure of the temple of Vesta and termination of the cult, the symbol of the safety of Rome, especially following the sack of the city a decade later.<sup>607</sup> But although these details are not

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<sup>604</sup> Jerome, *Epistula*, 58.8: *utilitatem legum futuris saeculis consecrasti*. See Matthews, (1975), p. 251.

<sup>605</sup> Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 11.19. *Igitur ad Orientem regressus, ibique, ut ab exordio principatus sui, summa cura summoque studio pulsus haereticis, Ecclesias catholicis tradere: idque ea moderatione agere, ut ultione contenta, tantum catholicis de Ecclesiarum restitutione consuleret, quo fides recta absque praedicationis impedimento proficeret: communem se praebere erga sacerdotes Dei: fide religione, et munificentia cunctis regum animum exhibere: accessu facilis et absque imperiali fastu ad colloquium se humilibus praebere: hortatu ejus et largitionibus, Ecclesiae plurimis locis ornatae satis magnificeque constructae: praestare multa poscentibus, sed frequentius ultro offerre, Idolorum cultus...collapsus est. Pro quibus in tantum Deo charus fuit, ut speciale ei munus contulerit divina providentia.*

<sup>606</sup> This is supported by Heather, (1991), pp. 82-3: 'Orosius is not a Church historian in the tradition of the Greek writers like Socrates, Sozomen, and Philostorgius, but attempts rather than a history of the Church, to provoke a Christian interpretation of major secular events...Divine providence naturally plays an important role in its account of cause and effect, but the work devotes much space to political events, and provides important information about the Goths in the west.'

<sup>607</sup> On the prayer of the Vestals for the safety of Rome see Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, 46; Horace, *Carmen saeculare*, 1.2.26 f; Pliny, *Epistula*, 4.11.7. For more on their symbolic status see Cornell, (1981), p. 27.

specifically outlined they arguably underlie the narrative, directing the characterisation of Theodosius and explaining his prominence within the text.

#### 4.1.4 Imperial Authority: Theodosius and Trajan

##### 4.1.4.1 Theodosius, Augustus and Legitimacy

The introduction of Theodosius in the *Historiae* is contextualised in two ways: firstly, with the formulaic documentation of the date, and secondly, by situating the emperor within an imperial genealogical succession that begins with Augustus:

In the one thousand one hundred and thirty-eighth year after the founding of the City, Theodosius, the forty-first emperor, after Gratian had been killed by Maximus, obtained power over the Roman world and remained in it for eleven years, after he had already reigned in parts of the East for six years during the lifetime of Gratian.<sup>608</sup> (7.35.1, p. 342)

Orosius's formal introduction of Theodosius including a place in the Imperial succession parallels the upward trajectory of the ameliorating times from the Incarnation, an event synonymous with the accession of Augustus, creating a reassuring discourse which is uninterrupted even by the sack of Rome. Rulership is legitimized by inheritance in a system of government that is presented as recognised and authorised on earth as well as invested with the sanction of God. The methodology for framing the text uses the repeated phraseology of time and place in the imperial line in Book Seven, functioning in conjunction with dating by *ab urbe condita*. This standard formula is arguably designed to be, or is in danger of becoming, invisible to the reader. Yet it is conceivable that this was Orosius's intention; that repeated use would normalize and obfuscate the framework of the text. These references which situate each successive imperial leader according to Augustus and the founding of the city of Rome are made at the opening of a new chapter or section and provide a structure for the subsequent narrative. Their position within the text is not liminal, neither is their function relegated, but their repeated use and consequent significance is sustained. Orosius uses this

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<sup>608</sup> 7.35.1, vol. 3, p. 96: *Anno ab Vrbe condita MCXXXVIII, Theodosius quadragesimus primus, interfecto per Maximum Gratiano, imperium Romani orbis solus obtinuit mansitque in eo annis undecim, cum iam in Orientis partibus sex annos Gratiano uiuente regnasset*. Deferrari, (1964), translates Gratian as *quadragesimus*, the 'fortieth' ruler after Augustus, (7.34, p. 341); Fear, (2010), has thirty-ninth (7.34.1, p. 384), and Raymond, (1936), has fortieth (7.34, p. 375).

framework of dating to contextualise the *Historiae* within the classical tradition of pagan Rome. The foundation of the text is Roman pagan history, but overlaid with a Christian narrative of time.

#### 4.1.4.2 Paradigms of Rulership: Trajan and Theodosius

Theodosius's initial introduction is made in ethnographic terms concentrating on his Hispanic origin, a point presented favourably perhaps because of the author's own supposed Hispanic derivation.<sup>609</sup> The imperial selection of Theodosius by Gratian is juxtaposed with the selection by the Emperor Nerva of Trajan, who was similarly Hispanic:

When he saw the afflicted and almost ruined condition of the state, with the same foresight with which Nerva had selected Trajan, a Spaniard, through whom the state was restored, he himself selected Theodosius, likewise a Spaniard, and invested him with the people at Sirmium for the necessary task of reestablishing the state, and he placed him in command of the East and likewise of Thrace, in this case with better judgment, since in all the virtues of human life Theodosius was Trajan's equal and, in loyalty to the faith and in reverence for religion, he surpassed him beyond any comparison, for the one was a persecutor of the Church and the latter its propagator.<sup>610</sup> (7.34.2-4, p. 341)

In playing on the parallels between the emperors Trajan and Theodosius Orosius is participating in a tradition which links the two emperors through their birthplace and genealogy. This is seen in the late-fourth century *Epitome de Caesaribus*: 'Theodosius, whose father was Honorius and whose mother was Thermantia, tracing his origin from the *princeps* Trajan'.<sup>611</sup> Orosius records that the reaction of Gratian to the state being *adflictum ac paene conlapsum*, 'afflicted and almost ruined', is, 'with the same

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<sup>609</sup> 'En raison de son origine hispanique, mais aussi conformément à l'éloge traditionnel de cet empereur, l'auteur des *Histories* accorde également une place privilégiée à Théodose.' Teillet, (1984), p. 143.

<sup>610</sup> 7.34.2-4, vol. 3, p. 93: *Qui cum adflictum ac paene conlapsum reipublicae statum uideret, eadem prouisione, qua quondam legerat Nerua Hispanum uirum Traianum per quem respublica reparata est, legit et ipse Theodosium aequae Hispanum uirum et restituendae reipublicae necessitate apud Sirmium purpuram induit Orientisque et Thraciae simul praefecit imperio, in hoc perfectiore iudicio, quia, cum in omnibus humanae uitae uirtutibus iste par fuerit, in fidei sacramento religionisque cultu sine ulla comparatione praecessit: siquidem ille persecutor, hic propagator Ecclesiae.*

<sup>611</sup> *Epitome de caesaribus*, 48.1 (often attributed to Aurelius Victor). *Theodosius, genitus patre Honorio, matre Thermantia, genere Hispanus, originem a Traiano principe trahens...* Also 48.8-9: 'Furthermore, many writings of the ancients and pictures inform us that Theodosius resembled Trajan in his manners and physique: thus, his stature was eminent, his limbs the same, likewise his hair and his mouth, except that his legs were somewhat weak for marching and his eyes were not as glowing (I am not sure whether he was as kind, or had as much of a beard, or walked with so dignified a gait). But his intellect was certainly similar'. *Fuit autem Theodosius moribus et corpore Traiano similis, quantum scripta veterum et picturae docent: sic eminens status, membra eadem, par caesaries, os absque eo, quod illi aliquantum vellendo steriles genae neque tam ingentes oculi erant, nescio an et tanta gratia tantusque flos in facie seu tanta dignitas in incessu. 9 Mens uero prorsus similis...*

foresight with which Nerva had selected Trajan', to appoint Theodosius as a restorer to the similarly 'afflicted', state.<sup>612</sup> Orosius is constructing an alternative succession of emperors in drawing parallels between Trajan and Theodosius based upon exceptional leadership, consolidating the representation of Theodosius as an ideal emperor in the *Historiae*. Orosius's representation of Trajan derives from the Epitome tradition, where he is similarly portrayed.<sup>613</sup> Rather than arguing to the contrary of the prevailing positive image of Trajan Orosius is able to build upon the archetype of imperial authority in his portrayal of Theodosius, in spite of the paganism of Trajan and the Christian persecution he enacted.<sup>614</sup>

The rhetorical context of Theodosius's appearance in Book Seven parallels the preceding entrance of Trajan beyond a shared ethnicity. The bitter narration of the emperor Domitian's rule and Christian persecution (7.10) forms the backdrop to the accession of Trajan, which echoes the political context of Theodosius's succession following the emperor Valens. The portrayal of Valens is in the most deplorable terms, mainly attributable to his 'fatal perverseness', his adherence to 'Arian' Christianity: 'And so, by the just judgment of God, the very men burned him [Valens] alive who, because of him, will also burn when dead for the vice of error.'<sup>615</sup> (7.33.19, p. 339) The ability and superiority of Trajan and Theodosius is illustrated by the convenient rhetorical foil of their predecessors in the execrable examples of Domitian and Valens respectively. Orosius's rhetorical approach to the rule of Trajan, traditionally regarded as the pinnacle of an inherently pagan Classical Rome, is actually part of the Christianisation of history.<sup>616</sup> Although there is no explicit identification of Trajan as a Christian his association with the ultra-Christian Theodosius has an equally strong rhetorical effect. The 'divine foresight' which Eutropius attributes the imperial adoption of Trajan to is equally applicable by Orosius, who also equates the succession of Trajan

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<sup>612</sup> 7.34.1, vol. 3, p. 93; 7.11.1, vol. 3, p. 43: ...*Traianum in regnum adoptauit, per quem reuera adflictae reipublicae diuina prouisione consulit.*

<sup>613</sup> See Eutropius, 8.2 and *Epitome de caesaribus*, 13.2.

<sup>614</sup> The portrayal of Trajan as a paradigm of imperial rule begins with Pliny the Younger's *Panegyric on Trajan*, which functions as a blueprint for ideal imperial authority; for Pliny Trajan is an *exemplum* for future emperors to follow. Pliny the Younger, *Panegyricus*, 75.4.6.

<sup>615</sup> 7.33.19, vol. 3, p. 92: *Itaque iusto iudicio Dei ipsi eum uiuum incenderunt, qui propter eum etiam mortui uitio erroris arsurus sunt.*

<sup>616</sup> Gibbon has Trajan as one of the greatest Roman Emperors: 'the greatest of the Roman princes, Numa, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, had ascended the throne in a very advanced season of life.' Gibbon, (1776), vol. 1, p. 331. For the idea of Trajan as one of five 'good' emperors, see Machiavelli, (1883), 1.10.

to divine ordination using the same phrase as Eutropius, *divina provisione consuluit*: ‘...he adopted Trajan as his own successor, through whom, indeed by divine foresight, he took care of the afflicted state.’<sup>617</sup> (7.11.1, p. 305) Eutropius and Orosius have very different definitions of the divine, but this does not prevent Orosius from blurring the boundaries of religious belief for the benefit of his polemical argument.

Nonetheless the positive emphasis Orosius gives to the rule of Trajan is something of an anomaly considering the paganism of the emperor and his Christian persecutions. The narrative concentrates firstly on the positive aspects of Trajan’s reign which mainly constitute his martial expansion of the empire. The persecutions are then discussed in surprisingly mild language: Trajan was ‘deceived’ or ‘ensnared’ by error, *errore deceptus*, into the persecutions, and following Pliny’s report which defended the Christians, the persecutions are immediately terminated:

In persecuting the Christians, the third emperor to do so after Nero, surely, he made an error in judgment when he ordered the Christians found anywhere to be forced to sacrifice to idols and, if they refused, to be killed, and when many were killed, warned by a report of Pliny the Younger, who had been appointed persecutor, together with other judges, that these people, beyond their profession of Christ and their respectable meetings, were doing nothing contrary to the law, and that, indeed, by their confidence in a harmless confession death seemed to no one of them serious and a matter of dread, he immediately tempered his edict by milder rescripts.<sup>618</sup> (7.12.3, p. 306)

Orosius works hard to deflect the blame for the persecutions onto the emperor Nero, an emperor wholly vilified in the text. Nero’s *Domus aurea* ‘suddenly blazed up in fire, so that it was understood that the persecution, though started by another, was punished most severely on the buildings of him by whom it was first started and on the very author of it.’<sup>619</sup> (7.12.4, p. 306) The chronology of natural disasters, such as earthquakes and the destruction of the Pantheon by lightning, are manipulated to occur not preceding the Christian persecution but following it in order to demonstrate the just punishment of

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<sup>617</sup> 7.11.1, vol. 3, p. 43: ...*Traianum in regnum adoptavit, per quem reuera, adflictae reipublicae diuina prouisione consulit*. Eutropius, 8.1: ‘He provided for the good of the state by a divine foresight, in his adoption of Trajan.’ *rei publicae divina provisione consuluit Traianum adoptando*.

<sup>618</sup> 7.12.3, vol. 3, pp. 43-4: *In persequendis sane Christianis errore deceptus, tertius a Nerone, cum passim repertos cogi ad sacrificandum idolis ac detrectantes interfici praecepisset plurimique interficerentur, Plinii Secundi, qui inter ceteros iudices persecutor datus erat, relatu admonitus, eos homines praeter confessionem Christi honestaque conuenticula nihil contrarium Romanis legibus facere, fiducia sane innocentis confessionis nemini mortem grauem ac formidulosam uideri, rescriptis ilico lenioribus temperauit edictum*.

<sup>619</sup> 7.12.4, vol. 3, p. 44: *Verumtamen continuo Romae aurea domus, a Nerone totis priuatis publicisque rebus in pensis condita, repentino conflagrauit incendio, ut intellegeretur missa etiam ab alio persecutio in ipsius potissime monumentis, a quo primim exorta esset, atque in ipso auctore puniri*.

God (7.12.5). Orosius presents the uprising of the Jews as part of the divine punishment for the Christian persecutions, but the violent suppression of the Jews where ‘many thousands were destroyed in a vast slaughter’ is not actually negative, a conclusion reached when considering the wider representation of the Jews as enemies of Christianity and likened to one of the ten plagues of Egypt.<sup>620</sup> (7.12.7, p. 307) W. H. C. Frend’s judgement that this is not history but apologetics is here justifiable.<sup>621</sup>

#### 4.1.4.3 Christian Persecutions and Biblical Parallels

Orosius notes Trajan as ‘the third emperor after Nero’ (*tertius a Nerone*) to persecute Christians.<sup>622</sup> (7.12.3, p. 306) This specific numerical categorisation suggests why Trajan is treated positively but with simultaneous emphasis on the persecutions; Orosius wants to sustain two apologetical arguments. Orosius refuses to disregard the image of Trajan as a ‘good’ emperor who subdued the barbarians and expanded the empire, helping to establish the *pax romana*, or his Hispanic nationality. But of greatest significance Orosius wants to maintain the neat numerical synchronicity of the text, in his allegorical parallel of the Ten Plagues of Egypt with the Ten Plagues of Rome as a result of the persecutions, with the Trajanic persecutions third in sequence:

The synagogue of the Israelites was subject to the Egyptians; the church of the Christians was subject to the Romans. The Egyptians carried on persecutions; the Romans also carried on persecutions. In the former case, ten refusals were sent to Moses; in the latter, ten edicts were directed against Christ; in the one case, various plagues struck the Egyptians; in the latter, various calamities struck the Romans...Here, in the Roman Empire, the third plague, under Trajan, stirred up the Jews, who, although formerly dispersed everywhere and as quiet as if they did not exist, suddenly all of them, aroused in the heat of anger, vented their wrath in the whole world against the very people among whom they were living.<sup>623</sup> (7.27.3, 6, pp. 325-6)

The narrative treatment and chronological manipulation is explained by the prevailing apologetical discourse of the text that takes precedence over considerations such as historical legitimacy or accuracy, qualities which are valued within modern historiography even if they are not authorial concerns for the text. Orosius finds

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<sup>620</sup> 7.12.7, vol. 3, p. 45: *Itaque multa milia eorum uasta caede deleta sunt.*

<sup>621</sup> Frend, (1999), p. 617.

<sup>622</sup> 7.12.3, vol. 3, p. 43.

<sup>623</sup> 7.27.3; 6, vol. 3, pp. 70-1: *...subdita fuit est Christianorum ecclesia Romanis; persecuti sunt Aegyptii, persecuti sunt et Romani; decem ibi contradictiones aduersum Moysen, decem hic edicta aduersus Christum; diuersae ibi plagae Aegyptiorum, diuersae hic calamitates Romanorum...hic itidem tertia sub Traiano plaga Iudaeos excitauit, qui cum antea ubique dispersi ita iam quasi non essent quiescerent, repentino omnes calore permoti, in ipsos inter quos erant toto Orbe saeuierunt.*



evidence in synchronicity to support his agenda, resulting in the creation of contrived parallels which are imposed upon the text.

#### 4.1.4.4 Reassurance in the *Historiae*

The synchronicity between the Ten Plagues of the Old Testament and the Christian persecutions helps to elucidate a broader sense of resilient optimism that pervades the text. Orosius's world-view is reassuring; every thing can be explained. Even where an event truly confounds the author he still has the ultimate answer, that it can be attributed to the 'great mystery' of the Divine:

And since the judgments of God are ineffable, all of which we cannot know nor can we explain those which we do know, I shall explain briefly that those who know justly sustain the reproach of God our Judge, in whatever way it may take place, and those who do not know also justly sustain it.<sup>624</sup> (7.41.10, p. 359)

Every action has a clear consequence - where there is sin, punishment will follow, where there is piety, reward will be given. The divine judgment of God can always be relied upon to amend the situation, most frequently in vengeance. Even the end of the world is explained with brevity and confidence at the outset of the work:

Of course, we make an exception of those remote and very last days at the end of the world and at the appearance of anti-Christ, or even at the final judgment when Christ the Lord predicted in Holy Scriptures even by his own testimony that distresses would occur such as never were before.<sup>625</sup> (Prologue 15, p. 5)

Only rarely we do we see traces of doubt or unexplained elements creep into the work; for example, the 'unknown reasons' that are attributed to the emperor Constantine's assassinations of his relatives.<sup>626</sup> This broader view of the providential nature of the work reflects the compression and elision of Theodosius's rule leaving out what Orosius considered to be unnecessary historical detail in pursuit of a smooth and ideal narrative.

<sup>624</sup> 7.41.10, vol. 3, p. 123: *Et quia ineffabilia sunt iudicia Dei, quae nec scire omnia nec explicare quae scimus possumus, breuiter expresserim, correptionem iudicis Dei, quoquo pacto accadat, iuste sustinere qui sciunt, iuste sustinere qui nesciunt.* This reasoning is pervasive in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, and although evident in the *Historiae* is relied upon much less.

<sup>625</sup> Prologue 15, vol. 1, p. 9: *...exceptis uidelicet semotisque illis diebus nouissimis, sub fine saeculi et sub apparitione Antichristi uel etiam sub conclusione iudicii, quibus futuras angustias, quales ante non fuerint, dominus Christus per scripturas sanctas sua etiam contestatione praedixit.*

<sup>626</sup> 7.28.26, p. 331: 'But in the midst of these events, there were unknown reasons why the emperor, Constantine, turned the sword of vengeance and the punishment destined for the impious against even his close relatives. For he killed his own son, Crispus, and his sister's son, Licinius.' 7.28.26, vol. 3, p. 78: *Sed inter haec latent causae cur uindictam gladium et destinatum in impios punishmentem Constantinus imperator etiam in proprios egit affectus: nam Crispum filium suum et Licinium sororis filium interfecit.* Orosius suppresses Constantine's murder of his wife Fausta.

With the initial introduction of Theodosius in the *Historiae* the rationale behind the sustained juxtaposition of Trajan and Theodosius is realised: Orosius has deliberately played upon the constructed parallel between the two emperors in order to heighten the religious divergence between them, and the paradigmatic imperial rule of the Christian Theodosius as surpassing exemplary pagan imperial government, epitomised in the emperor Trajan. Central to the ideal of the emperor Theodosius is his Christian faith and exceptional piety which is demonstrated by the contrast with Trajan:

In all the virtues of human life Theodosius was Trajan's equal and, in loyalty to the faith and in reverence for religion, he surpassed him beyond any comparison, for the one was a persecutor of the Church and the latter its propagator. Thus, Trajan was not blessed with even one son of his own, in whom he might rejoice as a successor, but the glorious descendants of Theodosius have ruled over the East and West for successive generations down to the present day.<sup>627</sup> (7.34.3-5, p. 343)

Orosius is triumphant in his offer of rhetorical proof of the providence of God, in his punishment of pagan sin and disbelief, and blessing of Christian faith and piety. The *Historiae* is circumscribed by its apologetic design to demonstrate the perpetual improvement of events following the Incarnation of Christ. Theodosius is therefore presented as a successor to the earlier rule of Trajan, whose inability to produce an heir for the Imperial throne Orosius construes as a direct result of his lack of faith and persecution of the Christians. By contrast Theodosius represents the culmination of improving times from the Incarnation whose orthodox Christianity is rewarded by the providential dynasty that continues to function in Orosius's time.<sup>628</sup> Orosius's comparative discourse of paradigmatic imperial rule between Trajan and Theodosius seeks to represent the Christian Theodosius as surpassing even the best previous examples of (pagan) imperial rule. The reign of Theodosius arguably functions as the penultimate event in the *Historiae*.<sup>629</sup> It crucially lays the foundations for the conclusion

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<sup>627</sup> 7.34.3-5, vol. 3, p. 93: *...in hoc perfectiore iudicio, quia, cum in omnibus humanae uitae uirtutibus iste par fuerit, in fidei sacramento religionisque cultu sine ulla comparatione praecessit: siquidem ille persecutor, hic propagator Ecclesiae. Ita illi ne unus quidem proprius filius, quo successore gauderet, indultus est; huius autem Orientis simul atque Occidentis per succiduas usque ad nunc generationes gloriosa propago dominatur.*

<sup>628</sup> See Ammianus Marcellinus, 27.6, where the idea that the rule of Gratian is divinely ordained is similarly found: 'I [Valentinian] intend for the preservation of public peace to take him [Gratian] as my colleague in the empire, provided that the will of heaven and your sovereign power support the promptings of a father's love.' *Gratianum hunc meum aduultum, quem diu versatum inter liberos vestros commune diligitis pignus, undique muniendae tranquillitatis publicae causa in augustum sumere conmilium paro, si propitia caelestis numinis vestraeque maiestatis voluntas parentis amorem iuuerit praeueuntem.*

<sup>629</sup> This is supported by Van Nuffelen's recognition that 'after Theodosius, no single individual assumes a historical personality that is more than a tool in God's hands.' Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 165.

of the work, which sees the triumphant realisation of Orosius's apologetic discourse, neatly encompassing the sack of Rome without difficulty, and with the projected continuation of the Roman empire under the descendants of Theodosius in harmony with the Romanised and Christianised barbarians.

#### 4.1.5 Theodosius and the Barbarians

##### 4.1.5.1 Theodosius and Barbarian Relations

Theodosius assumes a role of redemption following divine anger at the rule of Valens and the deterioration of the state. The campaigns Theodosius led against the barbarians in Thrace are presented in emphatically religious terms, as a crusade that is divinely ordained and pre-determined to succeed:<sup>630</sup>

Theodosius believed that the state which had been afflicted by the wrath of God was to be restored by His mercy; placing all his trust in the help of Christ, he attacked without hesitation the Scythian tribes, very mighty and feared by all our forebears... yet now, with the Roman army non-existent, very well equipped with Roman horses and arms, these, that is, the Alans, Huns, and Goths, he attacked and overcame in many great battles.<sup>631</sup> (7.34.5, p. 341)

Orosius's political theology is at its most evident here. The result is not intended to be subtle; divine influence in earthly affairs and the providence of God are not underlying, and Theodosius's success in his role as Emperor and military commander is only achieved by his complete Christian faith and deference to the will of God: 'Theodosius always triumphed through the power of God and not through trusting in man's ingenuity.'<sup>632</sup> (7.35.12, p. 344) The emperor will not fail in his campaigns because he attacked the barbarians 'with no hesitation' whilst 'placing all his trust in the help of Christ'.<sup>633</sup> (7.34.5, p. 341) Here little attention is given to the barbarians beyond their function as a literary device as an opposing force against which Theodosius's military

<sup>630</sup> For Theodosius's war against the Visigoths, AD 380-2, see *Consularia constantinopolitana*, 380, 382; Eunapius, fragment 55; Jordanes, *Getica*, 139-40; Themistius, *Oratio*, 16.211; Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.6; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 7.4; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, 4.31.

<sup>631</sup> 7.34.5, vol. 3, p. 94: *Itaque Theodosius adflicta rempublicam ira Dei reparandam credidit misericordia Dei; omnem fiduciam sui ad opem Christi conferens, maximas illas Scythicas gentes formidatasque cunctis maioribus, Alexandro quoque illi Magno, sicut Pompeius Corneliusque testati sunt, euitatas, nunc autem extincto Romano exercitu Romanis equis armisque instructissimas, hoc est Alanos, Hunos et Gothos, incunctanter adgressus magnis multisque proeliis uicit.*

<sup>632</sup> 7.35.12, vol. 3, p. 99: *Potentia Dei non fiducia hominis uictorem semper extitisse Theodosium.*

<sup>633</sup> 7.34.5, vol. 3, p. 94: *Itaque Theodosius adflicta rempublicam ira Dei reparandam credidit misericordia Dei; omnem fiduciam sui ad opem Christi conferens, maximas illas Scythias gentes formidatasque cunctis maioribus...* For the opposite representation found in the *Historiae*, that the campaigns against the barbarians were easily won, see Zosimus, *Historia nova*, 4.25.

success and piety can be demonstrated. The identities of individual barbarian peoples are not explored, with the representation of the barbarians as a homogenous group to be passively acted upon or employed as an expendable force within the army.

In Book One of the *Historiae* the Scythians, represented both as the ancestors of and synonymous with the Goths, are ‘barbarized by Ninus’ from pacifism to aggression and cannibalism: ‘and he taught barbaric Scythia, until then unwarlike and inoffensive, to stir up its dormant ferocity, to realize its strength, and to drink, not as heretofore the milk of domestic animals, but the blood of men’ (1.4.2, p. 21).<sup>634</sup> In order to aggrandize Theodosius’s military campaigns Orosius highlights the example of Alexander the Great who avoided military engagement with the Scythians through fear, as shown in Pompeius Trogus and Tacitus, who Orosius makes specific reference to as sources: ‘...placing all his trust in the help of Christ, he attacked without hesitation the Scythian tribes, very mighty and feared by all our forebears and avoided even by Alexander the Great, as Pompeius and Cornelius testify...’.<sup>635</sup> (7.34.5, p. 341) In particular Alexander the Great is presented as an irrepressible but overwhelmingly negative force:

In these days also Alexander the Great, truly that whirlpool of evils and most horrible hurricane sweeping the entire East, was born....Alexander, insatiable for human blood, whether of enemies or even allies, was always thirsting for fresh bloodshed.<sup>636</sup> (3.7.5, p. 87; 3.18.10, p. 105)

The rhetorical function of the reference to Alexander the Great substantiated by ancient authors is to excel the examples of the past in the present, and reveals Orosius’s conception of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ rulership. Orosius transforms the typical classical hero of Alexander into an anti-hero, the antithesis to the pious Christian Emperors of later centuries. Theodosius is demonstrated as surpassing the martial success of Alexander in tackling an enemy that even the most blood-thirsty and aggressively expansionist force

<sup>634</sup> 1.4.2, vol. 1, p. 43: *...Scythicamque barbariem, adhuc tunc inbellem et innocentem, torpentem excitare saevitiam, vires suas nosse, et non lacte iam pecudum sed sanguine hominum uiuere, ad postremum uincere dum uincit edocuit*

<sup>635</sup> 7.34.5, vol. 3, p. 94: *Itaque Theodosius afflictam rempublicam ira Dei reparandam credit misericordia Dei; omnem fiduciam sui ad opem Christi conferens, maximas illas Scythias gentes formidatasque cunctis maioribus, Alexandro quoque illi Magno, sicut Pompeius Corneliusque testati sunt.*

<sup>636</sup> 3.7.5, vol. 1, p. 147: *Quibus diebus etiam Alexander Magnus, uere ille gurgis miseriarum atque atrocissimus turbo totius Orientis, est natus.* 3.18.10, vol. 1, p. 170: *Sed Alexander, humani sanguinis inextinguibilis siue hostium, siue etiam sociorum, recentem tamen semper sitiebat cruorem.* For earlier portrayals of Alexander as a model for imperial rule, see Julian, *Caesars*, 323D and *Itinerarium Alexandri*. On Julian and Alexander, see Smith, (1995), pp. 11-14. For the *Itinerarium Alexandri*, see Lane Fox, (1997). For Orosius’s use of Alexander, see Cary, (1954).

chooses to avoid. The rhetorical effect of Orosius's construction of Alexander as an empire-building savage pagan provides an intentional foil for the literary construction of the Christian Roman empire and Theodosius in particular, as an ideal version of rulership. Despite the emphasis on peace and 'bloodless victory' in the final book, Orosius cannot resist pointing out that the success of Theodosius's military victories surpasses even those of Alexander the Great.

The historical situation of Theodosius's military suppression of the barbarians in Thrace was quite different; following the disaster at the battle of Adrianople in 378 the Roman government would have had little choice in dealing with the barbarians. Sparse details of the elements of Theodosius's military campaigns have been preserved, and Orosius's reference to *magnis multisque proeliis* is similarly vague.<sup>637</sup> (7.34.5, vol. 3, p. 94)

According to the narrative of the *Historiae* following the destruction of the Roman army at Adrianople the barbarian tribes, specifically the Alans, Huns, and Goths, were well-equipped with Roman horses and weapons, but despite this Theodosius was able to defeat them and entered Constantinople in triumph in 380: 'He entered the city of Constantinople as a victor and that he might not exhaust the small band of Roman troops by constantly making war, he struck a treaty with Athanaric, the king of the Goths.'<sup>638</sup> (7.34.6, p. 341) In reality it took Theodosius two years to achieve his triumphal entry into Constantinople. The compression and simplification of the narrative removes the complex and difficult reality of battle. No gesture is made towards a more realistic portrayal of Theodosius's campaigns against the barbarians as this brings no benefit to the apologetical discourse of the text; the focus is instead on determining the outcome as a divine victory for Theodosius. Although it is not substantiated in the *Historiae* Ammianus Marcellinus records that Athanaric was 'driven from his country by a domestic conspiracy, died and was buried with splendid rites conducted in the Roman manner.'<sup>639</sup> That Orosius chooses to suppress the pagan

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<sup>637</sup> Thompson, (1966), p. 22: 'The extensive and confused fighting and devastation which laid waste the Danubian provinces in 378-82 cannot be described owing to the inadequacy of our sources of information.' On the course of events in 378-82 Baynes writes (quoted by Thompson) that it 'is for us a lost chapter in the history of East Rome. Some few disconnected fragments can, it is true, be recovered, but their setting is too often conjectural. Many have been the attempts to unravel the confused tangle of incidents which Zosimus offers in the place of an ordered history...' Baynes, (1911), vol.1, p. 236.

Similarly Jones considers the years 379-82 as undecipherable. Jones, (1964), p. 156.

<sup>638</sup> 7.34.6, vol. 3, p. 94: *Vrbem Constantinopolim uictor intrauit et ne paruam ipsam Romani exercitus manum absidue bellando detereret, foedus cum Athanarico Gothorum rege percussit.*

<sup>639</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, 27.5.10. *...ubi postea Athanaricus proximorum factione genitalibus terris expulsus, fatali sorte decessit et ambitiosis exsequiis ritu sepultus est nostro.* Writing much later in the

element of Athanaric's burial is unsurprising, as the Christianity of the Gothic king Alaric, the successor to Athanaric, is widely celebrated in the text, despite Alaric's Arianism. Orosius is compelled to downplay any remnants of paganism at this late point in the work to avoid contradicting the rhetorically comprehensive construction of a Christian Roman empire.

In contrast to Ammianus Orosius records the Gothic reaction to the death of Athanaric, sustaining the idealised style in which the *Historiae* treats Theodosius: 'Athanaric, however, as soon as he came to Constantinople, died. All the tribes of the Goths, with their king dead and beholding the bravery and kindness of Theodosius, gave themselves over to Roman rule.'<sup>640</sup> (7.34.7, pp. 341-2) The traditional quality of bravery alongside the specifically Christian characteristic of kindness prompts the mass-surrender of the Gothic barbarians. The statement is echoed by Zosimus, that it was the 'kindness' of Theodosius that allowed the barbarian response of a peaceable exit: 'Such was the extravagance and lavishness of the tomb that all the barbarians were amazed, and the Scythians returned home without annoying the Romans any more, but rather marvelling at the emperor's kindness.'<sup>641</sup> The *Historiae* records an important and historical episode in Romano-Gothic relations, in spite of the idealised treatment the event receives in the *Historiae*.<sup>642</sup> Peter Heather has argued convincingly for the events of 382 as a peace

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mid-sixth century Jordanes records that on his death Theodosius 'honoured Athanaric even more when he was dead than during his life-time, for he not only gave him a worthy burial, but himself walked before the bier at the funeral.' Jordanes, *Getica*, 28.144. *Quem princeps affectionis gratia pene plus mortuum quam vivum honorans dignae tradidit sepulturae, ipse quoque in exequiis feretro eins praeiens*. Similarly Zosimus has Theodosius walking out to meet Athanaric as he entered the City, and on his death had him buried in a 'royal tomb'. *Historia nova*, 4.34.5.

<sup>640</sup> 7.34.7, vol. 3, p. 94: *Athanaricus autem continuo ut Constantinopolim uenit, diem obiit. Vniuersae Gothorum gentes rege defuncto aspicientes uirtutem benignitatemque Theodosii Romano sese imperio dederunt*. The significance of the treaty is critically debated. It has been argued that the treaty 'marks the end of the Roman Empire' as it began the penetration of the barbarian world into the Roman one and was the beginning of the process that led to the creation of the barbarian kingdoms in the next and following centuries. Piganiol, (1972), p. 235. Burns sees it as marking the beginning of the Middle Ages. Burns (1994), p. 77,

<sup>641</sup> Zosimus, *Historia nova*, 4.34.5. The disparity between Zosimus's and Orosius's accounts of Gothic relations under Theodosius must be noted: Orosius implies a settlement within the empire and Zosimus records that the 'Scythians' or Goths departed from the empire. Zosimus's claims Theodosius's kindness and mercy are confirmed in other sources besides Orosius: Claudian, *Panegyricus de tertio consulatu Honorii Augusti*, 111-7; Symmachus, *Epistula*, 4.51.2; Ambrose, *Epistula*, 61.7, 62.31; *Oratio de Obitu Theodosii*, 4; Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26. Blockley, (1998), p. 202, n. 152, points out that it is strange that so many of the ecclesiastical historians do not stress it. Blockley also notes that the connection between Visigothic peaceability and the magnificent funeral of Athanaric has been echoed by ancient and modern authorities, but rarely questioned. Blockley, (1998), p. 427.

<sup>642</sup> 'The settlement starts a new epoch in the history of the Empire. For good and ill it set a precedent which had many subsequent imitators. Unfortunately the sources are extremely unsatisfactory, and it is impossible to reconstruct the agreement with any degree of certainty.' Liebeschuetz, (1991), p. 28.

treaty that marked a new departure as the Goths were now a semi-autonomous unit on Roman soil.<sup>643</sup> The language of the peace treaty in the *Historiae* is not one of harmony and equality but of formal and unequivocal surrender to the power of Rome: *Romano sese imperio dediderunt*.<sup>644</sup> In the *Historiae* the diplomatic language of the treaty, *deditio*, suited Roman assumptions that the empire was divinely sustained in order to reach the teleological conclusion of the perfection of humankind. Accordingly, barbarians were inferior to Romans who, with the help of God, were to triumph over them.<sup>645</sup> The compliant submission of the Goths to Roman hegemony is presented as miraculous, but whatever the actual occurrence the outcome was that the barbarian enemy of the battle of Adrianople ceased to be problematic.<sup>646</sup>

Significantly the designation of Theodosius's opposition here changes; they are no longer generically referred to as 'barbarians', and other peoples like the Alans and Huns that Orosius had previously included in Theodosius's campaigns are excluded in the singular designation of 'the Goths'.<sup>647</sup> This indicates an increased focus on Romano-gothic relations in the concluding stages of the work, with the polemical objective to show the Goths not only as fully integrated into the Roman Empire but as facilitating divine providence as successors to the Romans, the chosen people of Christ. It has been

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<sup>643</sup> Heather, (1991), pp. 157-192.

<sup>644</sup> The language is similarly found in other sources. The *Consularia Constantinopolitana* documents the surrender of the whole Gothic people with their king in the year 382: *Ipsa anno uniuersa gens Gothorum cum rege suo in Romaniam se tradiderunt die V non. Oct.* '[In 382] the whole people of the Goths with their king surrendered to the Roman state'. It is most likely that the 'king' referred to here is Athanaric. See Heather, (1991), p. 157. Hydatius, *Chronicon*, 382: *se tradunt*; Marcellinus Comes, 382: *Romano sese imperio dedit*; Themistius, *Orationes* 15 and 16 uses language of subjection and surrender; the Goths were 'in servitude' according to Pacatus (*Panegyrici Latini* 2.22.3); Synesius records the Goths were the 'suppliants' of Theodosius (*De Regno* 21.50.12). According to Jordanes the treaty is a renewal of that made by Constantine with the Goths. Jordanes, *Getica*, 27.141-7. For the terminology of surrender, specifically *deditio*, in the context of a formal treaty, see Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.38; Ammianus Marcellinus, 31.10.17. See Heather and Moncur, (2001), p. 260: 'In outward form, at least, the peace clearly took the traditional Roman diplomatic form of a *deditio* - surrender - of the Goths to the Empire...Other sources confirm that this was how the peace was presented to the Roman public, and that this presentation was generally accepted...Formally, at least, the Goths surrendered unconditionally to the Roman state.'

<sup>645</sup> Matthews and Heather, (1991), p. 261.

<sup>646</sup> See Kulikowski, (2007), pp. 144-153, esp. p. 153.

<sup>647</sup> 'It was an established literary conceit to equate tribal groups of the Migration Period (ca 375 onwards) with those known from classical historical sources such as Herodotus, so that Goths and Huns often appear as Scythians, Getes, or Massagetae.' Heather, (1988), p. 152. Zosimus and Themistius follow Eunapius in consistently referring to the Goths as Scythians, as does Orosius, who also identifies the Goths with the Getae (1.16.2). See Maenchen-Helfen, (1973), pp. 1-17, for the conflation of the Scythians, Getae and Massagetae with various later barbarian peoples. The designation of the Goths as the Scythians in the *Historiae* illustrates what Orosius represents as a genealogical succession between the two peoples. The inclusion of the Scythians can be attributed to their prominence in Justin's *Epitome* which Orosius relies heavily upon for the early books of the *Historiae*.

argued that the altered circumstances following the Romano-gothic peace treaty and possibly the earliest settlement of Goths within the empire was part of a transformation in the Roman approach to the Goths.<sup>648</sup> This idea is associated with the representation of the Goths as successors to the Scythians in Roman historiography. Orosius detached the Goths from the generic representation of 'the barbarians' and gave them a special role in the continuation of the western Roman Empire and Roman historiography. The *Historiae* recognises Gothic kingship and a *gens*, but without a *territorium*. The final chapters of the work see the integration of the Goths into the empire in a more permanent way through their assumption of the Roman *patria*. However the position of the Goths was profoundly ambiguous, reflected in the varying attitude of the text from pro-barbarian or Gothic representations to positive hostility and the return to an ideology of Roman imperial colonialism that reinforces the justified hegemony and superiority of Roman rule. Despite this ambiguity in approach, the publication of the *Historiae* and the settlement of the Goths in AD 418 have been interpreted as more than coincidence, but as connected.<sup>649</sup> The textual preoccupation with the Gothic people and their place in the Roman Empire at the conclusion of the *Historiae* is exemplified by Athaulf's famous statement to turn 'Romania' into 'Gothia'; the role of Gallia Placidia as Imperial princess and Gothic Royal bride; and the Goths themselves as the indirect reason for the composition of the work in the Sack of Rome in 410. The Gothic focus in the final chapters of the *Historiae* demonstrate the prevalence of the anxieties and insecurities that involved both Goths and Romans concerning the place of the Goths in the empire at the time the *Historiae* was written.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Teillet, (1984). Similarly Kulikowski interprets the increased number of Goths within the imperial army as indicative of a new phase in relations between the Goths and the empire. Kulikowski, (2007), pp. 156-7.

<sup>649</sup> Pohl, (2002), pp. 221-241, particularly p. 238: 'We may infer some relationship between the publication of Orosius's *Histories* and the settlement of the Goths in 418. Communication between influential Goths and Romans was intense even before the first Gothic *regnum* on Roman soil was founded, and this communication happened in the real world. In all their scarcity, the texts transmitted to us represent traces of this communication, a key to debates, concepts, anxieties, and insecurities that increasingly involved both Romans and barbarians.'

<sup>650</sup> For Athaulf's intention to turn 'Romania' into 'Gothia', see 7.43.5-7. For Orosius's description of Galla Placidia's marriage to Athaulf, see 7.40.2. Orosius does not engage often with the issue of the Goths and their place in the empire, but one place where this is unavoidable is at the very end of the *Historiae* where the narration of most recent history occurs. See specifically 7.40; 7.41; 7.42.1-3; 7.43. For discussion of Orosius and the Goths, see Merrills, (2005), pp. 41-3 and 61-2; Courcelle, (1984), pp. 85-8; Fabbrini, (1979), pp. 239-341; Teillet, (1984), pp. 113-161.



#### 4.1.6 Theodosius and Legitimate Authority

##### 4.1.6.1 The Usurper Maximus - An Ambivalent View?

The challenge of the usurping emperor Maximus to the imperial authority of Theodosius, an authority legitimized by the Christian God, drastically alters the position of the emperor; the murder of Gratian by Maximus not only invests Theodosius with sole power over eastern and western halves of the empire, but the demand for vengeance allows Theodosius to begin a civil war without blame and under a religious pretext. Given the idealised presentation of Theodosius it is surprising that the introduction of the usurping emperor Maximus at this point in Book Seven is not overtly negative, despite threatening the Imperial succession of the Theodosian dynasty:

Meanwhile, when Theodosius...had made his son, Arcadius, a sharer in the power, Maximus, an energetic man, indeed, and honourable and worthy of the throne had he not arrived at it by usurpation contrary to his oath of allegiance, was made emperor by the army in Britain, almost against his will, and crossed over into Gaul where he treacherously surrounded and killed Gratian Augustus who was terrified by the sudden attack and was planning to cross into Italy, and he expelled Gratian's brother, Valentinian Augustus from Italy.<sup>651</sup> (7.34.9, p. 342)

Although recognising that his usurpation was 'contrary to his oath of allegiance', Maximus is nevertheless portrayed as 'honourable and worthy of the throne'.<sup>652</sup> (7.34.9, p. 342) Echoing a familiar trope of rival claims to imperial power, it is 'almost against his will' (*inuitus*) that Maximus is proclaimed Emperor by his troops in Britain.<sup>653</sup> (7.34.9, p. 342) Considering the panegyric treatment of Theodosius and his successors in Book Seven, it is unexpected for the depiction of Maximus to be in any way positive. But Orosius's personal interest in orthodoxy and heterodoxy underlie his motivation as an author. Orosius composed his *Commonitorium* against the Hispanic cleric Priscillian and his followers, and it was supposedly for guidance in this matter that Orosius was compelled to travel to North Africa to visit Augustine.<sup>654</sup> Maximus's involvement in the

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<sup>651</sup> 7.34.9, vol. 3, p. 95: ...*Maximus, uir quidem strenuus et probus, atque Augusto dignis nisi contra sacramenti fidem per tyrannidem emersisset, in Britannia inuitus propemodum ab exercitu imperator creatus in Galliam transiit: ubi Gratianum Augustum subita incursione perterritum atque in Italiam transire meditantem dolis circumuentum interfecit fratremque eius Valentinianum Augustum Italia expulit.*

<sup>652</sup> 7.34.9, vol. 3, p. 95: ...*nisi contra sacramenti fidem...uir quidem strenuus et probus.*

<sup>653</sup> 7.34.9, vol. 3, p. 95: ...*in Britannia inuitus propemodum ab exercitu imperator creatus in Galliam transiit.* Compare the equivocal portrayal of Maximus given by Zosimus, *Historia nova*, 4.35.4. An example of the trope of unwilling Imperial election is the proclamation of the emperor Julian in AD 360, an account of which is given in Ammianus Marcellinus (20.8.5-10).

<sup>654</sup> For full details of the Latin edition and translation of the *Commonitorium*, see the Bibliography.

Priscillianist controversy culminated in the execution of Priscillian in AD 385. It is primarily because of Maximus's staunch opposition to heterodoxy, but also, like Theodosius and probably Orosius himself, his Hispanic origin, that the portrayal of Maximus is favourable, an idea is confirmed by Arnaud-Lindet.<sup>655</sup>

Orosius presents the death of Gratian and exile of Valentinian II as an imperial obligation and divine compulsion for vengeance against Maximus; there is no suggestion of the personal political motivations of Theodosius:

So for just and necessary reasons, since, of his two royal brothers, the blood of one who had been killed demanded vengeance and the wretchedness of the other was in exile begged for restoration to power, Theodosius placed his hope in God and hurled himself against the usurper, Maximus, superior to him in faith alone.<sup>656</sup> (7.35.2, p. 342)

Theodosius is portrayed as having no choice in engaging Maximus in civil war.<sup>657</sup> But Orosius is very clear. Given the divine sanction Theodosius has received, the war becomes a crusade, an act of piety and faith. The glorification of Roman martial aggression that can be identified in earlier books of the *Historiae* has no place here. There is no pride in the warlike past of Roman imperialism: instead it is undermined and subverted by the pious Christian faith of Theodosius and the victory he has won 'under the guidance of God' (7.35.5, p. 343).<sup>658</sup> Just as the *Historiae* sees Theodosius as an idealised emperor, so the wars he fights are paradigmatic.

#### 4.1.6.2 Two Views of an Imperial Ideal - Augustine and Orosius

Both Augustine and Orosius closely account for the reign of Theodosius, but unlike Orosius Augustine's polemical approach is not limited only to secular and social history and can employ ecclesiastical history. Augustine is able to demonstrate the submission

<sup>655</sup> 'C'était un chrétien orthodoxe, d'où le jugement favorable émis par Orose à son sujet.' Arnaud-Lindet, vol. 3, p. 95, fn. 15.

<sup>656</sup> 7.35.2, vol. 3, p. 96: *Itaque iustis necessariisque causis ad bellum ciuile permotus, cum e duobus Augustis fratribus et ultionem unius interfecti sanguis exigeret et restitutionem miseria alterius exulantis oraret, posuit in Deo spem suam seseque aduersus Maximum tyrannum sola fide maior, nam longe minor uniuersa apparatus bellici conparatione, proripuit.* In contrast to Deferrari, ('[he] hurled himself against the usurper, Maximus') Fear translates: 'he took himself off against the usurper Maximus' (own italics), p. 388. The verb *proripuit*, *proripere*, has a stronger meaning than Fear gives.

<sup>657</sup> An idea similarly found in Augustine: 'He [Theodosius] was not like Cinna, and Marius, and Sulla, and other such men, who wished not to finish civil wars even when they were finished, but rather grieved that they had arisen at all, than wished that when they were finished they should harm any one.' *De civitate Dei*, 5.26. *Bella ciuilia non sicut Cinna et Marius et Sulla et alii tales nec finita finire uoluerunt, sed magis doluit exorta quam cuiquam nocere uoluit terminata.*

<sup>658</sup> 7.35.5, vol. 3, p. 97: *Theodosius incruentam uictoriam Deo procurante suscepit.*

of Roman imperial power to the Church following the massacre of Thessalonica in AD 390 and the penance demanded of Theodosius by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.<sup>659</sup> Orosius suppresses this event in order to avoid tarnishing the representation of Theodosius, and the ecclesiastical focus precludes discussion in the *Historiae*. Augustine is able to claim that Theodosius was ‘more glad to be a member of that Church than to be ruler of the world’, an argument which would not have sat comfortably in the *Historiae*. Augustine is less confined in his attacks on paganism which are not only more systematic and sustained, but also much more stinging.<sup>660</sup> He is able to emphasise Christianity as a rival to paganism, unlike Orosius who avoids points of extreme conflict and, although at times paganism is disparaged, the *Historiae* attempts to synthesise pagan and Christian cultures. In addition Augustine is more reliant on the rhetoric of materiality and otherworldliness: that Theodosius died after achieving ‘the loftiest summit of power’ Augustine can describe as ‘nothing but a passing mist’, a notion acknowledged by Orosius in passing but made much less of as part of an apologetic argument.<sup>661</sup>

Both authors emphasise the mercy and kindness of Theodosius, demonstrated in the ‘paternal devotion’ (*paterno custodiuit*) Theodosius shows towards Valentinian II which is replicated in both texts:

He [Maximus] also drove Gratian’s brother, the emperor Valentinian, from Italy. Valentinian fled to the east where Theodosius received him with a father’s piety and soon even restored him to his throne.<sup>662</sup> (7.34.10, p. 342)

...when Gratian’s younger brother Valentinian had been banished by Gratian’s slayer Maximus, Theodosius, as a Christian, took him under his protection...he watched over him with the affection of a father...with the greatest mercy and veneration, [Theodosius] restored the boy Valentinian to that part of the empire from which he had been caused to flee.<sup>663</sup>

This depiction is connected with the importance both authors place on Theodosius’s loyalty to the Valentinian dynasty, in his support and restoration of Valentinian II as the

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<sup>659</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 5.26.

<sup>660</sup> See for example Augustine’s typically personal attack on the pagan pantheon, where individual gods are targeted and ridiculed. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.23. Markus emphasises the division not between Christian and pagan but sacred and secular; see Markus, (1970), pp. 1-22.

<sup>661</sup> See 5.2.6 and 7.41.9. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26: *Haec ille secum et si qua similia, quae commemorare longum est, bona opera tulit ex isto temporali uapore cuiuslibet culminis et sublimitatis humanae.*

<sup>662</sup> 7.34.10, vol. 3, p. 95: *...fratremque eius Valentinianum Augustum Italia expulit. Valentinianus in Orientem refugiens a Theodosio paterna piutate susceptus, mox etiam imperio resititus est.*

<sup>663</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 5.26: *...ab eius interfectore Maximo Valentinianum eius paruulum fratrem in sui partes imperii tamquam Christianus excepit pupillum, paterno custodiuit affectu...Valentinianum puerum imperii sui partibus, unde fugatus fuerat, cum misericordissima ueneratione restituit...*

legitimate ruler in the west, eschewing the opportunity to further his own power.<sup>664</sup> But ultimately the polemic of the two authors is the same, that Christian rulers are successful specifically because of their Christianity, and pagan rulers are unsuccessful precisely because of their paganism. According to Augustine imperial power is dispensed ‘according to His plan for the government of the ages.’<sup>665</sup> Similarly Orosius sees the Christian God as directing the course of human history:

And this same one and true God, on whom, as we have said, all sects agree, although according to different notions, changing kingdoms and ordering the times, also punishing sins, has chosen the weak elements of the world to confound the strong and has laid the foundation of the Roman empire (6.1.5, p. 229).<sup>666</sup>

Both Augustine and Orosius interpret human events as directed by divine providence and according to a preordained plan. Success is dependent upon the mercy of God, who necessitates worship regardless of political status.

The *Historiae* is a Christian History that refuses to engage, on the surface at least, with ecclesiastical affairs. The narrative focusing on Maximus is no exception, but it can be seen that the underlying authorial concern with orthodoxy and internal church schism dictates the relation of events. This is taken to such an extent that Orosius still acknowledges the murder of the emperor Gratian and expulsion of Valentinian II from Italy, imperial rulers through whom Theodosius crucially tied himself to the Valentinian dynasty, without seemingly detracting from Maximus’s positive portrayal. Conflicting authorial interests are felt in an uncomfortable proximity, with Maximus both a tyrant threatening the Theodosian dynasty and legitimate imperial rule, and as a triumphant advocate of Orthodox Christianity. The compromise the *Historiae* reaches demonstrates Theodosius’s ‘paternal devotion’ to Valentinian and present restoration of Valentinian

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<sup>664</sup> ‘...since Valentinian was destitute of all resources, Theodosius could have removed him with no effort had he been fired more by the desire to rule than by the love of doing good.’ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 5.26. *quem destitutum omnibus opibus nullo negotio posset auferre, si latius regnandi cupiditate magis quam benefaciendi caritate flagraret*. Orosius never suggests the possibility of Theodosius assuming control of the western empire at Valentinian’s expense, but the justice in Theodosius’s behaviour is implicit throughout his portrayal: ‘So roused by just and necessary reasons to wage civil war, since of the two imperial brothers, the spilt blood of one demanded vengeance and the wretchedness of the other in exile begged for his restitution...’ 7.35.2, p. 342. 7.35.2, vol. 3, p. 96: *Itaque iustis necessariisque causis ad bellum civile permotus, cum e duobus Augustis fratribus et ultionem unius interfecti sanguis exigeret et restitutionem miseria alterius exulantis oraret...*

<sup>665</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 5.26: *in quibus est etiam quaelibet imperii magnitudo, quam pro temporum gubernatione dispensat*.

<sup>666</sup> 6.1.5, vol. 2, p. 163: *Itaque idem unus et uerus Deus, in quem omnis, ut diximus, etsi ex diuersis opinionibus secta concurrat, mutans regna et disponens tempora, peccata quoque puniens, ‘quae infirma sunt mundi elegit, ut confundat fortia’, Romanumque imperium adsumpto pauperrimi status pastore fundauit*.

to power.<sup>667</sup> (7.34.10, p. 342) With the focus of the narrative on the actual conflict between Theodosius and Maximus, the rhetoric of the usurper subtly and then distinctly changes. The arrogance of Maximus is suggested as he establishes himself at Aquileia ‘to be a spectator of his own victory.’<sup>668</sup> (7.35.3, p. 343) Theodosius’s crossing of the Alps to confront Maximus is, by the ‘ineffable judgement of God’, miraculously unopposed: ‘Thus Theodosius, without being observed, not to say opposed, crossed the undefended Alps and, unexpectedly arriving at Aquileia, without treachery and without a contest, surrounded, captured, and killed that great enemy, Maximus’ (7.35.4, p. 343).<sup>669</sup> The murder of Maximus is immediately justified: he is described as a ‘great enemy...a cruel man and one who also exacted from the very savage German tribes tribute and taxes by the terror of his name alone.’<sup>670</sup> (7.35.4, p. 343) The cruelty of Maximus and his deserved assassination leaves Theodosius’s historical reputation unblemished. To ensure this is indubitable the account ends with the statement, ‘Theodosius, under the guidance of God, gained a bloodless victory.’<sup>671</sup> (7.35.5, p. 343) This claim is made despite the murder of Maximus and death of Andragathius, Maximus’s *magister equitum*, whose deaths are justifiable.

#### 4.1.7 Theodosius and War

##### 4.1.7.1 Warring Peace - bellum sine sanguine

Civil war in the *Historiae* is represented as the worst affliction on the state: ‘It is well known that nothing more regrettable or more harmful has ever happened to the City of

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<sup>667</sup> 7.34.10, vol. 3, p. 95: *paterno custodiuit*.

<sup>668</sup> 7.35.3, vol. 3, p. 96: *Aquileiae tunc Maximus uictoriae suae spectator insederat*.

<sup>669</sup> 7.35.4, vol. 3, p. 97: *Ita Theodosius nemine sentiente, ut non dicam repugnante, uacuas transmisit Alpes atque Aquileiam inprovisus adueniens hostem illum magnum, Maximum...occidit*.

<sup>670</sup> 7.35.4, vol. 3, p. 97: *...hostem illum magnum, Maximum, trucem et ab inmanissimis quoque Germanorum gentibus tributa ac stipendia solo terrore nominis exigentem*. This correlates with the later statement from Orosius in opposition to the heavy tax burden in the Empire whilst demonstrating the integration of Roman and Gothic society: ‘now there may be found among them certain Romans who prefer poverty with freedom among the barbarians than paying tribute with anxiety among the Romans.’ 7.41.7, p. 358. 7.41.7, vol. 3, p. 122: *...ut inueniantur iam inter eos quidam Romani qui malint inter barbaros pauperem libertatem quam inter Romanos tributariam sollicitudinem sustinere*. Compare Hydatius, *Chronica*, 410.16: ‘As the barbarians ran wild through Spain and the deadly pestilence continued on its savage course, the wealth and goods stored in the cities were plundered by the tyrannical tax-collector and consumed by the soldiers.’ *De bacchantibus per Hispanias barbaris, et saeviente nihilominus pestilentiae malo, opes et conditam in urbibus substantiam tyrannicus exactor diripit, et miles exhaurit*.

<sup>671</sup> 7.35.5, vol. 3, p. 97: *Theodosius incruentam uictoriam Deo procurante suscepit*.

Rome than civil wars'.<sup>672</sup> (7.6.8, p. 295) The justification for Theodosius's military mobilisation against Maximus is therefore essential. But Orosius does more than simply justify the war; he legitimises it as a holy crusade and then as a conflict without bloodshed, a war without martial engagement. In Book Five Orosius has already compared civil wars of the past with the present, and claimed that they no longer exist:

...we would be labouring with less ill-will if, perchance, either a serious battle or bloody victory had taken place. However, since in these times of ours all events produce more of necessity and less of shame, that is, cause, battle, and victory for the purpose of wiping out the insolence of tyrants, or of checking the defection of allies, or of impressing an example of vengeance, who now has any doubt as to how much more mildly civil wars are waged today, or rather are repressed rather than carried on?<sup>673</sup> (5.22.9-11, p. 220)

In a rhetorical style that is typical of the *Historiae* the incredible argument is sustained that somehow civil wars in the current time are milder or fought with more justification than in the past. The rhetoric functions to reinforce the notion of a universal Christian community, an idea that forms the back-bone of the *Historiae*:

Is it not clear to all that everyone, united in a single peace and secure in the same state of security, victors and vanquished alike, rejoices in a shared joy and that, indeed, in the many provinces, towns, and peoples of the Roman Empire there is hardly anyone who has at any time been condemned to just vengeance and that against the wishes of their conqueror.<sup>674</sup> (5.22.14, p. 220)

There is no rhetorical distinction between the unity of the Roman empire and the ties of Christianity; with the conversion of the Roman emperors to Christianity the two are interchangeable. A simple equation can be deduced, that with the reduction or concentration of the community to the singular, as a mono-nationalism emerges in the

<sup>672</sup> 7.6.8, vol. 3, p. 30: *Tristius ac perniciosius urbi Romae nihil unquam fuisse quam bella ciuilia satis notum est.*

<sup>673</sup> 5.22.9-11, vol. 2, p. 142: *In tali ergo uel defectu, uel perduellione sociorum, minore nunc utique inuidia laboraret, si fortassis existeret, uel grauis pugna, uel cruenta uictoria. Verumtamen cum in hisce temporibus omnia plus necessitatis adferant et minus pudoris...*

<sup>674</sup> 5.22.14, vol. 2, p. 143: *Ac non potius omnibus notum sit una cunctos pace compositos atque eadem salute securos uictos uictoresque pariter communi exultasse laetitia, at etiam in tantis totius imperii Romani prouinciis, urbibus ac populis uix paucos aliquando extitisse quos iusta ultio inuito etiam uictore damnarit?* Compare with the statement chronologically earlier: 'In the six hundred and seventy-third year after the founding of the City, with the rumbles of wars resounding on all sides...the Roman state, still feeble and exhausted by internal disaster as if by fevers, was forced to drive back with arms the strongest peoples of the West and North.' 5.23.1, p. 221. 5.23.1, vol. 2, pp. 144-5: *Anno ab Vrbe condita DCLXXIII, sonantibus undique bellorum fragoribus...exsanguis adhuc atque exhausta intestina perniciet tamquam febribus Romana respublica propulsare armis Occidentis Septentrionisque fortissimas gentes cogeatur.* Also Goffart: 'Christian authors appreciated the long-lasting *pax Romana*, [sic] but deplored the warlike Roman past and took pains to undermine it. Almighty God might, for His own purposes, have fostered the Roman Empire, but there was nothing for Christian Romans to be proud of in that long, bloodstained, and brutal creation. Augustine and Orosius, in their accounts Roman imperialism, are leaders in the Christian subversion of Roman heroism, and they were not alone in knocking the triumphs of the past off their pedestals.' Goffart, (2009), p. 110.

Roman empire as a universal Christian community, all conflict is neutralised. War loses its violence, resolution is found in alternative or miraculous means, peace is preferred to battle, and even the barbarian king is persuaded by the validity of Roman law as an alternative to the destruction of the empire.<sup>675</sup>

War without violence here extends Orosius's ideas about conflict and community in Book Seven particularly, that a military victory can be won without disruption to the Christian Roman community or loss of life: 'no one arranged a line of battle; no one...drew a sword from the scabbard. A most terrible war was accomplished even to victory without bloodshed'.<sup>676</sup> (7.35.7, p. 343) The paradox of bloodless war assumes a greater significance in the final book because the philosophy of the text must be proved, that times are ever improving. The narrative of an absence of bloodshed (*bellum sine sanguine*) and civil war without martial engagement is crucial for the construction of Theodosius as a peaceful and merciful Christian emperor who, with the assistance of God, is nevertheless martially victorious over his enemies. In order to emphasize the miraculous in Theodosius's victory the emperor is portrayed as superior to Maximus 'in faith alone' and weaker in lacking 'warlike equipment', *apparatus bellici*.<sup>677</sup> (7.35.2, pp. 342-3) It is 'by the ineffable judgement of God', *ineffabili iudicio Dei*, that Andragathius abandons his fortifications in the Alps allowing Theodosius passage without opposition.<sup>678</sup> (7.35.3, p. 343) The killing of Maximus is presented within a fantastical narrative, that without treachery or opposition, 'that great enemy' is surrounded, captured and killed.<sup>679</sup> (7.35.4, p. 343) With no reservation or justification the text maintains Theodosius's divinely invested victory over Maximus as bloodless.<sup>680</sup>

To conclude the narrative concerning the usurpation of Maximus, Orosius instructs the reader, *ecce*, 'see', that:

under Christian rulers and in Christian times, civil wars, when they cannot be avoided, are concluded. The victory was arrived at, the city was broken through, and the usurper captured. And this is a small part of the story. Behold, elsewhere a hostile army was conquered and the count of the usurper, more cruel than the usurper himself, was driven

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<sup>675</sup> See 7.43.5-8.

<sup>676</sup> 7.35.7, vol. 3, p. 98: *et tamen nullus dolos instruxit, nullus aciem disposuit, postremo nullus, si dici licet, gladium de uagina extulit. Formidulosissimum bellum sine sanguine usque ad uictoriam...*

<sup>677</sup> 7.35.2, vol. 3, p. 96: *...posuit in Deo spem suam seseque aduersus Maximum tyrannum sola fide maior, nam longe minor uniuersa apparatus bellici conparatione...*

<sup>678</sup> 7.35.3, vol. 3, p. 96.

<sup>679</sup> 7.35.4, vol. 3, p. 97: *...hostem illum magnum, Maximum...*

<sup>680</sup> 7.35.5, p. 343: *'...[Theodosius,] under the guidance of God, gained a bloodless victory'. 7.35.5, vol. 3, p. 97: Theodosius incruentam uictoriam Deo procurante suscepit.*

to his death; so many ambushes were broken up and avoided, and so many preparations were rendered of no avail. And yet no one employed trickery; no one arranged a line of battle; finally, no one, if the expression may be used, drew a sword from the scabbard. A most terrible war was accomplished even to victory without bloodshed and, on the occasion of the victory, with the death of two persons.<sup>681</sup> (7.35.6-8)

Orosius's version of events is not intended to be precise but to demonstrate the interstice of the past with the arrival of 'Christian rulers and times' (*regibus et temporibus Christianis*). The narrative is deliberately vague and lacking in detail; the city 'broken through' or 'invaded' refers to Aquileia but is not specifically named.<sup>682</sup> A similar impression of the cursory treatment of events, bordering on hyperbole, is created by the use of exaggerated language: 'so many ambushes', *tantae insidiae*; 'so many preparations', *tanti apparatus*; 'no one employed trickery', *nullus dolos instruxit*; 'no one arranged a line of battle', *nullus aciem disposuit*; 'no one...drew a sword from the scabbard', *nullus...gladium de uagina extulit*; 'A most terrible war was accomplished even to victory without bloodshed', *Formidulosissimum bellum sine sanguine usque ad uictoriam*. The rhetorical argument is at the forefront of the text, with the details of actual events treated with secondary importance; meaning is only given to events through their apologetical impact.

Following the narrative of Theodosius's military victory over Maximus Orosius makes absolutely clear the influence of the Christian God in the course of events:

And lest anyone think that this took place by chance, that the power of God, by which all things are dispensed and judged, by bringing forth its proof, may force the minds of objectors either into confusion or belief, I mention a matter unknown to all and yet known to all. After this war, in which Maximus was killed, surely many civil and foreign wars have followed Theodosius and his son, Honorius, up to the present day, and yet almost all up to our own time have subsided with the fruit of a simple and holy victory at the cost of very little or no blood at all.<sup>683</sup> (7.35.8-9, pp. 343-4)

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<sup>681</sup> 7.35.6-8, vol. 3, pp. 97-8: *Ecce regibus et temporibus Christianis qualiter bella ciuilia, cum uitari nequeunt, transiguntur: ad uictoriam peruentum est, inrupta est ciuitas, correptus tyrannus; et hoc parum est: ecce parte alia uictus hostiles exercitus atque ipso tyranno truculentior comes tyrani ad mortem coactus, tantae dissolutae elusaeque insidiae, tanti apparatus exinaniti sunt: et tamen nullus dolos instruxit, nullus aciem disposuit, postremo nullus, si dici licet, gladium de uagina extulit. Formidulosissimum bellum sine sanguine usque ad uictoriam et in uictoria duorum morte confectum est.*

<sup>682</sup> Both the *Chronicle* of Hydatius and the *Consularia Constantinopolitana* record that Maximus was assassinated three miles away from the Aquileia. Hydatius, *Chronica*, 388, 10.17. *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, 388 (2).

<sup>683</sup> 7.35.8-9, vol. 3, p. 98: *Et ne hoc quisquam casu factum putet, quo magis potentia Dei qua et dispensantur et iudicantur uniuersa, propalato sui testimonio declarata, obstrepentium mentes uel ad confusionem uel ad fidem cogat, dico rem et ignotam omnibus et omnibus notam: post hoc bellum quo Maximus interfectus est, multa utique, sicut omnes recognoscimus, Theodosium filiumque eius Honorium usque ad nunc et externa bella et ciuilia consecuta sunt, et tamen omnia paene usque in hodiernum diem equidem cum fructu simplicis sanctaeque uictoriae uel nullo, uel minimo sanguine, quiererunt.*



This kind of statement can be seen as typical Orosian logic; contradiction is at the very heart of the argument. Something can be ‘unknown to all and yet known to all’, *ignotam omnibus et omnibus notam*. Theodosius and Honorius can be engaged in many civil and foreign wars, but they can ‘almost all have subsided...at the cost of very little or no blood at all’.<sup>684</sup> This is not accidental. It is what the text was designed to do, to coerce its reader into conformity with the sheer weight of argument, even if the argument is contradictory. The level of conviction and determination drives the work and is crucial to the progression of the polemic, even at the expense of logic.

#### 4.1.7.2 The Battle of Frigidus

The narrative concerning Theodosius culminates in a further civil war with the usurper Eugenius and Arbogastes at the battle of Frigidus, a conflict which has strong parallels with the struggle against Maximus. According to the trajectory of improvement and rhetoric of consolidation that characterises the text the battle of Frigidus exceeds and arguably eclipses the previous conflict. The narrative of the battle is longer and the representation of Arbogastes and Eugenius has no positive aspects, unlike that of Maximus. Orosius’s interpretation of the battle is not only as a challenge to the legitimate authority of Theodosius by a rival political opponent, but as the physical manifestation of the clash between Christian and pagan, a prevailing view in the ancient sources which is frequently and quite uncritically echoed in modern criticism.<sup>685</sup> The conflict against Eugenius is more extreme than against Maximus; the tension is increased, the enemy is greater, and the stakes are higher. Theodosius’s position is more disadvantaged and precarious in order to make his victory a more impressive. The

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<sup>684</sup> 7.35.9, vol. 3, p. 98: *et tamen omnia paene usque in hodiernum diem equidem cum fructu simplicis sanctaeque uictoriae uel nullo, uel minimo sanguine, quiererunt.*

<sup>685</sup> In the ancient sources: Ambrose, *Oratio de Obitu Theodosii*, 7; 10; Ambrose, *Explanatio psalmorum*, 36.25.2-4; Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 11.33; Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.25; Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24; Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, 4.53-58; John of Antioch, *Fragment* 187; Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 11. 2; *Epitome de caesaribus*, 48.7. In modern criticism: Friell and Williams, (1998), pp. 119-137, esp. p. 125: ‘It has been depicted and celebrated by many historians as the Last Stand of Roman Paganism, and even been cast in similar tragic mould to the noble death-throes of the Roman Republic.’ King, (1961), p. 96: ‘At the Frigidus he [Theodosius] blew the trumpet, the walls of paganism collapsed, and the Christian state, the *civitas dei* as conceived of by Eusebius and the Christian Emperors, was revealed, standing in all its grandeur and hollowness.’ Smith, (1976), pp. 92-3: ‘The nineties [390’s] did witness considerable change in the pagans’ position, and one event, the battle at the Frigidus (394), could be termed a reversal of fortune. It was a contest of faiths. Here the two armies were headed by the Christian Theodosius and the nominally Christian Eugenius, a cultivated man of letters who favoured the pagan party and who probably intended to emulate Julian’s restoration. The last substantial hope of the pagan party for control of the state was destroyed at this battle.’ See Salzman, (2010), as an exception.

relation of events is more imbued with the religious and a stronger intervention from the divine which effectively wins the battle for Theodosius. All efforts are concentrated into the portrayal of the conflict as ultimately deciding over Christianity and paganism, and proving Theodosius as an ideal Christian emperor who, with the divine investment of God, is unchallengeable.

The sacrosanct relationship between Theodosius and his Christian God, a relationship to which the emperor owes victory, is established directly at the opening of the narrative of battle: 'There is strong proof in both instances that Theodosius always came off the victor through the power of God, not trust in man' (7.35.12, p. 344).<sup>686</sup> The reliance of Arbogastes and Eugenius on 'pagan idols' (*cultu idolorum*) brings them no benefit; Arbogastes's exchanged allegiance for Eugenius over Theodosius and paganism for Christianity means that 'he succumbed with great ease' (7.35.12, p. 344).<sup>687</sup> However the military preparations of Eugenius and Arbogastes initially suggest that Theodosius will inevitably lose:

Eugenius and Arbogastes had made ready their lines in battle array on the plains and had occupied the narrow slopes of the Alps and the inescapable passes by cleverly sending ahead ambushing parties; although they were unequal in number and strength, yet by their strategy alone they were victors.<sup>688</sup> (7.35.13, pp. 344-5)

Orosius conjures a powerful image of Theodosius spiritual withdrawal to the 'highest point of the Alps' (*in summis Alpibus*) in response; somehow he has been deserted by his own army and surrounded by the enemy, and so, 'without food or sleep', 'with his body spread upon the ground and with his mind fixed on heaven, he prayed alone to the one Lord Christ who is all powerful'.<sup>689</sup> (7.35.14, p. 345) Theodosius spends a sleepless night 'in continuous prayer', leaving 'pools of tears' (*lacrimarum lacunas*) which were his 'price for heavenly assistance'.<sup>690</sup> (7.35.15, p. 345) The ascetic response of the

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<sup>686</sup> 7.35.12, vol. 3, p. 99: *Potentia Dei non fiducia hominis uictorem semper extitisse Theodosium.*

<sup>687</sup> 7.35.12, vol. 3, p. 99: *...nexus etiam praecipuo cultu idolorum, magna tamen facilitate succubuit.*

<sup>688</sup> 7.35.13, vol. 3, p. 99: *Eugenius atque Arbogastes instructas acies campis expedierant, arcta Alpium latera atque ineuitabiles transitus praemissis callide insidiis occuparant, etiamsi numero ac uiribus inpaes forent, sola tamen belli dispositione uictores.*

<sup>689</sup> 7.35.14, vol. 3, pp. 99-100: *At uero Theodosius, in summis Alpibus constitutus, expers cibi ac somni, sciens quod destitutus suis, nesciens quod clausus alienis, Dominum Christum solus solum qui posset omnia, corpore humi fusus, mente caelo fixus, orabat.*

<sup>690</sup> 7.35.15, vol. 3, p. 100: *Dehinc postquam insomnem noctem precum continuatione transegit et testes propemodum quas in pretium praesidii caelestis adpenderat lacrimarum lacunas reliquit.* Rufinus also gives Theodosius especial ascetic significance: 'He made ready then for war by arming himself not so much with weapons as with fasts and prayers; guarded not so much by the night watch as by nightly vigils in prayer, he would go around all the places of prayer with the priests and people, lie prostrate in sackcloth before the reliquaries of the martyrs and apostles, and implore assistance through the faithful

emperor is extraordinary within the text and is highly significant: no other figure is portrayed as behaving similarly, with such religiosity and piety or in such close proximity to the divine. There is no mediator such as a saint or bishop between the emperor and God as in other sources; these roles are embodied in the devout Theodosius.<sup>691</sup>

The absence of an intermediary between the secular earth-bound authority of the Roman emperor and the divine authority of the Christian God enables the direct juxtaposition of the Passion of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane before the Crucifixion and Theodosius's sacred victory over Eugenius. The synoptic Gospels record the Agony of Christ, echoed by Theodosius's agony the night before battle in the mountains: like Jesus Theodosius separates himself and keeps vigil throughout the night in prayer; the 'pools of tears' he sheds, the 'price for heavenly assistance', are comparable with Jesus's sweat 'like great drops of blood falling on the ground';<sup>692</sup> Theodosius prays 'with his body spread upon the ground', *corpore humi fusus*, just as Jesus prays: 'And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.';<sup>693</sup> the imagery of sleep and prayer reflects the insomnia of Jesus in his nightly vigil in contrast to his sleepy disciples;<sup>694</sup> following his supplication to God Jesus's resolve and acceptance of the imminent Crucifixion is indicated by his rebuke of the disciples for their somnolence: 'When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of

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intercession of the saints.' Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 11.33. *Igitur praeparatur ad bellum non tam armorum telorumque, quam jejuniorum orationumque subsidiis: nec tam excubiarum vigiliis, quam obsecrationem pernoctatione munitus circumibat, cum sacerdotibus et populo omnia orationum loca, ante Martyrum et Apostolorum thecas jacebat cilicio prostratus, et auxilia sibi fida sanctorum intercessione poscebat.*

<sup>691</sup> According to Theodoret Theodosius was visited by the Saints John and Philip who had been sent to fight for the Emperor. Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

<sup>692</sup> 7.35.15, vol. 3, p. 100: *Dehinc postquam insomnem noctem precum continuatione transegit et testes propemodum quas in pretium praesidii caelestis adpenderat lacrimarum lacunas reliquit*; Luke 22.44: 'In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.'

<sup>693</sup> 7.35.14, vol. 3, pp. 99-100: *At uero Theodosius, in summis Alpibus constitutus, expers cibi ac somni, sciens quod destitutus suis, nesciens quod clausus alienis, Dominum Christum solus solum qui posset omnia, corpore humi fusus, mente caelo fixus, orabat*; Mark, 14.35; Matthew, 26.39: 'And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'

<sup>694</sup> For example, Matthew 26.40-2: 'Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

trial.”<sup>695</sup> This mirrors Theodosius’s own resolution for the impending battle having been strengthened by discourse with the divine: ‘...after he had passed a sleepless night in continuous prayer...he with confidence took up arms alone, realizing that he was not alone. With the sign of the cross he gave the signal for battle...’ (7.35.15, p. 345).<sup>696</sup>

The scriptural narrative is characterised by its exclusivity, essentially to Jesus in his invocation to God, a feature shared and emphasised in the *Historiae*; the focus is singularly on Theodosius and Christ. Theodosius is one man praying to the One God who can bring about all things: *Dominum Christum solus solum qui posset omnia*.<sup>697</sup> The Scriptural focus of the narrative of Jesus’s supplication culminates in the Crucifixion with Christ addressing God on the Cross.<sup>698</sup> The culmination for Theodosius comes much more quickly with the miraculous events of the battle and a swift victory for Theodosius and his army.<sup>699</sup> The martial success of Theodosius sees the end of the paralleling between Theodosius and Christ, with a return to the pragmatic details of the aftermath of war, in the deaths of Eugenius and Arbogastes, and the record of the ten thousand Goths killed. (7.35.19, p. 346) The *imitatio Christi* of Theodosius is very effective; Orosius took the monotheism of the Christian religion and the monocracy of Roman culture and synthesised them by replicating the Gospel narrative in the *Historiae*. This sustained symbolism underlies the entire text, but is only made explicit at certain prominent points. The triumphant and final victory Theodosius won over the pagan usurper replete with Christian overtones at the conclusion of Theodosius’s reign is the religious pinnacle of the text, even in comparison with the Incarnation occurring almost four hundred years earlier.

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<sup>695</sup> Luke 22.45-7.

<sup>696</sup> 7.35.15, vol. 3, p. 100: *Dehinc postquam insomnem noctem precum continuatione transegit...fiducialiter arma corripuit solus, sciens se esse non solum, signoque crucis signum proelio dedit ac se in bellum...*

<sup>697</sup> ‘Theodosius prayed alone to the Lord Jesus Christ, only He can bring about all things’. 7.35.14, p. 345. Fear creates a strong monotheistic statement by translating, ‘one man praying to the One God Who can bring about all things.’ (p. 391). Deferrari’s translation is more conservative: ‘he prayed alone to the one Lord Christ who is all powerful’. (p. 345). Both translations reflect the possible ambiguities of meaning. The physical reality of Theodosius praying on his own could be emphasised, or the metaphorical significance of the monotheistic synchronicity of one ruler and one God. Fear’s translation seems to be a more accurate translation and closer to the original meaning.

<sup>698</sup> Matthew 27.46; Mark 15.34; Luke 23.34, 46.

<sup>699</sup> Compare with Eunapius’s account of the battle, where Theodosius attacks a sleeping enemy. Eunapius, *fragment* 60.

#### 4.1.7.3 The Miraculous in the Battle

The sources that relate the battle of Frigidus are dominated by the religious significance of signs, prophecies, and iconography, either pagan or Christian.<sup>700</sup> Orosius makes little reference to the pagan, firmly emphasising Christian symbolism and the miraculous. As the Prologue to the work shows, Orosius's brief in writing the *Historiae* was to derive religious significance from events in history (Prol. 10). The battle of Frigidus was no exception; it is in fact the culmination of this philosophy of history. It is 'with the sign of the cross' that Theodosius signals the beginning of battle, and the influence of divine providence is unambiguous as he is 'destined to be victorious'.<sup>701</sup> (7.35.15, p. 345) The decisive moment of the conflict sees a miraculous wind, 'a great and indescribable whirlwind', which blows into the faces of the enemy driving them back, and carrying Theodosius's arrows so they were 'almost never allowed to fall before striking a mark':

But when they had come to contiguous places for joining battle, immediately a great and indescribable whirlwind blew into the faces of the enemy. The darts of our men, which were shot and carried through the air and were borne through the great void farther than any man could throw, were almost never allowed to fall before striking a mark. And furthermore, the unceasing whirlwind struck their faces and breasts of the enemy, now heavily dashing their shields together and taking their breath when it pressed them closely together tightly, it drove them back; the weapons also which they themselves had hurled strongly were caught by the backward force of the wind and, when driven back, transfixing the unfortunate throwers themselves.<sup>702</sup> (7.35.17-18, p. 345)

Theodosius's victory comes with the suggestion that equally the pagan opposition understood the partiality of the divine against them, in the *humanae conscientiae pauor*: 'The fear of human conscience looked to its own good, for, as soon as a small band of their own men was routed, the army of the enemy surrendered to the victorious

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<sup>700</sup> Augustine records that Eugenius and Arbogastes erected statues of Jupiter and gold thunderbolts on the battlefield. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26. The image of Hercules led Eugenius's men according to Theodoret, in direct opposition to 'the Cross of Salvation' under which Theodosius fought. Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 24.149. Rufinus records that Theodosius consulted the monk John of Lycopolis before going to war, where 'great bloodshed' was predicted for both sides. Rufinus, 11.32. Eunapius and similarly Zosimus record the occurrence of an eclipse during the battle. Eunapius, *Fragment* 60; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, 4.58.

<sup>701</sup> 7.35.15, vol. 3, p. 100: ...*fiducialiter arma corripuit solus, sciens se esse non solum, signoque crucis signum proelio dedit ac se in bellum, etiamsi nemo sequeretur, uictor futurus, inmisit*. There are significant correlations between this part of the narrative and Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

<sup>702</sup> 7.35.17-18, vol. 3, pp. 100-1: *At ubi ad contigua inmiscendae pugnae spatia peruentum est, continuo magnus ille et ineffabilis turbo uentorum in ora hostium ruit. Ferebantur per aera spicula missa nostrorum atque ultra mensuram humani iactus per magnum inane portata nusquam propemodum cadere, prisuquam inpingerent, sinebantur. Porro autem turbo continuus ora pectoraque hostium nunc inlisis grauiter scutis euerberabat, nunc inpressis pertinaciter obstructa claudebat, nunc auulsis uiolenter destituta nudabat, nunc oppositis iugiter in terga trudebat; tela etiam, quae ipsi uehementer intorserant, excepta uentis impetu supinata ac retrorsum coacta ipsos infeliciter configebant*.

Theodosius.<sup>703</sup> (7.35.19, p. 345) The trope of bloodless war is returned to in the representation that in Christian times the deaths of only two men, Eugenius and Arbogastes, were enough to end a civil war, ‘not to mention those ten thousand Goths sent ahead by Theodosius whom Arbogastes is reported to have destroyed completely.’<sup>704</sup> (7.35.19, p. 346) This dismissal of Gothic casualties is compounded by the judgement that ‘To have lost these was surely a gain and their defeat a victory.’<sup>705</sup> (7.35.19, p. 346) It is unproblematic for Orosius’s presentation of ‘bloodless war’ not to be comprehensive, even to the number of ten thousand dead. Significantly the value of barbarian life is less than Roman, even at this late stage in the work which anticipates the Romano-Gothic harmony of the conclusion.

Once the narrative of the battle has been related the focus is returned to the apologetic argument, revealing the preceding target within the narrative as pagan: ‘I do not taunt our detractors.’<sup>706</sup> (7.35.20, p. 346) The ultimate purpose of including the conflict with Eugenius and Arbogastes is made clear, as an example to prove that in pre-Christian history war is not peaceable and non-violent as it now is under a Christian empire:

Let them [‘our detractors’, ie. the pagans] set forth a single war, from the time when the City was first founded, which was undertaken with such a pious necessity, accomplished with such divine felicity, settled with such compassionate kindness, in which the battle did not exact heavy slaughter and the victory bloody revenge.<sup>707</sup> (7.35.20, p. 346)

Further evidence is found in the poet Claudian, ‘...a most stubborn pagan’, who Orosius interprets as conceding the influence of the Christian God in the battle: ‘O thou much beloved by God! For thee the sky does battle, And the winds banded together come at the call of the trumpet.’<sup>708</sup> (7.35.21, p. 346) Both Augustine and Orosius include the same quotation from Claudian’s *Panegyricus de tertio consulate Honorii Augusti* written and delivered by Claudian to the emperor Honorius in AD 396.<sup>709</sup> The excerpt

<sup>703</sup> 7.35.19, vol. 3, p. 101: *Prospexit sibi humanae conscientiae pauor: nam continuo sese parua suorum manu fusa uictori Theodosio hostilis prostrauit exercitus.*

<sup>704</sup> 7.35.19, vol. 3, p. 101: *...absque illis decem milibus Gothorum quos praemissos a Theodosio Arbogastes delesse funditus fertur...*

<sup>705</sup> 7.35.19, vol. 3, p. 101: *quos utique perdidisse lucrum et uinci uincere fuit.*

<sup>706</sup> 7.35.20, vol. 3, p. 101: *Non insulto obtrectatoribus nostris.*

<sup>707</sup> 7.35.20, vol. 3, p. 101: *Non insulto obtrectatoribus nostris: unum aliquod ab initio Urbis conditae bellum proferant tam pia necessitate susceptum, tam diuina felicitate confectum, tam clementi benignitate sopitum, ubi nec pugna grauem caedem nec uictoria cruentam exegerit ultionem.*

<sup>708</sup> 7.35.21, vol. 3, p. 102: *‘O nimium dilecte Deo! tibi militat aether, Et coniurati ueniunt ad classica uenti.’*

<sup>709</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 5.26.

from Claudian seeks to increase the impact of the rhetorical point of using pagan arguments against the pagans, that even ‘a most stubborn pagan’ (*paganus peruicacissimus*) could not fail but be convinced that the divine assistance of the Christian God and not the pagan gods was responsible for Theodosius’s victory.<sup>710</sup>

The battle of Frigidus represents the culmination of the Orosian rhetoric against paganism in the *Historiae*. The ideal of Roman Christian imperial authority has been reached in Theodosius in a monarchy of rulership that reflects the monotheism of Christianity. War is now characterised by pious necessity, divine felicity, and compassionate kindness rather than heavy slaughter or bloody revenge like the military conflicts of the past, a situation brought about directly because of ‘the faith of a Christian leader’.<sup>711</sup> (7.35.20, p. 346) Paganism has been defeated, literally and symbolically, by Theodosius, the Christian Orthodox emperor who enshrined his opposition to paganism in law and defeated the idols with the symbols of Christianity during battle. From this point an important textual shift occurs, with the focus no longer on opposing paganism but to assimilating barbarism. The barbarians are now the opponents who demand the textual attention of Orosius; their presence within the empire and position within the text must be dealt with. This historical narrative includes the migration of barbarians into the west in the early fifth century, the rule of Stilicho, the sack of Rome by Alaric, the rule of Honorius and his dealings with the barbarians, the kidnap of Gallia Placidia by the Goths, and the final settlement between Honorius and the Gothic king Wallia. The changing target of the *Historiae* from pagan to barbarian arguably reveals that the most pressing contemporary concern for Orosius was not the pagans but the barbarians. At least according to Orosius’s representation the religious conflict of the empire between pagan and Christian has been resolved by the figure of the Christian emperor. The emperor is the embodiment of Roman imperial success and political stability, but with an extraordinary Christian faith that compliments his secular status, allowing direct communication with the divine, the assumption of an ascetic or saintly role, and the imitation of Christ. In contrast to this resolution the barbarians are a very immediate and pressing threat that must be neutralised through the reassuring discourse of Christian faith as explanation and the

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<sup>710</sup> 7.35.21, p. 346; 7.35.21, vol. 3, p. 102.

<sup>711</sup> 7.35.20, vol. 3, p. 101: ...*haec fidei Christiani ducis...*

continuing trajectory of improvement in the ‘blessing...of Christian times’.<sup>712</sup> (7.43.16, p. 363)

#### 4.1.8 The Continuation of a Christian Roman Empire and the Imperial Succession

The idealised representation of Theodosius as a Christian emperor is not curtailed by his death; Orosius establishes a tangible means of extending this superlative form of Christian imperial authority through the Theodosian dynasty: the ‘glorious descendants’ or ‘progeny’ of Theodosius ‘have ruled over the East and West for successive generations down to the present day’.<sup>713</sup> (7.34.4, p. 341) This legacy is essential to the rhetoric of perpetual improvement which forms the apologetic structure of the text. Additionally it enables the change in direction after the pinnacle of Theodosius’s rule and defeat of paganism to demonstrating the subservience of the barbarians to Roman imperial rule. It is probable that up until the composition of the *Historiae* (ca. AD 417) Orosius would only ever have lived under the rule of either Theodosius or his dynasty.<sup>714</sup> It is therefore an understandable speculation on the part of Orosius to expect the continuation of rulership. His vision of progress and optimism that culminated at the conclusion of the text affirmed that times were better than ever before. The broad perspective of history was projected into the future so that, although mindful of the ‘end of times’ (4.5.12, p. 129), Orosius was nevertheless secure in his anticipation that the good times under the Theodosian dynasty were set to continue.<sup>715</sup> Whether this image of optimism and progress in the early fifth century is accurate is a separate consideration to Orosius’s representation of it as such.

#### 4.1.9 Barbarian and Roman Peace

The division of the empire and the succession of Honorius and Arcadius to imperial power, continuing the Theodosian patriline, enables the incredible culmination of the

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<sup>712</sup> 7.43.16, vol. 3, p. 131: *Ex quo utcumque concesserim, ut licenter Christiana tempora reprehendantur, si quid a conditione mundi usque ad nunc simili factum felicitate doceatur.*

<sup>713</sup> 7.34.4, vol. 3, p. 93: *...huius autem Orientis simul atque Occidentis per succiduas usque ad nunc generationes gloriosa propago dominatur.* See Halsall, (2002).

<sup>714</sup> Theodosius I ruled from AD 379 to 395. He was succeeded on his death by his sons, Arcadius and Honorius who died respectively in 408 and 423, and Theodosius II, son of Arcadius, who ruled until 450. Orosius was described by Augustine to Evodius as a ‘young presbyter’ (*iuvenis presbyteri*) and as a ‘son by age’ (*aetate filius*) to Jerome. Augustine, *Epistula*, 169; *Epistula*, 166.

<sup>715</sup> 4.5.12, vol. 2, p. 20: *in ultimo temporum positi.*



work in the comprehensive surrender of the barbarians to the Romans in the final narrative moments of the work. The Gothic king Wallia, a leader characterised by his fear of God rather than his piety or faith in contrast to Roman imperial authority, made peace with the Romans before dedicating himself to fighting other barbarians in defence of Rome.<sup>716</sup>

Wallia...arranged a very favourable peace with the emperor, Honorius, giving hostages of the highest rank; he returned Placidia, whom he had held in the highest honour and respect while with him, to her brother; and for the security of Rome, he faced danger to himself by fighting against the other tribes that had settled throughout the Spains and conquered them for the Romans.<sup>717</sup> (7.43.12-13, pp. 362-3)

Simultaneous to Wallia's voluntary submission to Rome is the miraculous surrender of the Alans, Vandals and Suebi, who had made 'the same kind of agreement with us' and sent the message to Honorius: "Be at peace with us all, and receive hostages of all; we are in conflict with one another; we conquer for you, but with immortal gain for your state, if we should both perish."<sup>718</sup> (7.43.14, p. 363) Orosius's vision at the end of the *Historiae* prioritises barbarian and Roman peace, securing the ideology of Roman ethnographic superiority projected into the future. The peace made with Honorius echoes the surrender of the Goths to Theodosius over thirty years earlier, but now, in accordance with the trajectory of constant improvement, the barbarian capitulation is wholesale.

The precedence of Roman peace and security is juxtaposed with the continuing internecine barbarian conflict: 'we now learn daily, by frequent and trustworthy messages, that in the Spains wars are being carried on among the barbarian tribes and

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<sup>716</sup> 7.43.11-12, p. 362: 'This man, then – being greatly terrified by the judgment of God, because when in the year before a large band of Goths equipped with arms and ships tried to cross into Africa, being caught in a storm within twelve miles of the Strait of Gades, they had perished in a miserable death; mindful also of that disaster under Alaric when, as the Goths tried to cross into Sicily, they were wretchedly shipwrecked in the sight of their own and drowned'. 7.43.11-12, vol. 3, pp. 129-30: *Hic igitur, territus maxime iudicio Dei quia cum magna superiore abhinc anno Gothorum manus instructa armis nauigiisque transire in Africam moliretur, in duodecim milibus passuum Gaditani freti tempestate correpta, miserabili exitu perierat, memor etiam illius acceptae sub Alarico cladis, cum in Siciliam Gothi transire conati, in conspectu suorum miserabiliter arrepti et demersi sunt...*

<sup>717</sup> 7.43.12-13, vol. 3, p. 130: *...pacem optimam cum Honorio imperatore, datis lectissimis obsidibus, pepigit; Placidiam imperatoris sororem honorifice apud se honesteque habitam fratri reddidit; Romanae securitati periculum suum obtulit, ut aduersum ceteras gentes quae per Hispanias consedissent, sibi pugnaret et Romanis uinceret.*

<sup>718</sup> 7.43.14, vol. 3, p. 130: *Quamuis et ceteri Alanorum, Vandalorum, Sueuorumque reges eodem nobiscum placito depecti forent, mandantes imperatori Honorio: 'Tu cum omnibus pacem habe omniumque obsides accipe: nos nobis configimus, nobis perimus, tibi uincimus, immortalis uero quaestu reipublicae tuae, si utrique pereamus'.*

that slaughter is taking place on both sides'.<sup>719</sup> (7.43.15, p. 363) The *Historiae* ends with the problematic conceit that Roman peace is much more important than peace between the barbarians; what is effectively a civil war in Spain is represented in positive terms. The self-destruction of the barbarians not at Roman expense is portrayed as an advantage for the empire. Orosius relies on his argument as evidence, exhorting the reader to understand his narrative as such: 'Who would have believed these things had not the facts proven them?'<sup>720</sup> (7.43.15, p. 363) The rhetoric following Theodosius's victory at the battle of Frigidus is returned to, with the invitation to 'detractors' or opponents to provide a counter argument demonstrating an earlier period of peace and prosperity not under Christian times:

As a result of this, I would, in any way whatever, permit Christian times to be blamed freely, if, from the founding of the world to the present, any equally fortunate period can be pointed out. We have made manifest, I think, and are showing almost no more by words than by my finger the countless wars which have been stilled, the many usurpers who have been destroyed, and the very savage peoples who have been checked, confined, incorporated, and annihilated with a minimum loss of blood, no struggle, and almost without any slaughter. It is left to our detractors to repent of their deeds and to blush at the truth, and to believe, fear, love and follow the only true God who is powerful, all of whose deeds they have learned to be good, even those which they thing are evil.<sup>721</sup> (7.43.16-18, p. 363)

Orosius's polemical approach deliberately builds upon the weight of the preceding text as evidence, in the full knowledge that this comparison of former bad times with present good times is exactly what the *Historiae* is designed to do.

The closing argument returns the focus to the pagan opposition but in a way that combines the superiority of Christianity over paganism and Rome over the barbarians; somehow Roman hegemony over the barbarian peoples has been subsumed into the ultimate argument against paganism. The evidence for this revisits the trope of bloodless war, the destruction of usurpers, and the 'very savage people' who have been 'checked, confined, incorporated, and annihilated with a minimum loss of blood, no

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<sup>719</sup> 7.43.15, vol. 3, p. 131: *Itaque nunc cottidie apud Hispanias geri bella gentium et agi strages ex alterutro barbarorum crebis certisque nuntiis discimus.*

<sup>720</sup> 7.43.15, vol.3, pp. 130-1: *Quis haec crederet, nisi res doceret?*

<sup>721</sup> 7.43.16-18, vol. 3, p. 131: *Ex quo utcumque concesserim, ut licenter Christiana tempora reprehendantur, si quid a conditione mundi usque ad nunc simili factum felicitate doceatur. Manifestauimus, ut arbitror, atque ostendimus non magis uerbo paene quam digito innumera bella sopita, plurimos extinctos tyrannos, compressas, coangustatas, addictas, exinanitasque immanissimas gentes minimo sanguine, nullo certamine ac paene sine caede. Superest ut obtrectatores nostros molitionum suarum paeniteat ueritatique erubescant, Deumque uerum et solum qui potest omnia credant, timeant, diligant et sequantur, cuius omnia, et quae mala putant, bona esse didicerunt.*

struggle, and almost without any slaughter'.<sup>722</sup> (7.43.17, p. 363) This claim coexists with the acknowledgement of the continuing barbarian wars in Spain, a contradiction which demonstrates the inherent ideology of ethnographic imbalance, with Romanness as pre-eminent. Despite the rhetoric of harmony and integration, close analysis of the final stages of the work reveals that the place of the barbarian in the *Historiae* is never fully reconciled. The desire to round-off the *Historiae* as a piece of apologetic with an idealised vision of peace, harmony, and piety never before realised is fulfilled according to Orosius's polemic, but continual warfare within the empire nevertheless prevents the comprehension of this vision. Regardless of this reality, having secured what is represented as an apologetic success Orosius is able to conclude with an instruction to 'our detractors' (*obtrectatores nostros*) to repent and acknowledge the religious truth of Christianity in 'the only true God who is powerful'.<sup>723</sup> With this final jibe the position of the narrative voice has switched from the position of a Roman textually confronting and integrating the barbarians back to the position of a Christian polemicizing and instructing the pagans. The exhortation to convert is directed against the remaining 'detractors', pagans who have not adopted Christianity, and who are the final anomaly in the apologetic of Orosius; their continued and defiant non-Christian belief after the Incarnation places them, in terms of the text, on the wrong side of time.

#### 4.1.10 Conclusion

This Chapter has been concerned with imperial authority in Book Seven, not only intrinsically but through the prism of authorial methodology. The objective has not been to achieve the most accurate or factual account of Theodosius and his reign, just as this was not Orosius's aim. Instead the Chapter has focused on the approach of the author in his creative rewriting of events at the end of the fourth century, exploring how existing historical narratives are twisted and manipulated according to Orosius's ideological and apologetical position, a position dominated by national, ethnographic, political, and religious concerns. Orosius's version of history in Book Seven charts the trajectory of

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<sup>722</sup> 7.43.17, vol. 3, p. 131: *...conpressas, coangustatas, addictas, exinanitasque immanissimas gentes minimo sanguine, nullo certamine ac paene sine caede.*

<sup>723</sup> 7.43.18, p. 363: 'It is left to our detractors to repent of their deeds and to blush at the truth, and to believe, fear, love and follow the only true God who is powerful, all of whose deeds they have learned to be good, even those which they think are evil. 7.43.18, vol. 3, p. 131: *Superest ut obtrectatores nostros molitionum suarum paeniteat ueritatique erubescant, Deumque uerum et solum qui potest omnia credant, timeant, diligant et sequantur, cuius omnia, et quae mala putant, bona esse didicerunt.*

imperial authority from the first emperor Augustus to Theodosius, the most Christian of Christians. The representation of Augustus was intended to prove the synchronisation of Rome with Christianity and Augustus with Christ. With Theodosius the emphasis is different; instead the exceptional piety of Theodosius is the proven aim of the apologetic. Augustus could not be explicitly designated as a Christian, but following the genealogical succession of emperors and their conversion to Christianity, Theodosius can be, and is presented as a truly Christianised and evolved Roman emperor, the pinnacle of Christian Roman imperial authority in the *Historiae*. This is in alignment with the rhetoric of amelioration and trajectory of constantly improving times; the position of the reign of Theodosius at the conclusion of the work has to prove this scheme. But this necessity is based upon more than temporal coincidence. What directs the portrayal of Theodosius is not always discussed: the version of Nicene Christianity that Theodosius was instrumental in beginning to define, the creation of heterodoxy, and the anti-pagan legislation can be interpreted as underlying the Orosian narrative of Theodosius. Rather than a criticism of Orosius as a deceptive author, this observation is instead an important recognition of the layers behind the text and the intricacies of argument that lie beneath the *Historiae*. The figure of Theodosius functions as a meeting point for the tension of the text; the friction of pagan against Christian and Roman against barbarian are made manifest in the crucible of the emperor. Orosius's ideology of the superiority of Roman and Christian epitomized in Theodosius explains the idealisation of the emperor and his association with the divine, making the emperor, and Orosius's apologetic, unchallengeable.

## 5. Apologetics and the Providence of War

### 5.1.1 Warfare in the *Historiae*

Perhaps more than anything else, the *Historiae* can be described as fundamentally a history of warfare. War is a principal element of the text and the main preoccupation of the narrative.<sup>724</sup> The work can be considered as formulated around what Orosius designates as the first affliction of humanity:

...accordingly you bade me set forth from all the records available of histories and annals whatever instance I have found recorded from the past of the burdens of war or ravages of disease or sorrows of famine or horrors of earthquakes or of unusual floods or dreadful outbreaks of fire or cruel strokes of lightning and storms of hail or even the miseries caused by parricides and shameful deeds, and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.<sup>725</sup> (Prol. 10-11, p. 4)

More than any other this Chapter will engage with the authenticity of this self-definition the text offers in the Prologue, and will examine the *Historiae* through the motif of war, which functions as the prime cause of misery the world suffers, represented as a collective as well as an individual sin, and the one for which humankind is most directly responsible.<sup>726</sup> This Chapter will explore Orosius's apologetic comparison of the past

<sup>724</sup> This is acknowledged but not discussed by Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 101: 'that warfare is ubiquitous is stating the obvious'.

<sup>725</sup> Prologue 10-11, vol. 1, p. 8. – *praeceperas ergo ut, ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis, quaecumque aut bellis grauia aut corrupta morbis aut fame tristia aut terrarum motibus terribilia aut inundationibus aquarum insolita aut eruptionibus ignium metuenda aut ictibus fulminum plagisque grandinum saeua uel etiam parricidiis flagitiisque misera per transacta retro saecula repperissem, ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem.* Van Nuffelen understands that Orosius's emphasis on suffering aligns his text with the apologetic enterprise of *De ciuitate Dei*. Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 39-40. Augustine and Orosius's approaches to disaster are similar: 'What if I had decided to recall and emphasize the disasters which, unlike the devastations and destructions inflicted by warring armies, are not inflicted by men upon each other, but come upon the material world by the action of the elements?...If I had decided to collect such instances of historical fact from all possible sources, when could I have brought the list to an end? And these events all happened in periods before the name of Christ had suppressed any of the futilities of the pagans which destroy all genuine security.' Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 4.2. *Quid, si commemorare uoluisssem et exaggerare illa mala, quae non sibi inuicem homines faciunt, sicut sunt uastationes euersionesque bellantum, sed ex ipsius mundi elementis terrenis accidunt rebus...si haec atque huius modi, quae habet historia, unde possem, colligere uoluisssem, quando finissem? quae illis temporibus euenerunt, antequam Christi nomen ulla istorum uana et uerae saluti perniciose conprimeret.*

<sup>726</sup> This is demonstrated in the narrative of Philip of Macedon's reign: 'For twenty-five years, the fraud, ferocity, and tyranny of one king brought about the burning of cities, the slaughter of men, plundering of wealth, the pillaging of flocks, robbery of the dead, and the enslavement of men.' 3.14.10, p. 98. *Per uiginti et quinque annos incendia ciuitatum, excidia bellorum, subiectiones prouinciarum, caedes*

with the present where human history in pre-Christian times was blighted by the affliction of war. Orosius presents a revisionist version of history where warfare and belligerence are not celebrated; instead the slaughter, violence, enslavement, and tragedy of war is revealed. A firm moral stance on the issue of warfare is taken, investing in an ideology of condemnation that seeks to emphasize the negative both for conquerors and conquered alike. Where war has been a central part of a glorified version of the past, in victory over others, the expansion of empire, and individual heroism and success, Orosius instead takes the opposite view and presents war in the most dire terms, especially in Book Five, which will receive particular analytic attention. This Chapter approaches the *Historiae* through post-colonial theory, arguing that the critique of war and empire was part of the developing and innovative post-colonial discourse in the text. However this discourse was swiftly curtailed with the interweaving of Christianity with imperial authority in the Roman empire, reconciling the difficulty of empire in the creation of a universal and peaceful Christian commonwealth. The concentration on war in the *Historiae* is never neutral and is firmly embedded within a rhetorical argument. Orosius wrote in opposition to previous writers of history who had a different purpose, ‘for whereas they unfold wars, we unfold the miseries of wars.’<sup>727</sup> (3.Preface.1, p. 77) In one brilliant sentence, Orosius encapsulates the very conscious and deliberate difference between his writing of history and those earlier writers whose ethical position on war is the diametric opposite of his own, and which he endeavours to distinguish himself from.

### 5.1.2 Apologetic and the Comparison of Time

The *Historiae* as a text is acutely conscious of time, and a strong division exists between the past, present, and future.<sup>728</sup> Although the language of the past, present and future seems vague, it reflects the language Orosius himself uses and the generalised designation of these distinctions. This allows flexibility and easier comparisons between

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*hominum, opum rapinas, praedas pecorum, mortuorum uenditiones captiuitatesque uiuorum unius regis fraus ferocia et dominatus agitauit.* 3.14.10, vol. 1, p. 161.

<sup>727</sup> 3.Preface.1, vol. 1, p. 134: *...scriptores autem etsi non easdem causas, easdem tamen res habuere propositas: quippe cum illi bella, nos bellorum miserias euoluamus.*

<sup>728</sup> For a discussion of time in the future and eschatology, see Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 153-56. Van Nuffelen argues that there is nothing Millennial about the *Historiae* because eschatology lies beyond its scope. Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 1: ‘...in Orosius, we find the notion that the past is not only the source of lessons, and that, as in Livy, it has a moral purpose, but that it also prepares for the present in which a new historical “epoch” triumphs.’

epochs to be made for rhetorical effect, specifically that time before the Incarnation was very bad, and time after it is ever improving. The *Historiae* is 'at once a narrative of the past and an argument on how to interpret that past...neither can be separated.'<sup>729</sup> The purpose of the work is to demonstrate the suffering and unhappiness of the past in contrast to the present, which is portrayed as much more favourable, an aim achieved largely through the theme of war. This is Orosius's apologetic argument, which was designed to counter contemporary pagan claims that the Gothic sack of Rome in AD 410 was caused by Christianity and the neglect of the pagan gods. The *Historiae* was composed in response to disaster. Reconciliation following the trauma of the sack could be realised in two principal ways. The more disconcerting option would be to question the world-view of the individual and everything that was held to be true. The other would be to create an alternative reality, manipulating what does not fit with selectivity or denial. It is the latter option that seems to be most favoured by Orosius. Rather than admit the full scale of the disaster, he opts to construct an alternative version of events, where the experience of invasion is neutralised by comparison with other disasters in the past, especially the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 BC.<sup>730</sup> Orosius's approach necessitates the employment of binary opposites, most notably of the past juxtaposed with the present, and the present as infinitely better than the past.

### 5.1.3 Past vs. Present

At the outset of the text Orosius represents himself as originally convinced of the pagan argument regarding past and present times, that the present was a period of unmitigated disaster on an unprecedented scale. However on beginning his task of writing the *Historiae* he is thrown into confusion by the evidence he discovers, before being convinced by his own research:

I gave myself to the task and I was especially overcome with confusion, to whom, as I repeatedly considered the matter, the calamities of the present times seemed to boil over

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<sup>729</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 131. Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 59: 'Orosius accepts, even exults in the sufferings that he deems the story of human history, a precondition to a historical theory that sees the present as overcoming the miscreant deeds of the past. All human suffering is wrought by sin, the reason and cause for the nightmare that is human history.'

<sup>730</sup> For a similar argument, see Fear, (2010), p. 12: 'Far from lamenting the sack of Rome, as did his contemporaries, Orosius's solution was to confront the problem it posed for the Faith head on, by denying that there was a problem at all. He makes the bold claim that the sack was of no significance, and goes on to stand on its head the standard pagan view that it had come about because of Rome's neglect of her traditional gods by insisting that its occurrence was, in fact, due to the presence of pagans, not Christians, in the city.'

beyond measure. For I found the days of the past not only equally oppressive as these, but also the more wretched the more distant they are from the solace of true religion.<sup>731</sup>  
(Prologue 13-15, p. 5)

This metanoia, which is defined as the act or process of changing one's mind, is in effect rhetorical posturing. It has two important functions: one, to provide an example for the reader to be similarly erroneous in their belief before being corrected by the evidence of the *Historiae*; and two, as recognised by Van Nuffelen, to establish the necessity of the work in challenging the intuitive perception of the present found among his audience.<sup>732</sup> Orosius argues that the further away from the advent of Christianity, the 'solace of true religion', the worse times are, and from the point of the Incarnation the times are set on a course of constant improvement. A strong division is constructed between the past, which is miserable, and the *tempora Christiana*, demarcated by the Incarnation of Christ, which are blessed and miraculous.<sup>733</sup>

#### 5.1.4 Suffering and Warfare

The approach to the past as full of misery and suffering is exemplified principally through the presentation of warfare and its damaging effects, which are felt most severely in antiquity. That war functions within the wider apologetic argument of the misery of human suffering and the comparison between the past and the present is recognised by Susan Wessel:

Not the geopolitical consequences of war, but rather its miseries and those of the other human afflictions were the subject of his [Orosius's] treatise...the underlying question that drove his narrative was the extent of, and reason for, the unending cycle of human suffering at the hands of other human beings.<sup>734</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> 1.Prologue.13-15, vol. 1, p. 9: *...dedi operam et me ipsum in primis confusione pressi: cui plerumque reputanti super modum exaestuauisse praesentium clades temporum uidebantur. Nactus sum enim praeteritos dies non solum aeque ut hos graues, uerum etiam tanto atrocius miseros quanto longius a remedio uerae religionis alienos...*

<sup>732</sup> Van Nuffelen sees the statement as intended to draw the specifically pagan reader into the narrative in the presentation of the author having shared their views. Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 40. The function of the author as an *exemplum* to be followed does not require a division between a pagan and Christian reader.

<sup>733</sup> 4.6.35, vol. 2, p. 26: *tempora Christiana*.

<sup>734</sup> Wessel, (2008), pp. 350-1. Van Nuffelen repeatedly recognises the comparison between past and present, and the emphasis on misery, but gives no special consideration to the place of war. For example: 'In contrast to the traditional emphasis on the greatness of the past, Orosius is decidedly interested in the woes of the past; all topics are designated by a plural neuter adjective of emotion or pain...This announces a recurrent emphasis in the *Historiae*, where the sequence of time is seen as filled with misery.' Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 39.



The extent to which Orosius's vision of history is governed by war is demonstrated in the moment of self-reflection by the narrative voice in Book Three during the relation of the wars between Rome and various Italic peoples, and the simultaneous wars in Macedonia following the death of Alexander:

I seem to see the tumultuous period of these wars; viewing, as it were, some immense camp through the night from the watchtower of a mountain, I perceive nothing in the great expanse of the field but innumerable camp fires. Thus, throughout the entire kingdom of Macedonia, that is, through all Asia and the greater part of Europe, and even when these fires laid waste especially the places where they had broken out, they disturbed all other lands by the terror of rumour as by a cloud of smoke.<sup>735</sup> (3.23.2-5, p. 112)

Through the metaphor of fire, suddenly flaring up and causing devastation and confusion, war and the impact of conflict is portrayed as universal. It is crucial to recognise that Orosius's presentation of warfare is not disinterested or impartial, but always has a specific ideological investment. In the early books of the *Historiae* before the beginning of Christianity the binary functions simply, that the past was miserable because of war. In later books the equation becomes more complex as the continued existence of war and the expansion of empire based on war has to be negotiated.

### 5.1.5 Narrative Example of Orosius and War

The emphasis on warfare in the *Historiae* can be demonstrated by taking the beginning of the historical narrative as a case-study to highlight the general trend of the text. Having completed his rapid excursus of the physical world, Orosius declares his intention to 'cite the local misfortunes of the individual nations'.<sup>736</sup> (1.2.106, p. 20) The broad descriptor of *locales...miserias* ('local misfortunes') is in fact much more specifically located in the narrative of war. This begins immediately with Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians:

...because of his lust for power waged war abroad, and throughout all Asia for fifty years carried on a bloody life by warfare; starting from the south and the Red Sea, in the extreme north, he laid waste and dominated the shores of the Euxine Sea; and he taught barbaric Scythia, until then unwarlike and inoffensive, to stir up its dormant ferocity, to

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<sup>735</sup> 3.23.2-5, vol. 1, p. 178: *Quorum ego tumultuosissimum tempus ita mihi spectare uideor quasi aliqua immensa castra per noctem de specula montis aspectans, nihil in magno campi spatio praeter innumeros focos cernam. Ita per totum Macedoniae regnum, hoc est per uniuersam Asiam et plurimam Europae partem Libyaeque uel maximam, horrendi subito bellorum globi conluxerunt qui cum ea praecipue loca, in quibus exarsere, populati sunt, reliqua omnia terrore rumoris quasi fumi caligine turbauerunt.*

<sup>736</sup> 1.2.106, vol. 1, p. 42: *Nunc locales gentium singularum miseras.*

realize its strength, and to drink, not as heretofore the milk of domestic animals, but the blood of men, finally to conquer while she was being conquered.<sup>737</sup> (1.4.1-3, p. 21)

Ninus kills the king of the Bactrians, Zoroaster, in battle, before himself being killed during the storming of a city. He is succeeded by his wife Semiramis who keeps the people 'lusting for blood...[and] busy with the slaughter of nations.'<sup>738</sup> (1.4.4, p. 22) The conquering of Ethiopia, 'drenched...with blood' (1.4.5, p. 22), and invasion of India by Semiramis is roundly condemned: '...to persecute and slaughter peoples living in peace, was even more cruel and serious than it is today, because at that time there were neither the incentives for war abroad, nor such great temptation to exercise cupidity at home.'<sup>739</sup> (1.4.6, p. 22) Interspersed with incidences of incest, fire, sodomy, and flood, the narrative of war continues with conflict between king Phoroneus and the Telchines and Caryatii, and then the Parrhasians. India, 'a land already reduced to subjection' suffers further invasion (1.9.4, p. 28), and following a 'severe and long war' the Persian people are formed from a conquered tribe.<sup>740</sup> (1.11.4, p. 32) Orosius readily anticipates the end of his narrative of the Assyrian empire; for 'almost never...had [the Assyrians] peace from offensive and defensive wars' so 'what end will be achieved if we try to recall them by enumerating them to say nothing of describing them?'<sup>741</sup> (1.12.2, p. 33) This statement functions within the rhetorical affectation of preterition as the original intention to relate history is overwhelmed by the magnitude of evil which Orosius 'discovers': 'For in no way could I have at any time passed through so dense a forest of evils unless I were able at times to hasten my progress by frequent leaps.'<sup>742</sup> (1.12.1, p.

<sup>737</sup> 1.4.1-3, vol. 1, p. 43: *...propagandae dominationis libidine arma foras extulit cruentamque uitam quinquaginta annis per totam Asiam bellis egit; a meridie atque a Rubro mari surgens, sub ultimo septentrione Euxinum pontum uastando perdomuit, Scythicamque barbariem, adhunc tunc inbellem et innocentem, torpentem excitare saeuitiam, uires suas nosse, et non lacte iam pecudum sed sanguine hominum uiuere, ad postremum uincere dum uincit edocuit.*

<sup>738</sup> 1.4.4, vol. 1, p. 44: *...audosque iam usu sanguinis populos, per duo et quadraginta annos caedibus gentium exercuit.*

<sup>739</sup> 1.4.5, vol. 1, p. 44: *...sanguine interlitam...* 1.4.6, vol. 1, p. 44: *Quod eo tempore ideo crudelius grauiusque erat quam nunc est persequi et trucidare populos in pace uiuentes, quia tunc apud illos nec foris erant ulla incendia bellorum, nec domi tanta exercitia cupiditatum.*

<sup>740</sup> 1.9.4, vol. 1, p. 53: *...ea tempestate subactam Indiam...* 1.11.4, vol. 1, p. 59.

<sup>741</sup> 1.12.2, vol. 1, p. 59: *Nam cum regum Assyriorum per MCLX annos usque ad Sardanapallum per quinquaginta propemodum reges actum sit et numquam paene uel inferendis uel excipiendis usque in id tempus bellis quieuerit, quis finis reperietur, si ea commemorare numerando, ut non dicam describendo, conemur?*

<sup>742</sup> 1.12.1, vol. 1, p. 59: *Nequaquam enim tam densam aliquando siluam praetergredi possem, nisi etiam crebris interdum saltibus subuolarem.* This rhetorical conceit is established in the Prologue: '...I gave myself to the task [of writing the *Historiae*] and I was especially overcome with confusion, to whom, as I repeatedly considered the matter, the calamities of the present times seemed to boil over beyond measure. For I found the days of the past not only equally oppressive as these, but also the more wretched from the solace of true religion...' Prologue 13-14, p. 5. The meaning is made clearer by Fear's translation (p. 33). Prologue 13-14, vol. 1, p. 9: *...dedi operam et me ipsum in primis confusione pressi: cui plerumque*

33) Although the treatment and purpose of warfare is not static, at almost any point within the text the reader will find war to be the main preoccupation of the narrative, a motif through which history is related.

### 5.1.6 Warfare in Ancient Historiography

Most ancient historiography centres explicitly or implicitly on war.<sup>743</sup> The Histories of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius are formulated around war; all three authors are preoccupied with conflict and the fate of empire in their narratives. Herodotus traced the conflict between Persia and Greece; Thucydides recorded the war between Athens and Sparta, believing it to be ‘a great war and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past’; and the same ideology underlies Polybius’s *Histories*.<sup>744</sup> Virgil’s *Aeneid* famously begins with *arma virumque cano* (‘I sing of arms and a man’), and the ‘civilising mission’ of the aggressive imposition of Roman imperial hegemony is given as an instruction: ‘Roman, remember by your strength to rule / Earth’s peoples – for your arts are to be these: / To pacify, to impose the rule of law, / To spare the conquered, battle down the proud.’<sup>745</sup> In his *Ab urbe condita* Livy forever associates the hegemony of empire with Rome’s unparalleled success in warfare:

Go...tell the Romans that it is the will of heaven that my Rome should be the head of all the world. Let them henceforth cultivate the arts of war, and let them know assuredly,

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*reputanti super modum exaestuauisse praesentium clades temporum uidebantur. Nanctus sum enim praeteritos dies non solum aequae ut hos graues, uerum etiam tanto atrocius miseros quanto longius a remedio uerae religionis alienos.*

<sup>743</sup> Recognised by Levene, (2010), p. 261; and B. D. Shaw, (2001), p. 130.

<sup>744</sup> Herodotus, 1.1: ‘In this book, the result of my inquiries into history, I hope to do two things: to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and of the Asiatic peoples; secondly, and more particularly, to show how the two races came into conflict.’ Thucydides, 1.1: ‘Thucydides the Athenian wrote the history of the war fought between Athens and Sparta, beginning the account at the very outbreak of the war, in the belief that it was going to be a great war and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past.’ Polybius, 1.1: ‘There can surely be nobody so petty or so apathetic in his outlook that he has no desire to discover by what means and under what system of government the Romans succeeded in less than fifty-three years in bringing under rule almost the whole of the inhabited world, an achievement which is without parallel in human history.’ Levene, (2010), p. 261, on Herodotus and Thucydides: ‘The earliest surviving historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, announce the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars respectively as their theme, and even if in practice Herodotus in particular introduces a great deal of other material, it is ultimately ancillary to the narrative of war.’

<sup>745</sup> Virgil, *Aeneis*, 1.1; 6.851-3: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*

and hand down the knowledge to posterity, that no human might can withstand Roman arms.<sup>746</sup>

Despite claiming to provide a more comprehensive account of events over time, in reality war dominates Livy's narrative, presenting the rise of Rome as a seemingly endless catalogue of wars, triumphs and conquests.<sup>747</sup> Livy's work offers a particularly striking example of the assumption that Rome's military superiority was absolute; peoples and kingdoms could be controlled and organized to suit Roman interest, and Rome could continue conquering when and where it desired.<sup>748</sup> The *Historiae* functions as a critique of this viewpoint. Indeed, the text has been described as an epitome of Livy and was certainly a principal source for Orosius.<sup>749</sup> John Matthews made an important observation not only in contextualising the *Historiae* firmly within the early fifth century AD and the immediate aftermath of the sack of Rome, but also in understanding Orosius's text as a reaction against what he terms the 'Heroic Age of Rome':

At the same moment, therefore, that the Flaviani were, in the years after the Fall of Rome, safeguarding, in the security of their Sicilian estates, the books of Livy which celebrated the early growth of the Eternal City, Orosius offered a history which was largely devoted systematically and sourly to denying the entire value of this ancient history, the Heroic Age of Rome.<sup>750</sup>

Although the limited scope of this thesis does not allow for the systematic exploration of the use of Livy by Orosius or a comprehensive *Quellenforschung* of the sources Orosius used, it is important to recognise what, in literary and ideological terms, Orosius was reacting against in his anti-war and anti-imperial philosophy.

<sup>746</sup> Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.16.7: "Abi, nuntia" inquit "Romanis, caelestes ita uelle ut mea Roma caput orbis terrarum sit; proinde rem militarem colant sciantque et ita posteris tradant nullas opes humanas armis Romanis resistere posse."

<sup>747</sup> See Levene, (2010), p. 261.

<sup>748</sup> Recognised by Campbell, (2002), p. 13. To Livy the Romans were so successful in war it was reasonable for them to assume (or at least represent) their divine descendancy from Mars, the god of war. Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, Preface: 'Now, if any nation ought to be allowed to claim a sacred origin and point back to a divine paternity that nation is Rome. For such is her renown in war that when she chooses to represent Mars as her own and her founder's father, the nations of the world accept the statement with the same equanimity with which they accept her dominion.' *et si cui populo licere oportet consecrare origines suas et ad deos referre auctores, ea belli gloria est populo Romano ut cum suum conditorisque sui parentem Martem potissimum ferat, tam et hoc gentes humanae patiantur aequo animo quam imperium patiuntur.*

<sup>749</sup> Potter, (1999), p. 71.

<sup>750</sup> Matthews, (1967), p. 171. Momigliano recognised Augustine as reacting against the pagan contemporary idealisation of the past by undermining the sources of their antiquarianism, primarily in Varro. Similarly Orosius wrote not against the readers of the *Historia Augusta* or of Ammianus but the readers of Livy. Momigliano, (1963), p. 99. Markus understood Orosius to be writing '*contra livianos*'. Markus, (1974), p. 11. Deen Schildgen attributes Orosius's idea that Rome was the world to Livy. Deen Schildgen, (2012), p. 1.

Orosius took the Roman state ideology of conquest and victory, and the republican and imperial notion of war as triumphant and glorious, and reversed it so that war was shown to be bad and bloody, and detrimental to all involved.<sup>751</sup> Fear has recognised that Orosius's emphasis on the suffering of war is in striking contrast to the 'mainstream of Roman historiography', and Torres Rodríguez characterises it as a 'genuine revolution' in the writing of history.<sup>752</sup> Pocock similarly recognises Orosius's literary innovation:

His [Orosius's] exercise, however, is more than a mere heaping up of disaster narratives in a crude score-sheet between past and present. What renders Orosius interesting in the history of historiography is his systematic rejection of the narrative of republican and imperial virtue, and therefore of the premises and principles on which all Roman and nearly all classical history had been written.<sup>753</sup>

Although the bemoaning of warfare was not new in antiquity, the comprehensive and sustained hostility towards war encapsulated in the *Historiae* was unique to Orosius, an innovation that, once aligned with Christianity, would be enormously influential.

### 5.2.1 Subverting the Glorified Past

The Preface to Book Three clarifies Orosius's approach to war, and has a two-fold function: it reveals the difference in his apologetic intention to relate the misery of the past caused by war rather than just the narrative of history through war; and it enables Orosius to distinguish himself as an author and his text from earlier pagan writers:

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<sup>751</sup> For a discussion of war and glory under ancient Rome, see Erskine, (2010), pp. 39-49.

<sup>752</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 23; Torres Rodríguez, (1985), p. 65: 'Este punto de vista de Orosio choca con la tradición histórica greco-romana y constituye una verdadera revolución; en vez de enfocar su vista hacia los que triunfan y dominan, lo hace hacia los que sufren y son víctimas de las ambiciones ajenas. Los historiadores clásicos solo atienden a las gloriosas hazañas *regumque ducumque*, pasando por alto los sufrimientos que imponen a los demás, para ascender al pináculo de su gloria; como el artista solo se preocupa de la belleza de la estatua y le tiene sin cuidado el bloque de mármol que destroza para erigirla; como el que contempla el panorama del mar, solo se preocupa de la superficie, teniéndole sin cuidado lo que pasa en el fondo del mismo. Por eso, en cierto modo la Historia de Orosio resulta de palpitante actualidad, pues no revela hechos totalmente silenciados por los historiadores clásicos; por los cuales siente gran avidez la historiografía moderna.' Orosius's extraordinary approach to war and suffering is particularly highlighted by B. D. Shaw's observation: 'The tendency to understand war in late antiquity from a Roman perspective is also a historiographical tradition, which has been compounded by a pervasive, almost unconscious, desire to share the Roman point of view. So the Battle of Adrianople of 378 is a catastrophe; and the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410 is a political disaster.' B. D. Shaw, (2001), p. 134.

<sup>753</sup> Pocock, (2003), p. 81. Orosius's novel approach to war is not recognised by Momigliano: '...they [Greek and Roman historians] accepted war as inevitable though disagreeable...The Christian historians of antiquity are no exception: the Christian idea of peace did not affect the historical study of the causes of war, at least until the end of the V century A. D. St Augustine's thoughts about peace, remarkable as they are, did not inspire any new type of historical research about causes of war, as his faithful Orosius shows. If anything, the idea of original sin made war appear even more inevitable and natural.' Momigliano, (1984), p. 24.

I take up again the story of the conflicts of past ages...important and innumerable matters were described by a great many writers at very great length; moreover, the writers, although they did not have at their disposal the same materials, for whereas they unfold wars, we unfold the miseries of wars.<sup>754</sup> (3.Pref.1, p. 77)

Orosius's challenge to an idealised image of the Greco-Roman past is made specifically through literature and education, and is directed against pagan writers who manipulated history, providing a version of the past that glorified warfare, violence, and the building of empires. Orosius holds these writers directly responsible for falsifying the past, or at least not telling the whole story. Orosius targets those texts and authors that would have had the most cultural currency within his readership, having been studied as part of an ancient education:

The historian [Orosius] challenges the canonical understanding of the past and the mindset it produces, but from within the education that underpins it. Orosius deploys all the sources and resources of his education, but to show that the idealization of the past, and concomitant rejection of the past, is mistaken.<sup>755</sup>

Orosius's purpose was to reveal the true reality of the past as miserable, and the much-improved present, which he endeavoured to achieve through his challenge to previous pagan writers and their presentation of history.

The Orosian philosophy towards the misrepresentation of the past is most starkly demonstrated by the overtly negative redaction of Homer's *Iliad* in Book One:

But four hundred and thirty years before the founding of the City, the abduction of Helen, the conspiracy of the Greeks, and the gathering of a thousand ships, then the ten years' siege, and finally the renowned destruction of Troy are known generally. In that war, waged most cruelly for ten years, the very renowned poet, Homer, has made clear in his glorious song what nations and how many peoples were caught up and destroyed in that whirlwind, and it is not our place to unfold this story in detail now, for it is both a long task and one that seems known to all. But let those who have learned of the length of that siege, the atrocious slaughter of the city's overthrow, and the bondage, see if they are rightly offended by the condition of present times.<sup>756</sup> (1.17.1-3, pp. 37-8)

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<sup>754</sup> 3.Preface.1, vol. 1, p. 134: *...et nunc necessarie repeto secundum praeceptum tuum de anteactis conflictationibus saeculi...quoniam magna atque innumera copiosissime et a plurimis scripta sunt; scriptores autem etsi non easdem causas, easdem tamen res habuere propositas: quippe cum illi bella, nos bellorum miseriae euoluamus.*

<sup>755</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 10.

<sup>756</sup> 1.17.1-3, vol. 1, p. 67: *At uero ante Urbem conditam CCCCXXX anno raptus Helenae, coniuratio Graecorum et concursus mille nauium, dehinc decennis obsidio ac postremo famosum Troiae excidium praedicatur. In quo bello per decem annos cruentissime gesto quas nationes quantosque populos idem turbo inuoluerit atque adflixerit, Homeros poeta in primus clarus luculentissimo carmine palam fecit, nec per ordinem nunc retexere nostrum est quia et operi longum et omnibus notum uidetur. Verumtamen qui diuturnitatem illius obsidionis, euersionis atrocitatem caedem captiuitatemque didicerunt, uideant si*

The destruction of Troy is included in the *Historiae* chronologically as another historical detail, facilitating the more critical representation of events rather than perpetuating the accepted understanding of the *Iliad* embodying ideals of glory and fame achieved through martial violence. The ‘glorious song’ (*luculentissimo carmine*) of Homer is perceived in wholly negative terms, as a cruel war that lasted ten years before Troy was finally destroyed. Orosius considers the nations involved and the number of peoples ‘caught up and destroyed in that whirlwind’ (*quas nationes quantosque populos idem turbo inuoluerit atque adflixerit*). Once the reader has realised the Orosian perspective of the epic, comprehending the horror of the length of the siege and the atrocious slaughter and bondage entailed, they should consider the condition of the present times and understand which is worse: ‘But let those who have learned of the length of that siege, the atrocious slaughter of the city’s overthrow, and the bondage, see if they are rightly offended by the condition of present times.’ The purpose of Orosius’s diatribe against the texts of antiquity is revealed; to disprove his contemporary opponents who argue that the present is much worse than the past, an accusation motivated by the sack of Rome, and that Christianity is to blame.

Orosius continues Book One by highlighting Virgil’s account of Aeneas’s arrival in Italy, not as a foundation myth for the glorious beginnings of the Roman empire, but as a further example of how past events have been distorted by their retelling in pagan texts:

Furthermore, in the few intervening years, came Aeneas’ arrival in Italy from Troy as a fugitive, the strifes he aroused, the wars he stirred up over a period of three years, the many peoples he involved in hatred and afflicted with destruction, all these have been imprinted in our minds by the instruction of the elementary school.<sup>757</sup> (1.18.1, p. 38)

The myth of the foundation of Rome by Aeneas according to Virgil is elided in the *Historiae* in preference for the ‘twin originators’, Romulus and Remus.<sup>758</sup> Aeneas is

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*recte isto qualiscumque est praesentis temporis statu offenduntur.* Augustine similarly opens Book III of *De civitate Dei* with a discussion of Troy, Homer and Aeneas. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 3.2-4.

<sup>757</sup> 1.18.1, vol. 1, p. 68: *Paucis praeterea annis interuenientibus, Aeneae Troia profugi aduentus in Italiam quae arma commouerit, qualia per triennium bella exciuerit, quantos populis implicuerit odio excidioque adflixerit, ludi litterarii disciplina nostrae quoque memoriae inustum est.*

<sup>758</sup> ‘In the four hundred and fourteenth year after the overthrow of Troy...the city of Rome was founded in Italy by Romulus and Remus, twin originators. Romulus continually stained his rule by parricide and, in a succession of like acts of cruelty...after first killing his grandfather, Numitor, then his brother, Remus, seized the power and founded the City.’ 2.4.1-3, p. 48. *Anno post euersionem Troiae CCCCXIII...urbs Roma in Italia a Romulo et Remo geminis auctoribus condita est. Cuius regnum continuo Romulus parricidio imbuat, parique successu crudelitatis...Itaque Romulus, interfecto primum auo Numitore dehinc*

perceived as a fugitive, an exile from Troy, who brought nothing but conflict, war and death to Italy. Orosius's reasoning behind his choice of author and text from antiquity is to do with familiarity to his reader: exercises in the *ludus litterarius* have burned (*inurere*) Virgil's narrative into the mind, and Homer's epic 'seems known to all' (*omnibus notum uidetur*).<sup>759</sup> It has been argued that by the beginning of the second century AD the system of formal education in the Mediterranean world was fixed within fairly well-defined limits, and the authors that were to be studied had hardened into a standardized list, topped by Homer in Greek and Virgil in Latin.<sup>760</sup> Augustine discusses his literary training in Greek and Latin through the texts of Virgil and Homer, as does Paulinus of Pella who was born around AD 375.<sup>761</sup> Van Nuffelen understands that 'Vergil was the shared cultural baggage of the educated elite of his [Orosius's] age and would remain the bedrock of education for a long time in the Christian West. Orosius thus writes for an audience that shared in this education.'<sup>762</sup> The *Historiae* specifically targets Virgil and Homer because of their cultural familiarity. His textual criticism is designed as a wider challenge to the Greco-Roman cultural tradition of a glorified past.

Orosius's apologetic approach to Virgil and Homer can be contrasted with the approach of the rhetorician Quintilian, to whom these authors were essential reading for a student in the ancient world:

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*Remo fratre, arripuit imperium Urbemque constituit.* 2.4.1-3, vol. 1, p. 90. Romulus is a murderer and Rome is an empire founded on fraternal violence – the Romans are, in a pejorative sense, 'sprung from Romulus'. 5.16.24, p. 205. ...*et Romani, qui se ortos a Romulo scirent...* 5.16.24, vol. 2, p. 123.

<sup>759</sup> A *ludus litterarius* was a school or grammar school was where a teacher would train children in early literacy and perhaps numeracy. Bloomer, (2011), p. 15.

<sup>760</sup> Joyal, McDougall and Yardley, (2009), p. 231: 'The emergence of Christianity as the dominant religion in the Roman Empire had the potential to end this pedagogical continuity. Many of the beliefs, values and practices of the early Christians were, after all, fundamentally at odds with those of the pagan Greeks and Romans. Hence it might be assumed that Christians would have established their own distinct system of education, focusing on the Bible and other Christian texts. This, however, did not happen...Christians studied the same authors and works that their pagan counterparts had read at school in the past and continued to read.' Farrell, (2004), p. 266: 'From what we know of Roman schools, Homer offered a central place in the curriculum.' Marrou, (1956), p. 278: 'First and foremost, of course, came Virgil, the Latin Homer, the poet *par excellence*, study of whom must be the benefit of any liberal culture.' Bonner, (1977), pp. 212-3: 'Whether their master taught both languages or only Greek, the poet whom boys began to study first and foremost was Homer...Once boys were initiated in Homer, it was not long before, in the Latin class, their attention was directed to Virgil, and, first and foremost, the *Aeneid*...Virgil became the Latin school-text *par excellence*, and remained so through the centuries.' See also Al. Cameron, (2011), pp. 567-8; Clark, (2004), pp. 84-5.

<sup>761</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones*, 1.13-14. Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticon*, 73-5: 'I was compelled to read and learn the beliefs of Socrates and the martial fictions of Homer and the wanderings of Ulysses; and then straightaway I was compelled to traverse the books of Virgil too.' *dogmata Socratus et bellica plasmata Homeri / erroneque legens cognoscere cogor Ulixis; / protinus et libros etiam transire Maronis*. According to Osgood, both Augustine and Paulinus were re-evaluating the role of formal education, which had remained the same for hundreds of years, despite Christianity. See Osgood, (2010).

<sup>762</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 42.



Above all, since boys' minds are young and likely to absorb more deeply anything implanted in them when they are immature and totally ignorant, the goal of our pupils' education should be not only eloquence but also, and more importantly, integrity. Accordingly, the accepted practice that reading commence with Homer and Virgil is excellent, though a boy does need more mature judgement to appreciate these poets' finer points (but there is time for this since they will be read more than once). For the time being just let his soul be uplifted by the sublime character of epic poetry; let him draw inspiration from the magnificence of its subject matter; let him be permeated with the most noble ideals.<sup>763</sup>

Like Orosius, Quintilian not only implies that an ancient education was founded on a canon of texts and that there was an 'accepted practice' for learning to read which began with Homer and Virgil, but also that that both works have an ideological cultural investment, that they are intended to impart integrity, inspiration, and noble ideas in their readers. The glorification of the textual canon evident in Quintilian's ideas about education is echoed by Marrou in his representation of Virgil and Homer as 'a treasury of wisdom and beauty buried in the depths of his [an educated man's] memory, lines of which came back to him whenever he needed to express, or insist on, or stand up for, any feeling or idea.'<sup>764</sup> The sentiment encapsulated here is directly opposed by Orosius's reassessment of the past.

Orosius re-evaluates the pagan perception of the past, juxtaposing his overwhelming sense of horror and grief at misfortune, slaughter, and death, with the frivolous fiction of *fabula* ('story' or 'tale'):

Behold, how many actions involving so many provinces, peoples, and cities I have set forth...how I have involved masses of misfortunes. For who will unfold the slaughter of that time, who the deaths in words, or who can equal the grief with tears? Yet these very misfortunes, because they have grown dim by the passing of many centuries, have become exercises for our talents and delightful topics for stories. And yet if anyone applies himself completely with the entire force of his mind to wars and their causes, and furthermore, as if placed in a watchtower, measures both ages as to their conditions, I would easily say that he would judge that these affairs could not be so unfortunately confused and mixed up except by a God angry and estranged, and that present times cannot be composed without a gracious and merciful God.<sup>765</sup> (2.18.4-6, p. 74)

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<sup>763</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1.8.4-6: *Cetera admonitione magna egent, in primis ut tenerae mentes tracturaeque altius quidquid rudibus et omnium ignaris insederit non modo quae diserta sed vel magis quae honesta sunt discant. Ideoque optime institutum est ut ab Homero atque Vergilio lectio inciperet, quamquam ad intellegendas eorum virtutes firmiore iudicio opus est: sed huic rei superest tempus, neque enim semel legentur. Interim et sublimitate heroi carminis animus adsurgat et ex magnitudine rerum spiritum ducat et optimis inbuatur.*

<sup>764</sup> Marrou, (1956), p. 252.

<sup>765</sup> 2.18.4-6, vol. 1, p. 124: *Ecce paruissima pagina uerbisque paucissimus quantos de tot prouinciis populis atque urbibus non magis explicui actus operum quam implicui globos miseriarum: "quis enim*

Orosius argues that the pagan comprehension of history is flawed; the ‘masses of misfortunes’ are not understood according to their true emotional value but have instead ‘grown dim by the passing of many centuries’, assuming a warped sense of worth. The slaughter and death of the past provide ‘exercises for our talents’ (*exercitia ingeniorum*), presumably within an educational context, and ‘delightful topics for stories’ (*oblectamenta fabularum*). Orosius appeals to the reader through logic and reason, exhorting them to pay close attention to war and the causes of war, and to compare the conditions of the past and the present (*qualitatibus tempus permetiatur*) as if from a watchtower (*arce*). Orosius expects the reader to conclude that the troubles and confusion of the past were caused by the anger and hostility of God (*irato atque auersato*), and that the composition of the present is due to the kindness and mercy (*propitio et miserante*) of God. This crucial passage demonstrates that it is specifically through a reconsideration of warfare that the reader is exhorted to revalue the past in a moral sense, comparing the past with the present age. The result is predetermined by Orosius, that the reader will find disorder in the past and harmony in the present, the state of both ages ordained by the divine providence of God.

### 5.2.2 Interpreting the Past through the Present

The exempla of the praiseworthy and fortunate deeds of brave men that are told as pleasant stories from the past are recast by Orosius as the most bitter calamities suffered by others (*amarissimae aliorum calamitates*):<sup>766</sup>

Now let those for whom the worst calamities suffered by others are nothing but sweet stories from the past, assert and proclaim at length that they were the praiseworthy, fortunate deeds of brave men – provided that they never relate their own troubles, if at times they are ever tormented by them, with an excessively tearful tale. But if they wish those who hear about their own complaints to be affected by the same feelings as they themselves felt when they suffered them, let them first not compare the past with the present, but one deed with another and, having heard them, give judgment between the two like arbitrators who have no part in the quarrel.<sup>767</sup> (3.14.8-10, p. 130)

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*cladem illius” temporis, “quis fando funera explicet aut aequare lacrimis possit dolores”? Verumtamen haec ipsa, quia multo interiectu saeculorum exoleuerunt, facta sunt nobis exercitia ingeniorum et oblectamenta fabularum; quamquam si quis intentius adhibeat animum sesque toto mentis adfectu ipsis paene causis bellisque permisceat ac rursus uelut in arce spectaculi constitutus utrumque in suis qualitatibus tempus permetiatur, facile dixerim eum iudicaturum neque illa nisi irato atque auersato Deo posse tam infeliciter perturbari ac permisceri, neque ista sic nisi propitio et miserante componi.*

<sup>766</sup> See Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 63-93 for an extended discussion of exempla and the *Historiae*.

<sup>767</sup> Fear’s translation is superior to Deferrari’s here and has been used. Deferrari includes the instruction not to compare the past with the present (*non praesentibus praeterita*) but misses out the connected

The interjection comes within the historical narrative of Philip of Macedon who is represented in overtly negative terms. Orosius strives to remove all elements of heroism or laudability from his narrative: during his reign Philip ‘heaped up piles of every kind of sorrow and amassed crimes of every kind.’<sup>768</sup> (3.12.1, p. 90) Orosius’s appeal for objectivity in his request that arbitrators or judges (*arbitri*) who are not involved in the debate should decide in comparing deed with deed rather than the past with present, seems to be immediately contradicted by the summation of Philip’s reign:

For twenty-five years, the fraud, ferocity, and tyranny of one king brought about the burning of cities, the slaughter of men, plundering of wealth, the pillaging of flocks, robbery of the dead, and the enslavement of men.<sup>769</sup> (3.14.10, p. 98)

But rather than countermand the objectivity required Orosius is instead providing evidence for the debate following his own criterion, that is according to the deeds or events (*gesta*) that occurred under Philip’s rule rather than the comparison of past with present. Orosius holds a mirror to the ‘sweet stories’ and ‘fortunate deeds of brave men’, subverting the traditional glorious version of the past and revealing its true nature to his audience and opponents.<sup>770</sup>

### 5.2.3 The Numbered Dead: Warfare and Statistics

Orosius’s rhetorical argument which aims to reverse the glorification of war has a noticeable characteristic; where possible, statistics are given, most significantly for the

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instruction to instead compare one deed with another (*sed gestis gesta conparent*). This elision changes the meaning of the passage considerably, and Deferrari’s translation makes less sense because of it. 3.14.8-10, vol. 1, p. 161: *Adserant nunc multisque haec uocibus efferant quasi uirorum fortium laudes et facta felicia, quibus amarissimae aliorum calamitates in dulces fabulas cedunt, si tamen numquam ipsi iniurias, quibus aliquando uexantur, relatu tristiore deplorant. Si uero propriis querimoniis tantum alios audientes adfici uolunt, quantum ipsi perpetiendo senserunt, prius ipsi non praesentibus praeterita sed gestis gesta conparent et utraque ex auditu uelut alienorum arbitri iudicent.* Deferrari translates this as: ‘Let people now declare and set forth with a multitude of voices these events as the praiseworthy and fortunate deeds of brave men; for them the bitterest calamities of others become pleasant stories, if, however, they themselves never deplore with a rather sad report the injuries by which they are sometimes distressed. But if they wish others, when they hear them, to be affected by their complaints as much as they themselves felt on suffering them, first let them not compare past deeds, and let the judges decide both according to the evidence of strangers.’ 3.14.8-10, p. 98.

<sup>768</sup> 3.12.1, vol. 1, p. 152: *...tenuit quibus hos omnes acerbitatum aceruos cunctasque malorum moles struxit.*

<sup>769</sup> 3.14.10, vol. 1, p. 161: *Per uiginti et quinque annos incendia ciuitatum, excidia bellorum, subiectiones prouinciarum, caedes hominum, opum rapinas, praedas pecorum, mortuorum uenditiones captiuitatesque uiuorum unius regis fraus ferocia et dominatus agitauit.*

<sup>770</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 9: ‘Orosius’ intention is not so much the exposition of a Christian theology of history as an attempt to destabilize the traditional Roman view of the past as glorious and praiseworthy – a view that makes it hard for elite Romans to see the present in its true colours.’

number of people killed, captured or wounded. A typical example of this format can be taken from Book Four: ‘Twenty thousand Carthaginians were killed in this battle; also twenty six elephants were slain, and one hundred and four were captured, and when led through Italy furnished a great spectacle to the Italian peoples.’<sup>771</sup> (4.9.15, p. 141) Book Four Chapter Nine provides a wider example for the use and frequency of statistics in the *Historiae*: in conflict with the Carthaginians 30,000 Roman soldiers were killed, Regulus, ‘the renowned leader’, was captured with 500 hundred men, and in the tenth year of the Punic war the Carthaginians celebrated a ‘renowned triumph’. 300 ships were mobilised in response by the Romans and then the Carthaginians, with 104 Carthaginian ships sunk, 30 captured, and 35,000 troops killed. Rome’s casualties were nine ships sunk and 1,100 men killed. Battle was subsequently fought and the Carthaginians lost 9000 soldiers. Rome’s fleet was then shipwrecked on its return with 220 lost out of 300 and the remaining 80 surviving after loosing their cargo.<sup>772</sup> (4.9.3-9, pp. 139-40) The use of statistics is remarkable primarily because of their prominence; the paraphrase of Book Four Chapter Nine above demonstrates the level of concentration. Their inclusion is also unusual, not necessarily in the provision of

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<sup>771</sup> 4.9.15, vol. 2, p. 36: *...XX milia Carthaginiensium in eo proelio caesa sunt, elephanti quoque sex et uiginti interfecti centum et quattuor capti et per Italiam ducti maximum Italicis gentibus spectaculum praebuerunt.*

<sup>772</sup> 4.9.3-9, pp. 139-40: ‘...a great destruction of Roman forces took place, for thirty thousand of their soldiers were laid low in the meeting at that time. Regulus, the renowned leader, together with five hundred men were captured and cast into chains, and, finally, in the tenth year of the Punic War, he gave the Carthaginians a renowned triumph...Thus, Aemilius Paulus and Fulvius Nobilior, consuls, when the captivity of Regulus and the slaughter of the Roman army were reported, being ordered to cross over into Africa with a fleet of three hundred ships, attacked Clybea. On this account, the Carthaginians arrived immediately with a similar fleet, and the naval struggle could not have been put off. One hundred and four ships of the Carthaginians were sunk; thirty with their soldiers were captured; and in addition thirty-five thousand were slain; but nine of the ships of the Romans were sunk and one thousand one hundred soldiers perished. The two Hannos, the Punic generals, again came together there with a large army and, after joining battle, lost nine thousand soldiers. But, inasmuch as there never was at that time a long period of good fortune among the Romans and whatever were their successes, these were overwhelmed immediately by heavy misfortunes, when the Roman fleet loaded with booty was returning to Italy, it was crushed by an unspeakable wreckage, for, of the three hundred ships, two hundred and twenty were destroyed, eight barely escaped by throwing their cargoes overboard.’ 4.9.3-9, vol. 2, pp. 33-4: *Ingens ibi ruina Romanorum uirum fuit: nam triginta milia militum Romanorum in illa tunc congressione prostrata sunt. Regulus ille dux nobilis cum quingentis uiris captus est et in catenas coniectus decimo demum anno Punici belli nobilem triumphum Carthaginiensibus praebuit....Igitur Aemilius Paulus et Fulvius Nobilior consules audita captiuitate Regulis et clade exercitus Romani transire in Africam cum classe trecentarum nauium iussi Clypeam petunt. Eo confestim Carthaginienses cum pari classe uenerunt; nec differri potuit nauale certamen. Centum et quattuor naues Carthaginiensium demersae, triginta cum pugnatoribus captae, praeterea triginta et quinque milia militum ex ipsis caesa sunt; Romanorum autem nouem nauibus depressis mille centum periere milites. Consules apud Clypeam castra posuerunt. Duo Hannones imperatores Poenorum eo rursus cum magno exercitu conuenerunt proelioque commisso nouem milia militum perdiderunt. Sed – ut tunc apud Romanos numquam diuturna felicitas erat et qualescumque successus magnis continuo malorum molibus obruebantur – cum Romana classis ad Italiam praedis onusta remearet, infando naufragio euersa est: nam de trecentis nauibus duecentae uiginti perierunt, octoginta uix abiectis oneribus liberatae sunt.*

statistics in itself but with a frequency that is sustained throughout the text. The emphasis on statistics conveys an impression of precision and factuality that determines Orosius's narrative as difficult to challenge; they are intended to make the narrative appear to be more truthful.

Statistics are used not only to make the *Historiae* appear more trustworthy, but also to discredit pagan historians as deceitful and fallacious, as discussed in Chapter One.<sup>773</sup> At numerous points in the text Orosius attacks the suppression of the true statistics of war and the misrepresentation of war as glorified and honourable.<sup>774</sup> Orosius attributes the suppression of statistics to the differing methodologies of other writers; because they are more concerned with 'the business of giving praise' (*proposito sibi magis laudandi negotio*) they would not record the 'great numbers of miseries', 'lest they offend those for whom, and likewise about whom, they described these events, and lest they seem to terrify their hearers by examples from the past rather than to instruct them.'<sup>775</sup> (4.5.10-11, p. 129) The pagan construction of history is deficient as it is conditioned to acclaim Roman victories; it is through the 'shamelessness of lying' (*impudentia mentiendi*) that the number of the dead among the enemy is increased whilst the number of dead on the

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<sup>773</sup> See 1.2.6.3, 'Truthful Statistics'. See also Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 69: '...as Orosius remarks, ancient (given his apologetic slant, that label equals pagan) historians systematically leave out the number of dead on the Roman side so as to enhance the glory of the victory – except when remarkably few actually fell in battle. Over-determined by their education, contemporary pagans have no idea what real suffering is and how much blood the rise of Rome has cost.'

<sup>774</sup> See specifically 4.1.12-13, 5.3.4, and 4.20.7-10, as discussed in Chapter One. The distorted morality of pagan historians as represented by Orosius is recognised Van Nuffelen, (2012), pp. 62-3: 'Developing a critique already voiced by Augustine, Orosius accuses his pagan adversaries of putting glory above everything else. The number of dead does not count, as long as wars add to the glory of Rome...In such a skewed rhetorical universe, the *magnitudo laudis* is determined by the *magnitudo sceleris*.'

<sup>775</sup> 4.5.10-13, p. 129: 'Behold the events and their great number which I have enumerated as having taken place continuously year by year, during which surely rarely, or almost never, did nothing tragic occur, and this, when these same writers, being more concerned with the business of giving praise, shied away from great numbers of miseries, lest they offend those for whom, and likewise about whom, they described these events, and lest they seem to terrify their hearers by examples from the past rather than to instruct them. Furthermore, we who are placed at the end of these times are not able to know the calamities of the Romans except through those who have praised the Romans. Thence, it may be understood how numerous those happenings were which were purposely suppressed because of their horrors when so many are discovered which were able to come forth so faintly amidst praises.' 4.5.10-13, vol. 2, pp. 19-20: *Ecce continuatim quae et quanta numeramus accidisse annis singulis plurima, inter quos certe raro aut paene nullo nihil triste gestum, et hoc, cum idem scriptores proposito sibi magis laudandi negotio cauerent numerositates miseriarum, ne eosdem quibus haec et de quibus scribebantur offenderent auditoresque suos exemplis praeteritorum terrere potius quam instituere uiderentur. Porro autem nos in ultimo temporum positi mala Romanorum scire non possumus nisi per eos qui laudauere Romanos: ex quo intellegi datur quanta illa fuerint quae studio propter horrorem repressa sunt, cum tanta inueniantur quae tenuiter inter laudes emanare potuerunt.*

winning (invariably Roman) side is reduced or suppressed altogether.<sup>776</sup> (4.20.7-10, pp. 162-3) Orosius takes the opposite approach; he is seemingly unconcerned to terrify his reader, and actively wants to shock and educate his audience in his presentation of the reality of war that reveals huge numbers of injured and dead.

Using the rhetorical device of *subiectio*, posing a question and providing an answer, to strengthen his point, Orosius reveals his historical methodology in relaying past events, emphasizing the importance of statistics, whilst simultaneously criticizing previous writers for not completing their task properly:

Who, I ask, will unfold in words the one war of these two cities which was waged for twenty-three years; how many kings of the Carthaginians; how many consuls of the Romans; how many army battle lines; how great a number of ships it brought together, dispersed, and crushed? And then, at last, these seem to have been examined carefully, let judgement be passed on present events.<sup>777</sup> (4.11.4, p. 143)

Following the question ‘who...will unfold in words’, the implication is that no writer has yet done so, and it will be Orosius who provides a complete historical narrative that includes numerical information. Fear has noted the close resemblance of this passage with Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* in the treatment of the same moment of history, the Punic wars.<sup>778</sup> Augustine’s approach is slightly different, as he is using the technique of *subiectio* not to imply that he will provide the missing statistics, but that the numbers are so great they are incalculable:

In the Punic wars, again, when victory hung so long in the balance between the two kingdoms, when two powerful nations were straining every nerve and using all their

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<sup>776</sup> 4.20.7-10, pp. 162-3: ‘The inconsistency among the writers is surely a falsehood, but the cause of the falsehood is certainly flattery, for they are eager to pile up the praises of the victor and to extol the courage of the fatherland for present and future generations. Otherwise, if the number had not been investigated, whatever it had been would not have been expressed. But if it is glorious for a general and the fatherland to have killed a large number of the enemy, how much more joyful can it seem to the fatherland and happier to the commander to have lost none or very few of his men. Thus, it is very clear that this takes place with the like shamelessness of lying, by which an addition is made to the number of the enemy killed, and also the loss suffered by the allies are diminished or even completely overlooked.’ 4.20.7-10, vol. 2, pp. 62-3: *Sed haec uarietas scriptorum utique fallacia est; fallaciae autem causa profecto adulatio est, dum uictoris laudes accumulare uirtutemque patriae extollere uel praesentibus uel posteris student: alioquin, si inquisitus non fuisset numerus, nec qualiscumque fuisset expressus. Quodsi gloriosum est duci et patriae plurimos hostium peremisse, quanto magis laetum patriae et duci beatum potest uideri suorum uel nullos uel paucissimos perdidisse. Ita lucidissime patet quia simili impudentia mentiendi qua occisorum hostium numero adiicitur, sociorum quoque amissorum damna minuuntur, uel etiam omnino reticentur.* This passage is analysed in 1.2.6.3, ‘Truthful Statistics’, p. 67.

<sup>777</sup> 4.11.4, vol. 2, p. 38: *Quis, rogo, duarum ciuitatum unum bellum per annos tres et uiginti gestum fando explicet, quot reges Carthaginiensium, quot consules Romanorum, quot agmina exercituum, quantum numerum nauium contraxerit profligarit oppresserit? et tunc demum, si illa ad plenum perpensa uideantur, de praesentibus iudicetur.* Fear comments on the allusion to Vergil’s *Aeneid*. Fear, p. 178, fn. 140.

<sup>778</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 178, fn. 141.

resources against one another, how many smaller kingdoms were crushed, how many large and flourishing cities were demolished, how many states were overwhelmed and ruined, how many districts and lands far and near were desolated! How often were the victors on either side vanquished! What multitudes of men, both of those actually in arms and of others, were destroyed! What huge navies, too, were crippled in engagements, or were sunk by every kind of marine disaster!<sup>779</sup>

Augustine concludes: 'If I were to recall and relate those calamities, I should turn into just another chronicler.'<sup>780</sup> The differing approaches of the two authors to the same point in the past reveals the dissimilarity in their methodology; Augustine is disparaging of the task of constructing a historical narrative without the philosophy behind it, whilst Orosius can be 'just another chronicler' in willingly furnishing his account with statistics, but also investing heavily in the rhetorical argument that gives purpose to his work. The significance of a comprehensive account of history to Orosius is made clear: it is only once all the facts of the past are known that judgement can be passed on the present (*si illa ad plenum perpensa uideantur, de praesentibus iudicetur*).<sup>781</sup> In relaying historical events accompanied by statistics, particularly those associated with warfare, Orosius is facilitating the comparison between a miserable past and an improved present, fundamentally that the disasters of war in the past were much greater than in current times. Orosius is not simply depicting the past; he is highlighting its terrible nature in order to persuade his audience that they have misinterpreted the past, and that pagan writers of history are responsible. The *Historiae* is at once a narrative of the past and an argument on how to interpret that past.<sup>782</sup> Representing the disasters of war in the loss of life, injury, and captivity through statistics provides crucial evidence for this argument.

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<sup>779</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 3.18: *Iam uero Punicis bellis, cum inter utrumque imperium uictoria diu anceps atque incerta penderet populique duo praeualidi impetus in alterutrum fortissimos et opulentissimos agerent, quot minutiora regna contrita sunt! quae urbes amplae nobilesque deletae, quot adflictae, quot perditae ciuitates! Quam longe lateque tot regiones terraeque uastate sunt! Quotiens uicti hinc atque inde uictores! Quid hominum concumptum est uel pugnantium militum uel ab armis uacantium populorum! Quanta uis nauium marinis etiam proeliis oppressa et diuersarum tempestatum uarietate submersa est!*

<sup>780</sup> Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 3.18: *Si enarrare uel commemorare conemur, nihil aliud quam scriptores etiam nos erimus historiae.*

<sup>781</sup> See quotation above. 5.11.4, vol. 2, p. 38.

<sup>782</sup> As recognised by Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 131.

### 5.3.1 Warfare, the Comparison of Time, and Book Five

Book Five is of particular significance in examining the comparison of time as it presents the pre-Christian past in a paradigmatic sense, as it is intended to be understood; it is a case study for the most truthful and accurate interpretation of history, in contrast to previous pagan interpretations which have substantially misunderstood the past. As Van Nuffelen has recognised, Orosius claims a unique perspective on the past that corrects and improves traditional alternatives:

Orosius pretends to have identified why his contemporaries fail to see the present in its true colours: their rhetorical education has inculcated [in] (*sic*) them a mistaken, majestic view of the past. He hence argues that the great exempla of the past are in fact far less glorious than they seem, and that he is the only historian who puts forward the facts. He thus suggests that he is the only one who lives up to what classical historiography had set as its task, namely to tell the truth. Undermining the traditional, glorious view of the past by omitting traditional good exempla, Orosius highlights and reinterprets negative exempla so as to show what the past really looked like.<sup>783</sup>

The *Historiae* rewrites history from an intrinsically different position, where warfare and belligerence are not celebrated, but instead the slaughter, occupation of foreign territory, enslavement, and tragedy of war is revealed. Where war has been a central part of a glorified version of the past, in victory over others, the expansion of empire, and individual heroism and success, Orosius instead takes the opposite view and presents war in the most dire terms in Book Five.

### 5.3.2 An Alternative Perspective on the Past

The apologetic discourse of Book Five which reviles the past and argues against the benefits of warfare is established immediately, with the opening of the Book highlighting the perspective that is condemned:

So I think that they will say: ‘Has there ever been a happier period than those times in which were continuous triumphs, famous victories, rich booty, celebrated processions, and when great kings and conquered peoples were driven in a long line before the chariot?’<sup>784</sup> (5.1.2, p. 173)

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<sup>783</sup> Van Nuffelen, (2012), p. 20.

<sup>784</sup> 5.1.2, vol. 2, p. 82: *...unde arbitror esse dicturos: “ecquid his temporibus beatius, quibus continui triumphi, celebres uictoriae, diuites praedae, nobiles pompae, magni ante currum reges et longo ordine uictae gentes agebantur?”*



Orosius reverses the positive perception of war, that Roman victories have generally been understood as beneficial; with careful scrutiny (*diligenter adtendant*), it is evident that the opposite is true:

I realise that some people in the light of these events can be moved by the fact that Roman victories, with the overthrow of many peoples and cities, multiplied. And yet, if they weigh the facts carefully, they will discover that more harm than good resulted. For so many wars, against slaves, allies, citizens, and fugitives, surely bringing no gains but great miseries, are not to be weighed lightly.<sup>785</sup> (5.1.1, p. 173)

In arguing that warfare does not bring benefit but only suffering Orosius presents himself as conscious that he is contravening a widely-held opinion and one that is believed by his opponents. In clear and transparent terms Orosius offers both sides of the disagreement about the correct historical perspective of the past:

To these it shall be answered briefly that they are accustomed to plead for certain times and we to have instituted discussion in behalf of the same times, which times it is established are attributed, not only to one city, but are common to the whole world.<sup>786</sup> (5.1.3, p. 173)

Here the narrative voice explicitly recognises that an alternative perspective on early and mid-Republican Roman history is being proposed. The subject, his opponents, is deliberately vague, referred to initially as *aliquantos*, ‘a number of men’ and afterwards implied.<sup>787</sup> It is the same times, *isdem temporibus*, which Orosius has ‘instituted discussion about’ or ‘written a tract about’ in order to argue against the traditional pagan interpretation of the glorious past characterised by victory in war.<sup>788</sup> (5.1.3, p. 173) The language operates in contrasting binaries, one perspective against another, pagan against Christian, Rome against the world, and the fortune of the conquerors against the misfortune of the conquered.

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<sup>785</sup> 5.1.1, vol. 2, p. 82: *Scio aliquantos post haec deinceps permoueri posse, quod uictoriae Romanae multarum gentium et ciuitatem strage crebrescunt. Quamquam, si diligenter adtendant, plus damni inuenient accidisse quam commodi. Neque enim parui pendenda sunt tot bella seruilia, socialia, ciuilia, fugitiuorum, nullorum utique fructuum et magnarum tamen miseriarum.*

<sup>786</sup> 5.1.3, vol. 2, p. 82: *Quibus breuiter respondebitur et ipsos de temporibus solere causari, et nos pro isdem temporibus instituisse sermonem, quae tempora non uni tantum urbi adtributa sed Orbi uniuerso constat esse communia.*

<sup>787</sup> 5.1.1, p. 173; 5.1.1, vol. 2, p. 82.

<sup>788</sup> 5.1.3, vol. 2, p. 82. Deferrari translates *instituisse sermonem* as ‘instituted discussion about’ whilst Fear has ‘written a tract about’. Fear, (2010), p. 206.

### 5.3.3 Post-colonialism and the *Historiae*

The idea of the *Historiae* as a post-colonial text is not entirely new, but it is seldom recognised and has not been adequately developed.<sup>789</sup> This understanding of the text requires greater historical retrospection than is usual; in post-colonial theory Britain rather than Rome is typically assumed to be the colonial power. But colonialism began before the British empire, and modern criticism has been slow in the general application of post-colonial theory to the ancient world. This is recognised by Mattingly, who highlights the uncritical reception of Roman imperial authority within Roman history and archaeology, where the ‘sinister side of power’, the subjugation of conquered peoples, is habitually ignored.<sup>790</sup> It is true that ancient and modern cultural critical values are not that same, and it is possible to argue that the application of a modern theory to the ancient world risks anachronism. However the consideration of the Roman world through the prism of post-colonialism is not intended as a condemnation of ancient attitudes to empire; instead it is designed to encourage a reconsideration of the voiceless, of those implicated in history but not represented by it, and facilitate the reinterpretation of the past in a way that perhaps challenges the homogenous perspective of the ancient authors whose works survive. To ignore post-colonial theory and claim irrelevance to the ancient world risks reinscribing the imperialist and nationalist paradigms that post-colonialism is designed to challenge.

To see Orosius as a burgeoning post-colonial writer does not imply that there was an achieved state beyond colonialism in the early fifth century AD; the ‘post’ is not necessarily temporal, and does not necessarily entail the departure of the imperial power.<sup>791</sup> The *Historiae* can be understood as post-colonial according to the broad definition of the term given by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, covering ‘all the culture

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<sup>789</sup> See Hiatt, (2005), p. 60, and Pocock, (2003), p. 82.

<sup>790</sup> Mattingly, (2011), p. 20: ‘...recent approaches to the study of imperialism in the modern period lay greater stress on evaluating both the positive and negative impacts of imperialism on subject peoples than has habitually been the case in Roman studies. There is still too much of a tendency in writing on the Roman Empire to ignore the sinister side of its power and to assume that the best motivations lay behind its operation. Overall, both Roman history and Roman archaeology remain relatively undertheorized disciplines. For instance, the twenty-first-century reception of the messages of power and majesty from Roman times is still handled somewhat uncritically.’ Goff argues persuasively for the necessity of applying post-colonial theory to the field of classics. Goff, (2005), pp. 6-19.

<sup>791</sup> Recognised by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin: ‘It [the term post-colonial] has occasionally been employed...to distinguish between the periods before and after independence (‘colonial period’ and ‘post-colonial period’).’ Ashcroft et al, (1989), p. 1. For the opposite view, as well as the assumption of British colonial power rather than any other, see Edwards, (2008), p. 9: ‘For the end of Empire marks the beginning of postcolonialism, and, as such, the political independence of Britain’s colonies.’

affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.’<sup>792</sup> In accordance with this definition, and most importantly with the recognition Orosius gives to the nonconsensual nature of Roman imperialism, the *Historiae* can be located within the post-colonial category.<sup>793</sup> Due to the constraints of the thesis it will not be possible to define exhaustively ‘post-colonialism’, discuss the field of post-colonial studies or to survey post-colonial criticism. The literature on post-colonialism is vast, and the field is subject to fierce debate. Critics cannot decide on a definition of the term ‘post-colonial’;<sup>794</sup> even agreement on the place (or not) of the hyphen cannot be reached.<sup>795</sup> Instead, in accord with the definition offered above, this research considers how the *Historiae* is a post-colonial text and explores the post-colonial element therein.

### 5.3.4 The Post-colonial Voice

An understanding of the *Historiae* as a post-colonial text is legitimized by Orosius’s perspective on the past, which focuses on the evils of empire, specifically the Roman empire, and the cost of hegemony for conquered nations, which is achieved through war. The military victories of Rome, rather than being celebrated, are condemned as the consequences for the victims are given precedence: ‘Behold, then, how happily Rome conquers, to the extent that whatever is outside Rome is unhappily conquered.’<sup>796</sup> (5.1.3, p. 173) The mindset that understands triumphs, victories, the acquisition of booty, and

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<sup>792</sup> Ashcroft et al, (1989), p. 2.

<sup>793</sup> Similarly Goff: ‘Thus postcolonial literature is often recognised by its focus on displacement, in tales of exile and deracination; by its interrogation of the notion of identity; and by its deliberate impurity of language, genre and/or style.’ Goff, (2005), p. 3. Boehmer, (1995), p. 3: ‘postcolonial writers [have] sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization – the myths of power, the race of classifications, the imagery of subordination. Postcolonial literature, therefore, is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire.’

<sup>794</sup> For varying interpretations of post-colonialism, see Goff, (2005), pp. 1-5. For Loomba, the word ‘cannot be used in any single sense’ because decolonisation has ‘spanned three centuries, ranging from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to the 1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique.’ Loomba, (1998), pp. 7-8. Moore-Gilbert identifies the wide application of the term as being problematic: ‘...the problem derives from the fact that the term has been so variously applied to such different kinds of historical moments, geographical regions, cultural identities, political predicaments and affiliations, and reading practices. As a consequence, there has been increasingly heated, even bitter, contestation of the legitimacy of seeing certain regions, periods, socio-political formations and cultural practices as ‘genuinely’ postcolonial.’ Moore-Gilbert, (1997), p. 11. Punter challenges the very use of the term: ‘The question thus raised is one that strikes at the very heart of the postcolonial, namely, whether it is politically accurate or helpful to use the term ‘postcolonial’ at all in a world where the ending of formal colonial status has in most cases succeeded only in prolonging economic subjugation and indeed in many cases in intensifying economic differences between the industrialized nations and those other parts of the world for which there is, indeed, not even an agreed-upon name.’ Punter, (2000), p. 18.

<sup>795</sup> See McLeod: (2007), p. 9; (2000), p. 5 and Ashcroft et al, (2002), pp. 187-8.

<sup>796</sup> 5.1.3, vol. 2, p. 82: *Ecce quam feliciter Roma uincit tam infelicitur quidquid extra Romam est uincitur.*

subjugation of other peoples in positive terms is challenged in an alternative representation of the past. Orosius's approach constitutes an important shift in the historiography of empire, in the articulation of a more nuanced and balanced perspective with a developing post-colonial discourse at this early historical point in the fifth century AD. The progressive nature of the *Historiae* is recognised by J. G. A. Pocock, who describes the *Historiae* as 'postantique':

Orosius is a fierce critic of what we should term imperialism; the values of his criticism are not the same as ours, but he shares with contemporary post-colonial writers a determination to tell the story of empire from the bottom up. This lends his writing an air curiously postmodern, perhaps we should say postantique; it is as if we were reading the subaltern studies of the ancient world.<sup>797</sup>

Powerful contemporary accounts of the destructive consequences of empire are rare; in the expansion and control of territory it was seldom recognised that Rome had been the aggressor.<sup>798</sup> It was more common to find the representation that wars were fought defensively to suppress enemies who were considered to be a threat, as expressed by Cicero: 'The only excuse...for going to war is that we may live in peace unharmed.'<sup>799</sup> Cicero's rationale was echoed by the Greek historian Polybius, writing in the second century: 'The Romans took special care not to give the impression of beginning an unjust war or in undertaking wars to be laying hands upon their neighbours, but always to seem to be defending themselves and compelled to go to war.'<sup>800</sup> The concept of a 'just war', *iustum bellum*, supposed that war was defensive in nature and received

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<sup>797</sup> Pocock, (2003), p. 82.

<sup>798</sup> Kelly, (2006), p. 19.

<sup>799</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.35: *Quare suscipienda quidem bella sunt ob eam causam, ut sine iniuria in pace vivatur*. See also Cicero, *De republica*, 3.23: '...a war is never undertaken by the ideal State, except in defense of its honour or its safety...' *...nullum bellum suscipi a civitate optima nisi aut pro fide aut pro salute...* Harris notes that it was Cicero and his contemporaries who first gave real philosophical meaning to the term *iustum bellum*. Harris, (1979), p. 174. James extends the disinclination to engage with the reality of war from ancient thought to modern academic writing: 'The horrors of conquest are often skated over with haste to reach the more comfortable ground of provincial development and 'Romanization'...After the initial conquests, outside the special and horribly fascinating context of the gladiatorial arena, violence of any kind is rarely discussed as a factor in provincial life. Emphasis is placed on the collaborative nature of developing the empire, through foundation of cities, building communication and international trade, driven by the convergence of provincial ruling classes sharing the values and trappings of Greco-Roman civilization.' James, (2011), p. 15.

<sup>800</sup> Polybius, *Fragment* 99, quoted in Rosenstein, (2007), p. 239. Also see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.72: 'It is their duty [the *fetiales*] to take care that the Romans do not enter upon an unjust war against any city in alliance with them, and if others begin the violation of treaties against them, to go as ambassadors and first make formal demand for justice, and then, if the others refuse to comply with their demands, to sanction war.' Augustus claimed to have enacted a just war against the Alpine tribes: 'I brought peace to the Alps...with no unjust war waged against any nation.' Augustus, *Res gestae divi augusti*, 26. *Alpes a regione ea quae proxima est Hadriano mari ad Tuscum pacificavi nulli genti bello per iniuriam inlato*. Echoed by Suetonius, *Augustus*, 21.2.

divine support.<sup>801</sup> It enabled Roman claims that they had conquered their empire only by pursuing just causes, specifically by aiding their allies, in modern terms defined as ‘defensive imperialism’.<sup>802</sup> Within this context of a uniform cultural reception of empire, the effect of Orosius’s reversal of perspective appears particularly significant and influential.

Orosius inverts the position of ‘defensive imperialism’ to represent the experience of war literally from the other side, a circumstance comparable with Tacitus’s invented speech by the British leader Calgacus following his defeat in the face of overwhelming Roman military force:

Pillagers of the world, now they have exhausted the land by their indiscriminate devastation, they probe the sea. If their enemy is wealthy, they are greedy; if poor, they are overweening; neither East nor West has sated them...To plunder, slaughter, and rapine they falsely give the name ‘empire’. They make a desolation and they call it ‘peace’.<sup>803</sup>

This bitter critique of imperial rule by a Roman writer is exceptional within ancient literature. The sustained attack on war and the hegemony of empire in Book Five of the *Historiae* is similarly a precious indication that there was an alternative perspective and that the destruction and slaughter that inevitably accompanied military conquest did not receive unanimous approval. In creating Calgacus’s speech Tacitus is, like Orosius, imagining the effects of Roman subjugation. The historical realism within the response of both authors is not significant; whether Calgacus expressed himself in such terms misses the point that an alternative historical perspective on war and victory could be

<sup>801</sup> For a detailed discussion of the concept of just war, see Harris, (1979), pp. 163-255. See also Rosenstein, (2007), p. 229; Brunt, (1978); Webster, (1995); and Mattingly, (2011), p. 18.

<sup>802</sup> For a detailed discussion of defensive imperialism, including the ancient concept of this term and its reception in modern criticism, see Erskine, (2010), pp. 36-49; Linderski (1984), p. 133-164; Raaflaub, (2007), p. 19; Harris, (1979), pp. 163-255; Brunt, (1978), pp. 159-91.

<sup>803</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, 30. Similarly Caesar’s *Commentarii de bello gallico* contains a speech for the Gallic leader Critognatus, where the imperial power of Rome is contrasted unfavourably with the Cimbri and the Teutoni enemies who, in the fictionalised words of Critognatus, at least leave the Gauls their laws, rights, lands and liberty: ‘In contrast, what do the Romans seek, what do they desire, if not to follow envy’s prompting? To become established in the lands and states of people whose distinguished reputation and military strength they acknowledge, and to inflict perpetual slavery upon them? Never have they waged war on terms other than these. But if you are ignorant of what happens among far-off peoples, look at the part of Gaul which border our land: reduced to the status of a province, its rights and laws changed, subjected to Roman dominion, it is oppressed by perpetual slavery.’ Caesar, *Commentarii de bello gallico*, 7.77. “...Romani vero quid petunt aliud aut quid volunt, nisi invidia adducti, quos fama nobiles potentesque bello cognoverunt, horum in agris civitatibusque considerare atque his aeternam iniungere servitutem? Neque enim ulla alia condicione bella gesserunt. Quod si ea quae in longinquis nationibus geruntur ignoratis, respicite finitimam Galliam, quae in provinciam redacta iure et legibus commutatis securibus subiecta perpetua premitur servitute.”

and was imagined in antiquity. The extreme anti-colonial position of the narrative voice necessitates a rapid distancing from any endorsement of Rome's empire:

...at what value is this drop of happiness obtained with great labour to be weighed, to which the felicity of one city ascribed in the midst of so great a mass of unhappiness through which the upheaval of the whole world is brought about? Of it, on this account, these times are thought happy because the wealth of one city has been increased, why are they not rather judged most unhappy in which, by the wretched devastation of many well established peoples, very mighty realms have fallen?<sup>804</sup> (5.1.4, p. 173)

Orosius determines to reveal the hidden side of empire in highlighting the 'unhappiness' of the 'wretched devastation of many well established peoples' and the fall of 'very mighty realms'; in focusing not on the glorious victory of Rome the past can be rightly judged as miserable through the conjectured evidence of those at the receiving end of Roman imperialism.

Rather than articulating grievance through an individual as Tacitus does, Orosius instead personifies a conquered people, giving voice to the silenced nations, beginning with Carthage:

Or perchance it seemed different at that time to Carthage, when after a hundred and twenty years, in which, shuddering at the slaughters of war and the conditions of peace, now with a rebellious purpose and now humbly it exchanges peace for war and war for peace, finally, as its wretched citizens cast themselves at random with a final desperation into the fire, the whole city became a single funeral pyre? It is also now a part of the wretchedness of this city, small in compass, destitute in walls, to hear what she said.<sup>805</sup> (5.1.5, pp. 173-4)

The stipulations imposed on the Carthaginians by the Romans make peace scarcely an improvement on 'the slaughters of war'. The one hundred and twenty years refers to the period between the first and third Punic wars, culminating in the Roman destruction of Carthage and the apocalyptic, emotive imagery of the burning city which became a funeral pyre for its citizens. The narrative voice seeks to express the viewpoint of subjugated peoples; the passive *uidebatur* gives emphasis to Carthage's view of events,

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<sup>804</sup> 5.1.4, vol. 2, p. 82: *Quanti igitur pendenda est gutta haec laboriosae felicitatis, cui adscribitur unius urbis beatitudo in tanta mole infelicitatis, per quam agitur totius Orbis euersio? aut si ideo felicia putantur quia unius ciuitatis opes auctae sunt, cur non potius infelicissima iudicentur quibus miserabili uastatione multarum ac bene institutarum gentium potentissima regna ceciderunt?*

<sup>805</sup> 5.1.5, vol.2, p. 83: *An forte aliud tunc Carthagini uidebatur, cum post annos centum uiginti quibus modo bellorum clades, modo pacis condiciones, perhorrescens, nunc rebelli intentione, nunc supplici, bellis pacem, pace bella mutabat, nouissime miseris ciuibus passim se in ignem ultima desperatione iacentibus unus rogos tota ciuitas fuit? Cui etiam nunc, situ paruae, moenibus desitutae, pars miseriarum est audire quid fuerit.*

Spain ‘presents her own opinion’ (*edat Hispania sententiam suam*), and finally Italy ‘speaks’, *ipsa postremo dicat Italia*.<sup>806</sup> Spain’s experience of suppression under Rome like Carthage ends in an apocalyptic spectacle of internecine strife. For two hundred years Spain’s fields were watered with its own blood and it was ‘unable to drive back or endure the troublesome enemy constantly attacking on every frontier’ (5.1.6, p. 175).<sup>807</sup> Finally Spain, ‘crushed by the slaughter of wars, exhausted by the famine of sieges, with their wives and children killed’, found a remedy for their miseries: ‘they killed one another by pitiful conflict and mutual slaughter.’<sup>808</sup> (5.1.6, p. 175) Italy is then represented as a nation opposed to Roman rule:

Why did Italy for four hundred years, indeed, oppose, stand in the way of, and resist its own Roman, if their happiness was not their own unhappiness and did not the Romans, becoming the masters of the world, stand in the way of the common good?<sup>809</sup> (5.1.7, p. 174)

The invented reaction of Carthage, Spain and Italy is intended to generate sympathy for the victims and antipathy towards Rome, giving a different version of history to the celebration of Rome’s expansionist policy of empire.<sup>810</sup>

The anti-colonial discourse opposing Rome is extended to a diversity of captured nations which the narrative voice approaches generally and rhetorically through *praeteritio*:

I do not ask about the innumerable peoples of different nations, long free, then conquered in war, led away from their fatherland, sold for a price, dispersed in slavery,

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<sup>806</sup> 5.1.6, p. 174; 5.1.6, vol. 2, p. 83. 5.1.7, p. 174; 5.1.7, vol. 2, p. 83.

<sup>807</sup> 5.1.6, vol. 2, p. 83: *...cum per annos ducentos ubique agros suos sanguine suo rigabat infortunumque hostem ultro ostiatim inquietantem nec repellere poterat nec sustinere...*

<sup>808</sup> 5.1.6, vol. 2, p. 83: *...fracti caede bellorum, obsidionum fame exinaniti, interfectis coniugibus ac liberis suis ob remedia miseriarum concurs misero ac mutua caede iugulabant...*

<sup>809</sup> 5.1.7, vol. 2, p. 83: *...cur per annos quadringentos Romanis utique suis contradixit obstitit repugnauit, si eorum felicitas sua infelicitas non erat Romanosque fieri rerum dominos bonis communibus non obstabat?*

<sup>810</sup> This post-colonial attack on empire is not an isolated incident; moments of anti-imperial sentiment can be found throughout the *Historiae*, for example, Caesar’s invasion of Gaul: ‘Wretched Gaul, panted when, at the point of a sword, she was forced to profess a promise of eternal slavery, with her hostages in addition torn from her...’ 6.12.4, p. 255; 6.12.4, vol. 2, p. 200: *Sitiebat misera, cum instante gladio profiteri sponsionem seruitutis aeternae auulsis insuper obsidibus cogeretur*. 7.41.2, p. 357: ‘The Spains have been invaded; slaughters and devastations have been endured; indeed, it is nothing new, for during those two years when the sword of the enemy raged, they endured from the barbarians what for two hundred years they had once suffered at the hands of the Romans...’ 7.41.2, vol. 3, p. 121: *Inruptae sunt Hispaniae, caedes uastationesque passae sunt: nihil quidem nouum, hoc enim nunc per biennium illud quo hostilis gladius saeuuit, susinuere a barbaris, quod per ducentos quondam annos passae fuerant a Romanis...*

what they, then, preferred for themselves, what they thought about the Romans, and what judgements they made about the times.<sup>811</sup> (5.1.8, p. 174)

The reasoning of the narrative voice not to speculate or ‘ask’ (*non requiro*) the countless peoples conquered in war by the power of Rome what they would rather have happened to them, what they thought of the Romans, and how they considered that period of history, is intended to have obvious implications: they would rather not have been defeated and enslaved, they would be strongly opposed to Rome, and they would not judge the times as happy or fortunate. Again, Orosius ‘passes over’ (*omitto*) the wealth, power and glory of ‘kings’ (*regibus*) who were captured, loaded with chains as slaves, ‘sent under the yoke, driven before the chariot, [and] slaughtered in prison’ (5.1.9, p. 174).<sup>812</sup> Orosius recognises the futility of such a task in the inherent and irreversible silencing of the oppressed and defeated, that those subjugated by the hegemony of Rome have all power removed and any physical or articulated opposition to empire is suppressed: ‘...of whom to ask an opinion is as foolish as it is difficult not to bemoan their wretchedness.’<sup>813</sup> (5.1.9, p. 174) It is this recognition and reversal of historical perspective that defines the *Historiae* as a fledgling post-colonial text at a time when the overwhelming reaction to empire that survives was glorification and triumph.

### 5.3.5 Post-colonial Identity

According to Bill Ashcroft’s post-colonial categorisation of literary response to imperial power, the *Historiae* ‘interjects’ to give an altered version of past events:

A...specifically post-colonial response to history is *interjection*, in which the basic premises of historical narrative are accepted, but a contrary narrative, which claims to offer a more immediate or ‘truer’ picture of post-colonial life, a record of those experiences omitted from imperial history, is inserted into the historical record.<sup>814</sup>

Ashcroft understands ‘interjection’ to be fundamentally ‘a political contestation of imperial power.’<sup>815</sup> Orosius presents his contestation and fight for the oppressed past

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<sup>811</sup> 5.1.8, vol. 2, pp. 83-4: *Non requiro de innumeris diuersarum gentium populis diu antea liberis, tunc bello uictis, patria abductis, pretio uenditis, seruitute dispersis, quid tunc sibi maluerint quid de Romanis opinati sint, quid temporibus iudicarint.*

<sup>812</sup> 5.1.9, vol. 2, p. 84: *Omitto de regibus magnarum opum, magnarum uirium, magnae gloriae, diu potentissimis, aliquando captis, seruiliter catenatis, sub iugum missis, ante currum actis, in carcere trucidatis.*

<sup>813</sup> 5.1.9, vol. 2, p. 84: *...quorum tam stultum est exquirere sententiam, quam durum non dolere miseriam.*

<sup>814</sup> Ashcroft, (1996), p. 197.

<sup>815</sup> Ashcroft, (1996), p. 198.



from the position of a provincial in Book Five; the polemic against Rome indicates that the narrative voice is directed from a non-Roman perspective, and the speculative voices of Carthage, Spain and Italy suggests a greater affiliation with these suppressed peoples. Following the wider perspective of conquered nations, the narrative voice turns back to the debate, engaging the reader in an active comparison of the past and present: 'Let us, as I say, consult ourselves about our choice of a way of life to which we have been accustomed.'<sup>816</sup> (5.1.10, p. 174) Within this turn the position of the narrative voice becomes evident, that the voice is here speaking as a provincial and not a Roman, as other not self, as peripheral not central. Rome is juxtaposed with 'our people', *nostris*, and 'with us', *nobiscum*:

Our forefathers carried on wars; worn out by wars and seeking peace, they offered tribute; tribute is the price of peace. We pay tribute, lest we suffer war, and by this means we have taken a position and remain in the harbour at which our forefathers finally took refuge to avoid the storms of evils...what Rome extorted from our people by the sword to implement their luxurious living, she herself now contributes with us for the general use of the state.<sup>817</sup> (5.1.10-13, p. 175)

The claim of descent, *maiores nostri*, 'our forefathers', is strikingly not from Roman ancestors, but those who suffered under Rome. Orosius is participating in the literary production of history in presenting the narrative voice as writing from the position of an unwilling victim in the cultural experience of empire. That this is a construct that enables the comparison of the provincial past with the provincial present is less significant than the fact that this perspective is evident in antiquity and has been imagined in the *Historiae*.

### 5.3.6 The *Historiae*: Partially Post-colonial

The theoretical placing of the *Historiae* as post-colonial is complicated by the varying interpretation of history in accordance with Orosius's apologetic design. It is only within pre-Christian time that the brutality of the imperial system for those under the domination of Rome is acknowledged. After the birth of Christ the situation is reversed, with the empire representing a universal and peaceful Christian commonwealth and

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<sup>816</sup> 5.1.10, vol. 2, p. 84: *Nos, nos inquam ipsos uitaeque nostrae electionem cui adqueuimus, consulamus.*

<sup>817</sup> 5.1.10-13, vol. 2, pp. 84-5: *Maiores nostri bella gesserunt, bellis fatigati pacem petentes tributa obtulerunt: tributum pretium pacis est. Nos tributa dependimus, ne bella patiamur, ac per hoc in portu, ad quem illi tandem praecauendis malorum tempestatibus confugerunt, nos consistimus et manemus...ut quod Roma in usum luxuriae suae ferro extorquebat a nostris, nunc in usum communis reipublicae conferat ipsa nobiscum.*

facilitating conversion to Christianity. The discourse of anti-empire is incompatible with the Christian political theology that understands the Roman empire, once Christianized, in providential and salvific terms; the opposition to empire is ultimately reconciled. For this reason a more nuanced understanding is required that recognises the simultaneous glorification and condemnation of empire, which makes the *Historiae* partially rather than intrinsically a post-colonial text. In terms of post-colonial theory the lack of consistency in the post-colonial discourse of the *Historiae* is understood as characteristic of ‘early’ post-colonial texts, that the potential for subversion cannot be fully realized:

Both the available discourse and the material conditions of production for literature in these early post-colonial societies restrain this possibility [of realizing the full potential for subversion]. The institution of ‘Literature’ in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work.<sup>818</sup>

A text like the *Historiae* is created within ‘the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system’ which limits and undercuts the assertion of a different perspective. Ashcroft et al argue that the development of independent literatures depends upon the abrogation of this constraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages.<sup>819</sup> Despite the radical nature of Orosius’s rewriting of history, the *Historiae* is in fact a deeply conservative text, investing heavily in the existing political status quo combined with a moderate, potentially orthodox, version of Christianity, and carefully aligned with contemporary figures of Christian authority especially Augustine. From this perspective Orosius’s optimism and conservative ideals were not likely to produce a history of extreme revisionism which, by necessity, bordered on the apocalyptic or anarchic. Orosius’s combination of the Christian religion with Roman imperial authority was bold and innovative whilst simultaneously reinforcing existing power structures and cultural norms that did little to challenge to the political basis of authority, that of empire.

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<sup>818</sup> Ashcroft et al, (1989), p. 6.

<sup>819</sup> Ashcroft et al, (1989), p. 6. The deposition of the last Roman emperor in the west in AD 476 arguably created this circumstance. An author like Isidore of Seville, a successor of Orosius writing in the late sixth and early seventh century in Visigothic *Hispania*, would therefore have the potential capability of producing such ‘independent literature’.

### 5.3.7 The Reconciliation of Empire

The overarching theme of the *Historiae*, the comparison between past and present, necessitates that the anti-imperial discourse that gives voice to the subjugated peoples of Carthage, Italy, Gaul and Spain is, at some point, reconciled within the text. Once the destruction, chaos and misery of the colonial past have been established in Book Five it is then contrasted with the harmony and security of the present. War is juxtaposed with peace, happiness with ‘the storms of evil’, and the slavery of paying tribute to Rome with the generous beneficence of the state:

So I would view our times, whether they are happy. Indeed, we who continually possess what they finally chose, think them happier than those. For the unrest of wars, by which they were worn out, is unknown to us. Moreover, we are born and grow old in the peace which they tasted slightly after the rule of Caesar and the birth of Christ; what was for them the due payment of slavery is for us a free contribution for our defence, and so great is the difference between past and present times that what Rome extorted from our people by the sword to implement their luxurious living, she herself now contributes with us for the general use of the state.<sup>820</sup> (5.1.11-13, p. 175)

The context for the argument has been established, firstly in the presentation of the unhappy experience of empire in the past, and now the rhetoric builds towards the logical conclusion of the improved present.<sup>821</sup> What is missing at this point is the moment of transition, the difference to history. That difference is Christianity; but the narrative returns to the past once again before that revelation is made.

Orosius sees the world of the past as thoroughly divided: geographical space is split into provinces; war is universal; political authority is polyarchic; and peoples are divided by their laws and customs: ‘Long ago, when wars raged throughout the whole world, every province enjoyed its own kings, its own laws, and its own customs, and there was no alliance of mutual good feelings where a divergence of powers divided.’<sup>822</sup> (5.1.14, p.

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<sup>820</sup> 5.1.11-13, vol. 2, pp. 84-5: *Igitur nostra tempora uiderim utrum felicia? Certe feliciora illis ducimus, qui quod illi ultime delegerunt nos continue possidemus. Inquietudo enim bellorum, qua illi attriti sunt, nobis ignota est. In otio autem, quod illi post imperium Caesaris natiuitatemque Christi tenuerunt, nos nascimur et senescimus; quod illis erat debita pensio seruitutis nobis est libera conlatio defensionis, tantumque interest inter praeterita praesentiaque tempora, ut quod Roma in usum luxuriae suae ferro extorquebat a nostris, nunc in usum communis reipublicae conferat ipsa nobiscum.*

<sup>821</sup> Orosius’s interpretation of the present at the expense of the past has been recognised by Chadwick, who saw the tensions in the *Historiae* as ‘the love-hate relation both to Rome and its Empire on the one hand, and to the barbarians on the other; or the argument that the disasters being endured now are providentially mild compared with those of the Roman republic. The present is idealised at the expense of the past.’ Chadwick, (1982), p. 59. Similarly argued by Herzog (2002), p. 316.

<sup>822</sup> 5.1.14, vol. 2, p. 85: *Olim cum bella toto Orbe feruebant, quaeque prouincia suis regibus suis legibus suisque moribus utebatur, nec erat societas adfectionum ubi dissidebat diuersitas postestatum.*

175) Fundamentally it was the divergence of political authority that prevented the possibility of unity or peace (*societas adfectionum*).<sup>823</sup> Orosius builds the polemic through anacœnosis, posing a series of rhetorical questions to facilitate his representation of the chaotic and hostile past:

Finally, what brought into an alliance the unfathered and barbarous tribes which, established by different sacred rites, religious practices also kept apart? If anyone then, at that time, overcome by the severity of evils deserted his native land to the enemy, to what unknown place did he, an unknown, finally go? What people, in general an enemy, did he, an enemy, supplicate? To whom did he at a first meeting entrust himself, not having been invited by reason of an alliance by name, nor induced by a common law, nor secure by a oneness in religion?<sup>824</sup> (5.1.14-16, p. 175)

The ‘unfathered and barbarous tribes’ are kept apart by their religious practices, extending the imagery of universal conflict in the association between political and religious diversity. There is no refuge from enemies; everything is strange and everyone a stranger. The social structures which allow friendship and hospitality, particularly shared customs, laws and religion, are absent from this dangerous and brutal pre-Christian world. Orosius concludes this depiction of the inhospitable past by illustrating his argument with examples from the past, of the Egyptian king Busiris who sacrificed strangers to Zeus, of the Tauri people who sacrificed strangers to Diana, and Polymestor who murdered his guest Polydorus to take his treasure.<sup>825</sup>

### 5.3.8 The Christian Turn in Time

The narrative moves away from these literary and mythical examples of the past to the Christian present time, where the narrative voice rejoins strongly and emotively with the

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<sup>823</sup> In his *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini* Eusebius of Caesarea similarly organises his polemic according to antithesis, where a world characterised by variance and division with a multiplicity of government had dire consequences: 'Of old the nations of the earth, the entire human race, were variously distributed into provincial, national, and local governments, subject to kingdoms and principalities of many kinds. The consequences of this variety were war and strife, depopulation and captivity, which raged in country and city with unceasing fury.' *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*, 16.2. The parallels between the thought of Orosius and Eusebius cannot be explored here but provides an opportunity for future research.

<sup>824</sup> 5.1.14-16, vol. 2, p. 85: *...postremo solutas et barbaras gentes quid tandem ad societatem adduceret, quas diuersis sacrorum ritibus institutas etiam religio separabat? Si quis igitur tunc acerbitate malorum uictus patriam cum hoste deseruit, quem tandem ignotum locum ignotus adiit? quam gentem generaliter hostem hostis orauit? cui se congressu primo credidit, non societate religionis unitate securus?*

<sup>825</sup> 5.1.16, pp. 175-6: 'Did Busiris in Egypt, the most wicked sacrificer of foreigners who unfortunately ran into him; the shores of Taurian Diana, most cruel toward strangers but with rites more cruel; and Thrace, together with its Polymestor, abominable toward relatives and guests give a few examples?' 5.1.16, vol. 2, p. 85: *An parum exempli dederunt Busiris in Aegypto peregrinorum infelicititer incurrentium impiissimus immolator, crudelissima circa aduenas Dianae Tauricae litora sed magis sacra crudelia, Thracia cum Polymestore suo usque ad propinquos hospites scelerata?*

image of a universal Christian empire: 'But for me, when I flee at the first disturbance of whatever commotion, since it is a question of a secure place of refuge, everywhere there is a native land, everywhere my law and my religion.'<sup>826</sup> (5.2.1, p. 176) This universalising discourse is intended as the antithesis of the religious and political diversity of the past; conflict has been ended and there is no longer war between peoples. The inference of the narrative based on Orosius's personal experience is made explicit in the change from third to first person: '...Africa has received me to her open peace, to her bosom, to her common law'.<sup>827</sup> (5.2.2, p. 176) It is arguable that in his vision of Roman ecumenicalism Orosius is simply reflecting on his own personal experiences, in his flight from an inhospitable and dangerous homeland to the sanctity of Augustine and Africa, where he appears to have been well received. His trans-Mediterranean travels could have secured his impression that Christianity really did provide a safe haven that transcended the borders of nation and country. However Orosius's attempt to simplify the complexities of his own time with an all-encompassing Christian identity has been received with critical scepticism: 'it is a rosy view; a view which does not square well with the picture of contemporary Roman society which emerges from our other sources and one which could scarcely survive very much longer.'<sup>828</sup> Paschoud further describes his vision as 'une pernicieuse illusion, ou plutôt un mélancolique regret'.<sup>829</sup> The image that Orosius presents is propaganda, a panegyric for the Christian empire in an over-estimation of the peace, strength and universality of the Church.

In a vitriolic and triumphant tone Orosius presents his reality of the Christian commonwealth:

The breadth of the East, the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the great islands are of my law and name because I, as a Roman and a Christian, approach Romans and Christians. I do not fear the gods of my host; I do not fear religion as my death; ...the one God ... is both loved and feared by all; the same laws, which are subject to one God, prevail everywhere; and wherever I shall go unknown, I do not fear sudden violence as if I be unprotected. Among Romans,

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<sup>826</sup> 5.2.1, vol. 2, p. 86: *Mihi autem prima qualiscumque motus perturbatione fugienti, quia de confugiendi statione securo, ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est.*

<sup>827</sup> 5.2.2, vol. 2, p. 86: *Nunc me Africa tam libenter excepit quam confidenter accessi; nunc me, inquam, ista Africa excepit pace simplici, sinu proprio, iure communi...*

<sup>828</sup> Markus, (1963), p. 351.

<sup>829</sup> Paschoud, (1967), p. 290.

as I have said, I am a Roman; among Christians, a Christian; among men, a man.<sup>830</sup>  
(5.2.3-6, pp. 176-7)

The construction of a Roman Christian identity is facilitated by travel and security, where the universal, sweeping style includes all points of the compass, with the west implied by the ‘great islands’, *magnarum insularum*, Britain and Ireland.<sup>831</sup> (5.2.2, p. 176) The *patria* is no longer geographically local or specific because of Christianity.<sup>832</sup> By the early fifth century Orosius can emphasise the legal, and therefore legitimate, aspect of Christianity in the further expansion of the religion into the state and interconnection with political authority.

### 5.3.9 The Shifting Allegiance of Empire

The reversal of empire in the representation of hegemony from the perspective of the oppressed has been replaced by a pro-imperial attitude, and the provincial voice has been elided by the universal Christian Roman empire. Orosius is no longer defending the peripheral voices of empire and the political entity of empire is now positive; polytheism has been eradicated by monotheism, and universal conflict between nations has been eliminated by the establishment of one nation. The Christian nation encompasses the entire world, allowing peace and harmony to flourish. This strong blend of monotheism, universalism, empire and nation is evident in the *Historiae* in a broad and idealised sense as well as reduced to the individual. With the change to the first person comes an exposition of identity in a style of challenge and rebuffal, suggested by the repeated ‘I’, culminating in the strident but succinct statement of identity: ‘Among Romans...I am a Roman; among Christians, a Christian; among men, a

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<sup>830</sup> 5.2.3-6, vol. 2, pp. 86-7: *Latitudo orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissimae tutissimaeque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo. Non timeo deos hospitum mei, non timeo religionem eius necem meam...unus Deus, qui temporibus, quibus ipse innotescere uoluit, hanc regni statuit unitatem, ab omnibus et diligitur et timetur; eadem leges, quae uni Deo subiectae sunt, ubique dominantur; ubicumque ignotus accessero, repentinam uim tamquam destitutus non pertimesco. Inter Romanos, ut dixi, Romanus, inter Christianos Christianus, inter homines homo...*

<sup>831</sup> See also Eusebius, *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*, 10.6: ‘The nations of the East and the West are instructed at the same moment in his precepts: the people of the Northern and Southern regions unite with one accord, under the influence of the same principles and laws, in the pursuit of a godly life, in praising the one Supreme God, in acknowledging his only begotten Son their Saviour as the source of every blessing, and our emperor as the one ruler on the earth, together with his pious sons.’

<sup>832</sup> Perhaps identified here specifically because of their perceived location on the outer-reaches of the western empire. References to the Orkney Islands in the *Historiae* can be interpreted in the same way, as illustrating Orosius’s fully ‘universal’ knowledge of the world.

man.’<sup>833</sup> The identity and allegiance of the narrative voice has shifted and the post-colonial discourse is now a thing of the past. There is no place for ethnic or regional identity; instead identity is forged by religion and citizenship.<sup>834</sup> Orosius’s ideology of identity is defined spatially, religiously and legally within the Christian Roman empire, conceptualised but not articulated as Christendom, where geographical distance is neutralised by a universal Christian community and a cohesive monotheism.

### 5.3.10 Apologetics and the Providence of Peace

As the perception of empire is transformed by the birth of Christ, so the apologetic discourse that represents the pre-Christian past as particularly violent and belligerent is reversed. The advent of Christianity transfigures human history, bringing providential peace and harmony to a seldom grateful people. Orosius invests heavily in the concept of peace in order to emphasise the joint significance of the birth of Christ and the accession of Augustus, and initiate a new epoch of time defined by the existence of Christianity. It is logical to expect that the assertion of the abolition of conflict will determine the subsequent relation of history in the substantiation of the claim throughout the seventh book. However the notion of a universal and everlasting peace is a strong apologetical statement but does not sustain scrutiny beyond a superficial level; it exists not intrinsically but only within the changing concept and continued existence of warfare. Fundamentally the obstacle of the sack of Rome, a major event in the *Historiae*, disrupts the course of peace, necessitating the acknowledgement of the persistence of conflict. The sack can then be contextualised within a hierarchy of warfare, avoiding the representation of the Gothic invasion as exceptional, and enabling a positive comparison when contrasted with other military disasters. The perpetuation of warfare in Book Seven is also explained by Orosius’s historiographical approach, which necessitates that further instances of war after the birth of Christ are not elided, in preference for a more complete historical narrative in accord with the preceding six

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<sup>833</sup> See quotation above. Marrou, (1970), p. 82, recognises the significance of this passage; he highlights the indivisible nature of Roman and Christian identity as presented by Orosius and sees the evocation of the eschatological heavenly ‘City of God,’ but in the present good and hope in future good: ‘Tout à fait dans la lignée d’Eusèbe, très loin par conséquent d’Augustin qui, lui, a si profondément ressenti et exprimé la contingence radicale de toute cité terrestre, Orose nous fait assister à un glissement du surnaturel au terrestre; j’ai souligné le rôle que joue chez lui l’expression *germinantia tempora Christiana*: cette qualification pré-hégélienne permet l’équivoque et l’identification entre le temps de l’empire et le temps de l’Eglise, entre le peuple de Dieu et le peuple romain.’

<sup>834</sup> Recognised by Deen Shildgen, (2012), p. 57.

books. Orosius eschews an idealised and partial account of history from Christ's birth, maintaining the coherence of the text in one sense but risking contradiction in another, in the simultaneous and competing narratives of war and peace.

### 5.3.11 Conclusion

The *Historiae* is a text in which war is central; it is the motif through which the narrative of the past is told. The misery and suffering of pre-Christian history is exemplified through the presentation of war as an affliction on humanity. Orosius's sense of grief and horror at the suffering of the past challenges the twisted morality of the pagan perception of history, and sees the misfortune, slaughter and death in the glory and triumph of victory. The reader is exhorted to similarly reassess the past in a moral sense, comparing the past with the present age. The reader is predestined to find disorder in the past and harmony in the present, with all of time ordained by the divine providence of God. War is an intrinsic part and a necessary requisite of the political structure of empire. Rome was no exception, and the subversion of the pagan interpretation of the past necessitates that empire, the product of war, is reviled and condemned. But the multiple identities of Orosius, as an admiring Roman citizen, a provincial who has witnessed the reality of Roman conquest, and a Christian polemicist, jostle sometimes uncomfortably for position throughout the text.<sup>835</sup> Each element has moments of prominence, and the differing allegiances to individual narratives cause contradiction and confusion. It is arguable that the tripartite identity is never fully reconciled, but it is also true that Orosius's most significant loyalty was to Christianity, a loyalty that had to resolve political and spiritual authority and events on earth with the divine ordinance of God. This is achieved in the sanctification of empire through the birth of Christ; Orosius resists, but is ultimately invested in, empire. Divine providence directs the abolition of polytheism and polyarchy and the final Roman Christian empire assumes universal authority, where war no longer exists, Roman law is obeyed, and only the Christian God is worshipped. However, it is important to remember that Orosius's reaction against war, and indeed his pro-peace attitude, are constructs. Whatever his personal sentiment regarding war, which is impossible to reconstruct from

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<sup>835</sup> For a discussion of multiple identities in other ancient sources, particularly Pompeius Trogus, see Erskine, (2010), pp. 56-7. For the same recognition in Favorinus of Arles, see Wallace-Hadrill, (2008), pp. 1-8.



the text, Orosius is representing a position he considers to be defensible and convincing. In questioning the morality of the Roman ideology of glory and victory in warfare, Orosius is endeavouring to win the apologetic argument against his opponents, which is the principal objective of the text.

## 6. The Sack of Rome: Sin, Punishment, and Divine Providence

### 6.1.1 Introduction

Written in fervent defence of Christianity, the catalyst for the composition of the *Historiae* is disaster, a theme that thoroughly preoccupies the text, with the entirety of history conceived in unmitigated and uncompromising terms of bad times and good, a catalogue of calamities that could only be terminated by the birth of Christ. Orosius's principal task is to explain the vicissitudes of humanity, such as the rise and fall of empires, the fates of individual rulers, the wars fought between and within nations, and natural disasters like famine or flood. The authorial approach imbues the events of the past and present with a meaning beyond the literal and assimilates them into the Orosian vision of history, which holds the authority of the Christian God at its core: all power and order are from God.<sup>836</sup> (2.1.3) Orosius is concerned for his reader to understand that the course of time is not governed by fate or the actions of individuals, but by the

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<sup>836</sup> 2.1.3, p. 44: '...that all power and all ordering are from God, both those who have not read feel, and those who have read recognise.' 2.1.3, vol. 1, p. 84: *Quapropter omnem potestatem a Deo esse omnemque ordinationem et qui non legerunt sentiunt et qui legerunt cognoscunt.*

mysterious will of the divine: ‘...all these events were disposed by the ineffable mysteries and the most profound judgements of God and did not happen by the powers of man or by uncertain accident’.<sup>837</sup> (2.2.4, p. 45) But the fall of Rome, occurring almost four-hundred years after the Incarnation, threatens the credibility of Orosius’s polemical design. How could a civilisation such as Rome suffer such catastrophe and destruction if the coming of Christ had already affected the miraculous improvement of human affairs? Through particular attention to the narrative of the sack in Book Seven, this Chapter explores the strategies the text employs to cope with this theological disparity, that the Christian God is ultimately responsible for the sack but is not culpable. The theosophical system Orosius develops explains misery and disaster in human history through the omniscient authority of God, a divine judge who orders events on earth and punishes sinful behaviour: ‘...when man sins the world is censured and, because of our failure to check the intemperance, this earth on which we live is punished’.<sup>838</sup> (2.1.1, p. 44) Human sin is represented as the cause of disaster, compelling the interference of God in human affairs, blessing with peace and punishing with war. As the disaster of greatest significance within the text, the sack of Rome is no exception, but the narrative is transformed from a destructive invasion by a hostile enemy into a peaceful non-event that cleanses Rome of the scourge of paganism.<sup>839</sup>

### 6.1.2 Original Sin

Sin is an essential category in Orosius’s perspective on the world, which is dominated by division: Christians are distinct from non-Christians, right belief separated from wrong, right worship divided from wrong, and good behaviour from bad. This division of human action and belief is part of a wider discourse of partition in the *Historiae*, which takes place ethnographically between nations and peoples, geographically between continents, empires, regions and provinces, and politically between forms of government and individual rulers. The concept of original sin is a fundamental principle

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<sup>837</sup> 2.2.4, vol. 1, p. 86: *Ut autem omnia haec ineffabilibus mysteriis et profundissimis Dei iudiciis disposita, non aut humanis uiribus aut incertis casibus accidisse perdoceam...*

<sup>838</sup> 2.1.1, vol. 1, p. 84: *Vnde etiam peccante homine mundus arguitur ac propter nostram intemperantiam conprimendam terra haec, in qua uiuimus...*

<sup>839</sup> The analysis of Orosius’s version of the sack of Rome necessitates that this Chapter focuses spatially on Rome. Any distinction between Roman Christians and Roman pagans is similarly spatial, and is not intended to suggest a particular division between Christian and Roman or Roman and pagan identities beyond this. For the intersection between Roman and Christian identity, see Elm (2012), particularly pp. 1-3; 379-80; 395-6; and 479-83.

in the *Historiae* and is established before the historical narrative commences: ‘sin and the punishment of sin began with the very first man’.<sup>840</sup> (1.1.11, p. 6) To Orosius, the human race is inherently flawed. Humans were created by God to be righteous and immaculate (*rectum atque immaculatum*), but they became depraved by lusts and were made sordid with sins.<sup>841</sup> (1.3.1, p. 20) The world is governed by divine providence which is just and good.<sup>842</sup> But man is changeable in nature, weakened and stubborn by his ‘freedom of choice’, an allusion to the Fall, and he requires guidance and reproof from God for ‘the immoderate use of his freedom’.<sup>843</sup> (1.1.9, p. 6) God is the divine creator and judge, and the judgement of those who sin will continue as long as man inhabits the earth, whether that is recognised or not:

For all of us, unwillingly though we be, can either feel the force of the sentence of God, the Creator and Judge – which has been established for sinful man and, because of man, for the Earth, and which will endure as long as men dwell on the earth – by denying it, or, by trusting in it, endure it. Those whose obstinate minds are not persuaded by the truth of the Scriptures are branded as guilty by the testimony of their own weakness.<sup>844</sup> (1.3.2, p. 50)

Orosius associates sin with deliberate disbelief; those pagans who refuse to believe and will not be persuaded by the Scriptures are condemned to sin and suffer punishment. The sin of greatest consequence in the *Historiae* is that of determined and defiant disbelief in the Christian God, which is allied with a lack of Christian worship, a continued worship of pagan deities, and the persecution of Christians.

### 6.1.2.1 Sin and Punishment

A crucial element of Orosius’s apologetic argument is that the sins of humanity are punished by a just and merciful God with disasters and warfare: ‘...evils which existed then, just as they do now to a certain extent, are undoubtedly either manifest sins or the

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<sup>840</sup> 1.1.11, vol. 1, p. 11: *...deinde cum ab ipso primo homine peccatum punitionemque peccati coepisse doceamur.*

<sup>841</sup> 1.3.1, vol. 1, p. 42: *Cum post fabricam ornatumque mundi huius homo, quem rectum atque immaculatum fecerat Deus, ac perinde humanum genus, libidinibus deprauatum peccatis obsordisset...*

<sup>842</sup> 1.1.9, vol. 1, p. 11: *Primum quia si diuina prouidentia, quae sicut bona ita et iusta est, agitur mundus et homo...*

<sup>843</sup> 1.1.9, vol. 1, p. 11: *libertate licentiae.* 1.1.9, vol. 1, p. 11: *ita iuste corripi inmoderatum libertatis necesse est...*

<sup>844</sup> Fear’s translation is preferable to Deferrari’s here and has been used. 1.3.2, vol. 1, p. 42: *Sententiam creatoris Dei et iudicis peccanti homini ac terrae propter hominem destinatae semperque dum homines terram habitauerint duraturae, omnes inuiti licet aut probamus negando aut confitendo toleramus, obstinatisque mentibus testis sibi infirmitas sua inurit, quibus fidelis scriptura non suaserit.*

hidden punishments of sin.<sup>845</sup> (1.1.12, p. 6) For what is warfare, wonders Orosius, but evil befalling one side or another?<sup>846</sup> The divine sanction of peace is a reward for Christian belief, and the sufferance of disturbances (*inquietatur*) is punishment for blasphemy:

Hence, insofar as the world exists tranquilly, it is so because of those who believe; insofar as it is perniciously disturbed, it is so as punishment for those who blaspheme, while the faithful Christians are free from anxiety through all events, who securely have the peace of eternal life, or advantageously so even in this world.<sup>847</sup> (7.3.3, p. 288)

Orosius represents the earthly experiences of Christians and pagans as distinct; Christian faith profits those who believe and Christians are not condemned to suffer war, disaster, or famine like pagans. Christians can be free from anxiety with the promise of eternal life. Juxtaposed with those who believe (*credentiam*) are not unbelievers, but those who blaspheme (*blasphemantium*), those who publicly declare their lack of faith and attack Christianity, suffering disaster as a result. This discourse of division between Christian peace and pagan punishment is crucial for Orosius's representation of the sack of Rome where the conceit finds personification: miraculously the Christians are protected and saved, whereas the Roman pagans are scourged by the invading Goths, finding sanctuary in the Churches by masquerading as Christians.

### 6.1.2.2 Sin, Disaster, and Divine Responsibility

Orosius categorically and consistently argues that it is the mercy of God which allows humankind to flourish, but humanity is responsible for its own misery, which arises from sin or 'immoderation' (*intemperantiae*): 'it is due to his clemency that we live, but it is due to our intemperance that we live wretchedly.'<sup>848</sup> (2.3.5, p. 47) Where the circumstance of peace or war is attributed to God the text becomes particularly defensive and the apologetic against contemporary pagans becomes most clear, often

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<sup>845</sup> 1.1.12, vol. 1, pp. 11-12: *mala autem huiusmodi quae tunc erant, sicut et nunc sunt in quantum sunt, sine dubio aut manifesta peccata sunt aut occultae punctiones peccatorum.*

<sup>846</sup> 1.1.12, p. 6: 'What else should these wars be called but evils befalling on one side or the other?' 1.1.12, vol. 1, p. 11: *...quae bella quid aliud dicenda sunt, nisi uergentia in alterutrum mala?*

<sup>847</sup> 7.3.3, vol. 3, p. 21: *...hinc, in quantum tranquille agitur mundus, credentium gratia, in quantum perniciose inquietatur, blasphemantium poena est, securis per omnia fidelibus Christianis quibus aut aeternae uitae requies in tuto aut etiam huius in lucro est...*

<sup>848</sup> 2.3.5, vol. 1, p. 89: *...illius clementiae esse quod uiuimus, quod autem misere uiuimus, intemperantiae nostrae.*

addressing them directly. The appeal to recognise the deserved wretchedness of humanity is directed against ‘those who especially grumble foolishly about Christian times’, that is, contemporary pagans.<sup>849</sup> (2.3.5, p. 47)

Orosius simultaneously argues that the Christian God is an interfering deity, that he determines the course of time and events on earth, but he is not culpable for misery and disaster which are divinely sent but are punishment for human sin. The core of this argument is determined by a specific historical event, the sack of Rome. Orosius uses the macro to explain the micro; all of history, from the Creation to the present, is utilized to demonstrate that the sack was a consequence of the persistent pagan worship of the Romans, a punishment directed by God but one that he was not responsible for.

### 6.2.1 Contemporary Crisis and Broken Peace

The *Historiae* can be understood as a text with a singular purpose: to situate the sack of Rome within an apologetic schema that explains misery and disaster in human history through the authority of an omniscient and dominating God, a divine judge who directs events on earth and justly punishes sinful behaviour: ‘...rightly does God reprove the ungrateful, the unbelieving, and even the contumacious with various kinds of reproofs.’<sup>850</sup> (6.1.26, p. 232) Attempts to rationalize the catastrophe preoccupy the text, pervading the narrative long before the historical account begins in Book Seven. In the first Book Orosius takes the historical exemplar of the fall of Babylon to compare with the survival of Rome following the Gothic invasion; the difference of Christianity determines the fates of the two empires, with the preservation of Rome because of its Christian emperor, Christian citizens, and Christian saints:

...in the one case [Babylon] the turpitude of the passions was punished in the king; in the other [Rome] the very serene tranquillity of the Christian religion was preserved in the king; in Babylon, without reverence for religion, furious licence satisfied thirst for pleasure; in Rome, there were Christians who showed mercy, and Christians to whom mercy was shown, and Christians because of whose memory and in whose memory mercy was shown.<sup>851</sup> (2.3.7, p. 47)

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<sup>849</sup> 2.3.5, vol. 1, p. 89: *...intellegant hi qui insipienter utique de temporibus Christianis murmurant...*

<sup>850</sup> 6.1.26, vol. 2, p. 167: *...unde et merito Deus uel ingratos uel incredulos uel etiam contumaces uariis correptionibus arguit.*

<sup>851</sup> 2.3.7, vol. 1, p. 89: *quoniam ibi in rege libidinum turpitudine punita, hic Christianae religionis continentissima aequitas in rege seruata est; ibi absque religionis reuerentia auaritia uoluptatis licentia furoris impleuit, hic et Christiani fuere qui parcerent, et Christiani quibus parcerent, et Christiani propter quorum memoriam et in quorum memoria parceretur.*

Orosius concludes the historical juxtaposition with a direct attack on his opponents, that they should ‘cease to rail at religion and exasperate the patience of God’; instead they should ‘truly reflect upon the times of their ancestors, so disturbed by wars, accursed with crimes, horrible with dissensions, most constant in miseries, at whose existence they can properly shudder, and they necessarily should ask that they not return.’<sup>852</sup> (2.3.8-10, p. 47) The horrors of the past are used as a rhetorical weapon to threaten contemporary pagans; they must pray to the Christian God who alone has the power to prevent a return to catastrophic times: ‘Indeed, they should ask that God alone who, by His inscrutable justice, both permitted that they take place in the past, and, by His manifest mercy, is responsible that they not return.’<sup>853</sup> (2.3.10, p. 47) Orosius exhorts his opponents to Christian conversion by expressions of regret in the sack of Rome, an insignificant anomaly in an otherwise uninterrupted peace, but one that could nonetheless be resolved through prayer: ‘Yet if only they would pray to Him who can end this unrest though it be small, and through whose blessing they have this continued peace unknown to other times!’<sup>854</sup> (1.21.19, p. 43) It is pernicious and stubborn pagan disbelief that is responsible for the sack, and those blasphemers are ignorant of the mercy and authority of God which is demonstrated fundamentally by the survival of Rome, ordained as the final and enduring empire.

Orosius’s ‘objectors’ are ‘enemies of truth’ (*inimici ueritatis*) who see with a ‘defective eye’ (*uitioso oculo*):<sup>855</sup>

They think that the whipping by a father is more serious than fires set by an enemy. They call God, who caresses, admonishes, and redeems, harsher than the devil who persecutes, domineers, and destroys them. And yet, if they understood the Father, they would rejoice in His chastising and, if the fruits of this experience were foreseen, the discipline would be bearable.<sup>856</sup> (4.6.39, p. 134)

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<sup>852</sup> 2.3.8-10, vol. 1, p. 89: *Quapropter desinant religionem lacerare et lacessere patientiam Dei propter quam habent, uti et hoc quoque inpunitum habeant, si aliquando desistant. Recolant sane mecum maiorum suorum tempora, bellis inquietissima, sceleribus execrabilia, dissensionibus foeda, miseriis continuatissima, quae et merito possunt horrere, quia fuerunt, et necessario debent rogare, ne sint.*

<sup>853</sup> 2.3.10, vol. 1, p. 90: *...eum sane rogare solum Deum qui et tunc occulta iustitia permisit ut fierent, et nunc aperta misericordia praestat ut non sint.*

<sup>854</sup> 1.21.19, vol. 1, p. 77: *Atque utinam ipsum depulsorem huius uel modicae inquietudinis precarentur, cuius munere hanc ignoratam aliis temporibus iugitatem pacis habuerunt.*

<sup>855</sup> 4.6.37, p. 134: ‘objectors’; in the Latin the subject is implied: 4.6.37, vol. 2, p. 26: *...de quorum numero sunt isti...*

<sup>856</sup> 4.6.39, vol. 2, pp. 26-7: *...qui grauiora arbitrantur flagella patris, quam hostis incendia; qui acerbiorum uocant blandientem, admonentem et redimentem Deum quam persequentem, dominantem trucidantemque diabolum; quamquam, si de patre intellegent, de castigatione gauderent et, si praeuideretur fructus eruditionis, esset disciplina tolerabilis...*

Fires set by an enemy (*hostis incendia*) returns to the metaphor of warfare as fire, here an allusion to the thwarted invasion of Rome by Radagaisus, and the ‘whipping’ (*flagella*) by a father refers to the Gothic sack of Rome.<sup>857</sup> The pagan perspective of recent events is flawed; Orosius’s opponents do not appreciate the relative leniency of the sack by Alaric, a Christian and a misguided ally of Rome, in comparison with the fate that was narrowly avoided in the near invasion of Italy by Radagaisus, ‘a pagan and a barbarian, a true Scythian’ (7.37.9, p. 350), and ‘the most savage by far of all former and present enemies’.<sup>858</sup> (7.37.4, p. 349) God’s punishment is a caress that admonishes and redeems. Orosius expects the epiphany of this understanding to produce rejoicing in the mercy of God and compassion of the Gothic sack. The Roman pagans should, after all, be grateful for the ‘bearable discipline’ that is for their own benefit. The pagan realisation that Orosius expects exceeds conversion to Christianity; he represents it as possible that his opponents can challenge and reinterpret pagan culture: ‘...they can also learn to despise their miseries from their own people with whom the highest evils were regarded as the highest blessings, provided they attained the celebrated and illustrious glory of high renown.’<sup>859</sup> (4.6.41, pp. 134-5) Orosius is here referring to the perception of Roman hegemony and martial suppression of non-Romans in laudable and idealised terms, an understanding that is undermined throughout the text.

We have seen how Orosius uses various rhetorical strategies in his attempt to reconcile the event of the sack of Rome within the text. The survival of Rome is emphasized, and the fate of the city avoiding destruction is attributed to Christianity. The mercy of God and the mildness of the sack are clear when the invasion is considered within a relative historical context that encompasses all disasters, and pagans should pray to God that miseries like those suffered in the past do not return. The leniency of God and the fortune of Rome in avoiding a more dire punishment are shown by the threat of invasion from Radagaisus, with the occupying force instead lead by Alaric, the Christian ally of Rome. But Orosius’s portrayal of the Christian God is not always compassionate and kind; following the narrative of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the first Book, the portrayal of God is more severe and threatening, justly destroying the land

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<sup>857</sup> For war as fire see 3.23.2-5 and 7.8.4-6; for discussion see above 5.1.4.

<sup>858</sup> 7.37.9, vol. 3, p. 109: *...paganus barbarus et uere Scythia*; 7.37.4, vol. 3, p. 107: *Radagaisus, omnium antiquorum praesentiumque hostium longe immanissimus...*

<sup>859</sup> 4.6.41, vol. 2, p. 27: *Quamquam contemptus miseriarum possunt etiam a suis discere, apud quos summa mala pro summis bonis aestimata sunt, tantum ut gloriam famae celebrem atque inlustrem consequerentur.*

with fire and brimstone: ‘So God, becoming enraged, poured fire and brimstone down upon this land and, burning the entire region with its people and cities, condemned it to eternal ruin as a witness of His judgement for future generations’ (1.5.9, p. 24).<sup>860</sup> The biblical exempla of Sodom and Gomorrah functions as a cautionary tale to the pagan populace: ‘...I warn these of this very fate of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, that they may be able to learn how God has punished sinners, how He can punish them, and how he will punish them.’<sup>861</sup> (1.6.6, p. 25) With the emphasis on promised punishment, Orosius warns that if Rome ignores the Gothic invasion, described as ‘very mild admonitions’, and pagan sacrifice continues, the fate of the *urbibus* of Sodom and Gomorrah would echo in the *urbs Romana*.<sup>862</sup>

### 6.2.2 The Main Event Minimized

The pointed comparison of the punishments of Babylon and Rome, directed at ‘those who cast as much spit upon Christ’, is intended to emphasize the survival of Rome and dismiss the impact of the Gothic invasion.<sup>863</sup> (1.6.1, p. 24) Orosius employs all of his rhetorical skill and force to downplay the sack, attacking his opponents and denigrating their arguments:

Yet how gladly would I accept their opinions, if they would faithfully acknowledge what they really feel. And yet I do not think that it ought to be taken very seriously that they murmur occasionally about Christian times and this in out-of-the-way places.<sup>864</sup>  
(1.6.2-3, p. 24)

Orosius undermines the authenticity of the pagan opposition by representing it as deceitful, and trivializes his attackers as few (*rari*) and muttering (*murmurent*) in ‘out-of-the-way places’ (*in angulis*). But his most effective and sustained polemic centres on an interpolation concerning the Roman people and the importance of the circus:

Moreover, the Roman people have borne witness unmistakably that the brief interruption of their customary pleasures caused them little and slight concern so that they freely exclaim: ‘If our circus is again restored to us, we will have suffered

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<sup>860</sup> 1.5.9, vol. 1, pp. 46-7: *Itaque iratus Deus pluit super hanc terram ignem et sulphur totamque regionem cum populis atque urbibus exustam, testem iudicii sui futuram, aeterna perditione damnauit.*

<sup>861</sup> 1.6.6, vol. 1, p. 48: *Quos saltem de hoc ipso exitu Sodomorum et Gomorraeorum moneo, ut discere atque intellegere queant, qualiter Deus peccatores punierit, qualiter punire possit, qualiter puniturus sit.*

<sup>862</sup> 1.6.5, p. 25: ‘very mild admonitions’; 1.6.5, vol. 1, p. 48: *...has clementissimas admonitiones.* 1.5.9, vol. 1, p. 47: *urbibus.* 1.5.9, p. 24: ‘cities’.

<sup>863</sup> 1.6.1, vol. 1, p. 47: *... hi qui in Christum... quantum in ipsis est sputa coniciunt.*

<sup>864</sup> 1.6.2-3, vol. 1, p. 47: *Et tamen quam libenter sententias eorum acciperem, si illi fideliter ita ut sentiunt faterentur, quamquam quid de temporibus Christianis rari et hoc in angulis murmurent, non usque adeo moleste accipiendum putem*



nothing'; that is to say that the swords of the Goths had accomplished nothing at Rome, if the Romans still be allowed to view the circus games.<sup>865</sup> (1.6.4, p. 24)

The verb *egisse* (*ago, agere*) which explains that actions of the Gothic swords is translated as 'accomplished' by Deferrari and 'had done' by Fear.<sup>866</sup> The meaning here could be literal, conveying the physical effect of the invading Goths; but the verb *agere* is usually defined in less passive and more dynamic terms, suggesting that the Gothic invasion was intended by divine providence to do more than simply disrupt the games, but to stop the games entirely. This is an early allusion to a theme that is developed extensively in subsequent books, of the sack overlaid with a moral purpose, to cleanse and edify the Roman populace in an ordeal which sorts and separates, in an echo of the Final Judgement.

### 6.2.3 Worshipping the Wrong Gods: Blame, Guilt, and the Theatre

Orosius minimizes the Gothic invasion with the presumably hypothetical argument ascribed to the Roman people, that if the circus is restored nothing has happened. But rather than understanding this to be accurately representative of the circumstance and feeling in Rome following the sack, a more probable interpretation sees it as a Christian gibe against the superficial and placatory pagan culture of entertainment, 'bread and circuses'.<sup>867</sup> Theatre attendance assumes a particularly anti-Christian significance in the *Historiae*, and, once associated with pagan sacrifice, becomes a means to shift blame for disaster from Christian to pagan:

So let our people understand...the theatres, not the times, are to be blamed, that the true God is not to be blasphemed who has always prohibited these things, but their gods and demons should be abominated who demanded them, indeed, with a very clear proof of their malignity demanding such a sacrifice, since they fed no more on the spilt blood of cattle than on the abandoned virtue of men.<sup>868</sup> (4.21.5-7, p. 168)

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<sup>865</sup> 1.6.4, vol. 1, p. 48: *...adeo autem paruo quodam et leui motu haesitasse erga se parumper consuetudinem uoluptatum indubitissime contestatus est, ut libere conclamaret, "Si reciperet circum, nihil esse sibi factum", hoc est, nihil egisse Romae Gothorum enses, si concedatur Romanis spectare circenses.* Orosius makes reference to the circus rather than to gladiatorial spectacles in order to pun on 'circuses' and 'swords', *circenses* and *enses*. Circus games were associated with imperial victory, and Orosius's emphasis on the circus could also be a pacifistic judgement on Rome's martial hegemony and success.

<sup>866</sup> 1.6.4: Deferrari, p. 24; Fear, p. 53.

<sup>867</sup> Juvenal, *Satires*, 10.81.

<sup>868</sup> 4.21.5-7, vol. 2, p. 70: *Quamobrem intellegant nostri...theatra incusanda non tempora, nec blasphemandum Deum uerum qui usque ad nunc ea prohibet, sed abominandos deos, uel daemones suos, qui ista petierunt, profundo quidem satis malignitatis suae argumento tale sacrificium flagitantes, quoniam non magis fuso cruore pecudum quam profligata uirtute hominum pascere.*

It is the theatres and not the current Christian times that are responsible for the fall of Rome to the Goths; the theatre has been forbidden by the true God but solicited by demons. The object of attack then switches from the theatre to sacrifice: the demand for sacrifice from the pagan gods is evidence of their wickedness, as it is not so much the blood of animals but the virtue of men that is consumed. This aggressive and inflammatory polemic specifically against pagan worship is comparatively rare in the course of the text; the narrative voice more usually adopts a general approach to religious practices and avoids direct criticism. However, the conflation of theatres and sacrifice is necessary for the construction of the theatre as a figurative altar (*aram*) for the sacrifice or slaughter (*trucidantur*) of virtue (*uirtutum*): '[theatres are] places where, incredible as it is to relate, men butcher their virtue as a sacrifice on the altar of luxury.'<sup>869</sup> (4.21.7, p. 202) In his burst of invective against pagan worship Orosius creates a maelstrom of negative association: the theatre is immoral, it is demanded by demons, associated with blood sacrifice, and responsible for the perdition of men. This highly critical and particular attack on paganism is relatively anomalous within the *Historiae*, but comes at a sensitive point in the text where the denunciation of pagan opponents intensifies in the apportioning of blame for disaster.

#### 6.2.4 Dealing with Disaster

For the *Historiae*, a text which covers all of human history, the sack of Rome is the disaster of greatest significance, although the event is given sparing textual space in accordance with the approach to downplay the invasion. The text employs various rhetorical tactics to engage with and reconcile the sack of Rome specifically and the theme of disaster more widely. A tight control is maintained on the reader's interpretation and response to the historical narrative, in the constant manipulation of events to suit the apologetic of the text. Orosius utilises the technique of comparison between the past and the present to demonstrate the past as much worse than the present, and the 'disasters' of the present as relatively gentle.<sup>870</sup> Catastrophe that occurs after the birth of Christ is significantly downplayed, in concurrence with the apologetic trajectory of improving time following the creation of a universal Christian

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<sup>869</sup> Fear's translation more accurately captures the meaning and has been used. 4.21.7, vol. 2, p. 70: *...in quibus – quod incredibile dictu est – ad aram luxuriae uirtutum uictimae trucidantur.*

<sup>870</sup> Orosius's apologetic approach to compare past and present events is specifically discussed in Section One, 'Apologetic and the Comparison of Time', and 'Past vs. Present'.

commonwealth. With the intensification of the debate concerning which religious practices are responsible, blame for disaster is shifted firmly away from God and Christians and onto pagans and the multitude of demons demanding sacrifice and sin.

### 6.2.5 Recalling the Gauls: The Gallic and Gothic Sacks Compared

The technique of comparing historical events to facilitate the Orosian presentation of past disasters as much worse than the present is most effective in the parallels drawn between the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 BC and the Gothic sack in AD 410, described by Fear as the ‘centrepiece of Orosius’s defence of Christianity.’<sup>871</sup> When considering the disasters of the present, as a means of consolation Orosius directs his reader to ‘recall the Gauls’, to apply the events of the past to the present in order to improve their perspective in relative terms and demonstrate that things could be much worse: ‘...as often as the Gauls flared up, the resources of Rome were diminished, so that in the present trouble with the Goths, we should rather recall the Gauls.’<sup>872</sup> (3.22.15, p. 112) The portrayal of the Gallic sack is overtly negative, with the narrative concentrating on the slaughter and sabotage by the ruthless Gallic invaders, and the despair and destruction as a result of the subsequent siege of the city:

The Gauls entered the City which lay open to them, slew the senators who sat rigid as statues in their chairs, and after burning them by the fire of their homes, buried them under the collapsing roofs. All the remaining youth...they shut in with a siege as they lay concealed in the citadel of Capitoline Hill and there they wore down those unfortunate survivors by famine, disease, desperation, and fear; then they subdued them and sold them into slavery.<sup>873</sup> (2.19.7-8, p. 75)

The Gallic sack saw the brutal massacre of the Roman senators who were burned ‘by the fire of their homes’ and ‘buried under the collapsing roofs’, scarcely a senator survived; but during the Gothic invasion scarcely could a senator be found to have died, and those that had perished accidentally whilst hiding.<sup>874</sup> The Gallic siege of Rome that

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<sup>871</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 108, fn. 189. See Harris, (2003), pp. 98-100 for discussion of the Gallic and Gothic sacks.

<sup>872</sup> 3.22.15, vol. 1, p. 178: *Ita autem quotienscumque Galli exarserunt, totis opibus suis Roma detrita est, ut sub praesenti nunc concursatione Gotthorum magis debeat meminisse Gallorum.*

<sup>873</sup> 2.19.7, vol. 1, p. 126: *Patentem Galli urbem penetrant, trucidant rigentes simulacrorum modo in suis sedilibus senatores eosque incendio domorum crematos lapsu culminum suorum sepiunt. Uniuersam reliquam iuuentutem, quam constat uix mille hominum tunc fuisse, in arce Capitolini montis latitantem obsidione concludunt, ibique infelices reliquias fame, peste, desperatione, formidine terunt, subigunt, uendunt.*

<sup>874</sup> 2.19.13, p. 76: ‘...there, scarcely any senator was found who by flight had escaped; here, scarcely anyone was sought who by chance perished while hiding. I could, indeed, rightly make the comparison that the number of senators in the one case was the same as that of the lost in the other.’ 2.19.13, vol. 1, p.

crushed the unfortunate survivors 'held possession of the exhausted ashes of the burned and conquered city' for almost a year (7.39.17, p. 355), whilst the Gothic sack lasted only for three days.<sup>875</sup> (2.19.13, p. 76) Orosius's representation of the two events is disingenuous; before the actual sacking of the city in 410 the Goths besieged Rome three times over two years, and it is very probable that the Roman inhabitants were similarly worn down and desperate in the early fifth century AD as in the fourth century BC.

Orosius gives a particularly poignant and emotive account of the physical and psychological impact of the invasion with the image of the departing Gauls leaving behind a deserted and ruined city:

As the Gauls departed there had remained within the circuit of the former city a repulsive mass of shapeless ruins, and on all sides the echo of the unfortunate voices of those wandering over obstructions and not knowing that they were among their own possessions resounded and kept ears alarmed. Horror shook men's minds; the very silence terrified, for the material of fear is loneliness in open spaces.<sup>876</sup> (2.19.10-11, pp. 75-6)

Orosius paints the very worse picture he could conjure up, of bleakness and utter despair, where the Romans are mentally disturbed by horror and terror, traumatised to the extent that they do not know or recognise their own city. Rome is shaken to its very core; the Gauls, 'persecuting the very name of Rome in the last ashes', compelled the Romans to attempt to abandon the city and their homes for another town, 'even to be called by another name.'<sup>877</sup> (2.19.13, p. 76) The physical reality of the city has been damaged and altered to the point that it is unrecognisable to its inhabitants, reduced to 'shapeless ruins', a bleak landscape of silence and open spaces.

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127: *...ibi uix quemquam inuentum senatorem qui uel absens euaserit, hic uix quemquam requiri qui forte ut latens perierit. Recte sane compararim hunc fuisse ibi seruatorum numerum qui hic fuerit perditorum.*

<sup>875</sup> 7.39.17, vol. 3, p. 117: *Neque uero Gallorum meminisse in huiusmodi conlatione debeo, qui continuo paene anni spatio incensae euersaeque Urbis adtritros cineres possederunt.* 2.19.13, p. 76: 'Truly, these two captivities are similar and comparable to each other, the one raging for six months and the other running its course in three days'. 2.19.13, vol. 1, p. 127: *Reuera pares sunt et conferuntur inter se hae duae captiuitates! illa sex mensibus desaeuiens et tribus diebus ista transcurrrens.*

<sup>876</sup> 2.19.10-11, vol. 1, p. 126: *Exeuntibus Gallis, remanserat in illo quondam Urbis ambitu informium ruinarum obscena congeries et undique per impedita errantium et inter sua ignotorum offensae uocis imago respondens trepidos suspendebat auditus. Horror quatuebat animos, silentia ipsa terrebant: siquidem materia pauoris est raritas in spatiosis.*

<sup>877</sup> 2.19.11, vol. 1, p. 126: *Hinc illis mutare sedes, aliud incolere oppidum, altero etiam censeri nomine cogitatum placitum atque temptatum est.*

Following the unsettling depiction of the Gallic invasion, Orosius invites the reader to directly compare the two sacks of Rome: ‘Behold the times in comparison with which the present is weighed; behold the times for which our memory sighs; behold the times which strike us with penitence...these two captivities are similar and comparable to each other...’.<sup>878</sup> (2.19.12-13) The juxtaposition of the disasters encourages the interpretation that the Gallic sack brought Rome to the brink of annihilation, with the Roman populace exterminated and the city destroyed. On the other hand, the Goths are respectful and merciful in their behaviour, abandoning their intention of plundering and ‘driving the confused hoards into refuges of safety, that is, sacred places’ (2.19.13, p. 76).<sup>879</sup> The Gallic sack ‘raged’ (*desaeuiens*) for almost an entire year, whilst the Gothic sack ran its course in only three days.<sup>880</sup> The Gauls slaughtered the senators, whilst the Goths allowed them to escape. Orosius even argues that the Goths lacked brutality and aggression to such an extent that lightning divinely sent (*missus e caelo ignis euertit*) had to finish their task:

...in this present disaster God was more angry and men less so, since by Himself performing what they would not have fulfilled...For since it was beyond human strength to burn bronze beams and to overthrow large massive structures, the Forum, together with its empty images, was struck by a bolt of lightning...that which the fire let loose by the enemy did not reach, fire sent from heaven cast down.<sup>881</sup> (2.19.14-15, p. 76)

Orosius’s account of the Gallic sack reproduces the Livian narrative but with the suppression of the pagan religious elements, such as the alarm-cry of Juno’s sacred geese and the preservation of the sacred vessels by the Vestal virgins.<sup>882</sup> This textual manipulation simplifies the account, facilitating its purpose as a foil to the Gothic sack,

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<sup>878</sup> 2.19.12-13, vol. 1, pp. 126-7: *En tempora quorum conparatione praesentia ponderantur; en, quibus recordatio suspirat; en, quae incutiunt de electa uel potius de neglecta religione paenitentiam! Reuera pares sunt et conferuntur inter se hae duae captiuitates!* A similar challenge to the reader can be found at 2.19.4, p. 75: ‘Let anyone, if he can, compare some of the disturbances of this age with this disaster, although he does not weigh equally the story of a past disaster with a calamity in the present.’ 2.19.4, vol. 1, p. 125: *Cui cladi audeat quisquam, si potest, aliquos motus huius temporis conparare, quamuis non aequae pendat praeteriti mali fabulam praesentis iniurua!*

<sup>879</sup> 2.19.13, vol. 1, p. 127: *...et Gothi relictis intentione praedandi ad confugia salutis, hoc est sanctorum locorum, agmina ignara cogentes.*

<sup>880</sup> 2.19.13, p. 76: ‘raging’; 2.19.13, vol. 1, p. 127: *desaeuiens*.

<sup>881</sup> 2.19.14-15, vol. 1, p. 127: *...in hac clade praesenti plus Deum saeuisse, homines minus, cum, peragendo ipse quod illi non inpleuissent, cur eos miserit, demonstrauit. Quippe cum supra humanas uires esset incendere aeneas trabes et subruere magnarum moles structurarum, ictu fulminum forum cum imaginibus uanis quae superstitione miserabili uel Deum uel hominem mentiuntur, abiectum est; horumque omnium abominamentorum, quod inmissa per hostem flamma non adiit, missus e caelo ignis euertit.*

<sup>882</sup> See Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 5.47 and 5.40 respectively.

encouraging the reader to appreciate the extremity of past disasters and the relative tranquillity of the present.

### **6.2.6 The Gothic Sack**

This Chapter has explored the various ways in which the text comprehends the sack of Rome as a traumatic event, one that needs explanation and rationalisation for both a pagan and Christian audience. We have seen how the sack of AD 410 and the fate of Rome is favourably compared to other historical exempla such as the destruction of Babylon, the obliteration of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the devastation of Rome by the Gauls. A hypothetical comparison is also employed in the averted fate of Rome, with the threat of invasion from Radagaisus forestalled in preference for the more lenient Christian king Alaric, whose every attempt not to sack Rome was met with opposition from the proud and obstinate Romans. The sack is represented as being for the benefit of the Romans, a justified and lenient punishment for which they should be grateful. The accusers who place the blame for the sack firmly on Christianity are denigrated and their attacks are shown to be unjustified. Finally culpability for the sack is shifted onto the pagan gods or ‘demons’ who demand continued blood sacrifice and the spectacle of the circus. Orosius’s methodology in engaging with the fall of Rome is to deny, denigrate, and most significantly, to downplay. These rhetorical approaches are most prominent and fundamental to the narrative moment of the sack itself towards the end of the *Historiae*.

### **6.2.7 The Significance of the Sack**

Despite Orosius’s sustained attempts at minimalism, it is difficult to overstate the significance of the fall of Rome; it is more than another historical event. It stands apart within a text constructed around the travails of human history, where the sacking of cities, warfare, slaughter and disasters are common currency. The sack is the culmination of the Orosian narrative of the irreligion and wickedness of humanity before Christianity, transcending the confines of time to function as a punishment for persistent paganism and wilful ignorance of the truth of Christianity throughout history. The event is the crucible of the text, the moment that threatens to invalidate Orosius’s use of history for apologetic ends and to prove the pagan polemical attack that the Christian God is weak and ineffective, and the neglected pagan deities require worship

to avert disaster. The catastrophe jeopardizes the very existence of Christianity as a credible religion less than twenty years after the pagan cults were outlawed. The threatened restoration of pagan sacrifice simmers beneath the textual surface in the tense and troubled period of anticipation before the Gothic Radagaisus invaded: ‘Everywhere there was much complaining and immediately there arose discussions about renewing and celebrating the sacrifices; blasphemies raged in the whole city; the name of Christ was publicly weighed down with reproaches as if a curse upon the times.’<sup>883</sup> (7.37.7, p. 350) Similarly Eucherius, the son of Stilicho, promised to mark the beginning of his reign following the usurpation of the emperor Honorius by restoring the pagan temples and overthrowing the churches (7.38.6).<sup>884</sup> Disregarding the historical accuracy of this narrative claim, it is this final threat of the resurrection of the old rites that prompts God to send the Goths to sack the city, a long-awaited punishment that can no longer be deferred: ‘So, after such a great increase in blasphemies as this and no repentance, that final and long-impending punishment reached the city.’<sup>885</sup> (7.38.7, p. 353) It is crucial that the text rejoins strongly, portraying the Gothic sack as the final nail in the coffin of paganism rather than an episode in the continuing struggle between monotheism and polytheism. The credibility of the text and the authority of Orosius’s polemic rely upon the Christian narrative of the sack becoming the accepted historical version, a version which is conventionally challenged in modern criticism but is nonetheless the surviving version; there is no contemporary pagan equivalent that has survived intrinsically to match or contest Orosius’s description.<sup>886</sup>

### 6.2.8 The Orosian Reality of the Sack

The vindication of Christianity is of paramount importance in Orosius’s representation of the fall of Rome, a position achieved through the alternative, arguably fictional,

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<sup>883</sup> 7.37.7, vol. 1, p. 108: *Magnis querellis ubique agitur et continuo de repetendis sacris celebrandisque tracatur, feruent tota Vrbe blasphemiae, uulgo nomen Christi tamquam lues aliqua praesentium temporum probis ingrauat.*

<sup>884</sup> 7.38.6, p. 353: ‘Eucherius was killed, who, to win the favour of the pagans, threatened to mark the beginnings of his reign by restoring the pagan temples and overthrowing the churches’. 7.38.6, vol. 3, p. 113: *...occisus Eucherius, qui ad concilandum sibi fauorem paganorum restitutione templorum et euersione ecclesiarum inbuturum se regni primordia minabatur...*

<sup>885</sup> 7.38.7, vol. 3, p. 113: *Itaque post haec tanta augmenta blasphemiarum nullamque paenitentiam ultima illa diuque suspensa Urbem poena consequitur.*

<sup>886</sup> Olympiodorus of Thebe’s account from the early fifth century survives in fragments. For a similar observation see Heather, (2007), p. 192: ‘No single source lays out for us in one clear sequence everything leading up to this momentous event [the sack of Rome], let alone explores their underlying cause. In part, this is testimony to its complexity. The sack of Rome was an end product of an interaction between multiple protagonists that no contemporary historian – none, at least, whose work has survived – was able to understand in its entirety.’

reality of the sack as a peaceful non-event, where the city and its citizens hardly suffered as the result of a hostile invasion by an aggressive military force following a break-down in diplomatic negotiations and a prolonged siege. The extent to which the disaster is minimized is extraordinary, with the actual event covered in one sentence: ‘On the third day after the barbarians had entered the city, they departed of their own accord, after burning a number of the buildings’.<sup>887</sup> (7.39.15, p. 355) Orosius’s efforts to downplay the Gothic sack make the event textually conspicuous, especially because such toned-down descriptions of atrocities are rare; it is more usual in general terms that violent occurrences are embellished and exaggerated.<sup>888</sup> The Christian landscape of Rome proves central in the salvation of the populace, following Alaric’s instruction to the barbarian hordes, although hungry for plunder (*praedae inhiantes*), not to harm those who sought refuge in the city’s churches:

Alaric was on hand, and he besieged, confused, and broke into fearful Rome, but after having first given the order that if any should take refuge in the holy places, especially the basilicas of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, they should permit these, in particular, although they were eager for plunder, to remain unharmed and unmolested.<sup>889</sup> (7.39.1, p. 353)

The two largest churches in Rome, St Peter’s and St Paul’s, are given special dispensation as places of sanctuary, endorsing the special relationship the saints had with early Christian Rome and their role as joint protectors of the city, pointedly highlighting the failure of the pagan deities.

The churches of Rome as havens of safety are similarly exploited by Augustine, who represents the sack as a new type of historical event, one that does not follow the usual conventions of warfare because of Christianity:

All the devastation, the butchery, the plundering, the conflagrations, and all the anguish which accompanied the recent disaster at Rome were in accordance with the general practice of warfare. But there was something which established a new custom, something which changed the whole aspect of the scene; the savagery of the barbarians

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<sup>887</sup> 7.39.15, vol. 3, p. 116: *Tertia die barbari quam ingressi Urbem fuerant sponte discedunt, facto quidem aliquantarum aedium incendio sed ne tanto quidem quantum septingentesimo conditionis eius anno casus effecerat.*

<sup>888</sup> Ward-Perkins, (2005), p. 22.

<sup>889</sup> 7.39.1, vol. 3, pp. 113-4: *Adest Alaricus, trepidam Romam obsidet, turbat, inrumpit, dato tamen praecepto prius ut si qui in sancta loca praecipueque in sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli basilicas confugissent, hos inprimis inuioltos securosque esse sinerent, tum deinde in quantum possent praedae inhiantes a sanguine temperarent.*



took on such an aspect of gentleness that the largest basilicas were selected and set aside to be filled with people to be spared by the enemy.<sup>890</sup>

Augustine is swift in his amendment to clarify that it is not the brutal barbarians who were merciful, attributing the miraculous survival of Rome's citizens emphatically to the Christian God. The 'fierce and savage minds' (*truculentissimas et saeuissimas mentes*) of the Goths were restrained and controlled by God as a demonstration of the mercy of a divine Christian punishment, a conceit echoed in Orosius's portrayal of the Gothic invaders as tools of God sent for the just retribution of pagan Rome: 'the storming of the city took place because of the wrath of God rather than because of the bravery of the enemy' (7.39.2, p. 353).<sup>891</sup> For both Orosius and Augustine the mercy of the Christian God is shown through the sanctified Christian space in the city that preserves lives and prevents slaughter, whilst the atrocities committed figuratively and literally beyond the Christian boundary are the responsibility of the pagan deities. But Orosius's depiction of the sack is more extreme than Augustine is willing to stretch. Rather than trying to sustain the denial that the invasion was a disaster with devastation, slaughter, plundering and fire, Augustine distinguishes between the Christian and pagan experience of the sack, with seeming indifference to the suffering of Roman pagans whose punishment was inevitable. By contrast Orosius entirely neutralises the violence and slaughter that must have accompanied the invasion in Alaric's command that where possible bloodshed should be avoided: 'He also told his men that as far as possible, they must refrain from shedding blood in their hunger for booty.'<sup>892</sup> (7.39.1, pp. 401-2) Augustine's narrative is characterised by justified slaughter and destruction, whereas Orosius's portrayal nullifies the negative in a sack without violence.

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<sup>890</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.7: *Quidquid ergo uastationis trucidationis depraedationis concremationis afflictionis in ista recentissima Romana clade commissum est, fecit hoc consuetudo bellorum; quod autem nouo more factum est, quod inusitata rerum facie inmanitas barbara tam mitis apparuit, ut amplissimae basilicae implendae populo cui parceretur eligerentur et decernerentur.*

<sup>891</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.7: 'Their fierce and savage minds were terrified, restrained, and miraculously controlled by him who long ago said, through his prophet, "I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with scourges: but I will not disperse my mercy from them."' *Truculentissimas et saeuissimas mentes ille terruit, ille frenauit, ille mirabiliter temperauit, qui per prophetam tanto ante dixit: Visitabo in uirga iniquitates eorum et in flagellis peccata eorum; misericordiam autem meam non dispergam ab eis.* 7.39.2, vol. 3, p. 114: *Accidit quoque, quo magis illa Urbis inruptio indignatione Dei acta quam hostis fortitudine probaretur...*

<sup>892</sup> Deferrari's translation here risks conflating Alaric's command not to harm those sheltering in Rome's churches, and not to shed blood if possible. The distinction is better preserved by Fear and his translation has been used. 7.39.1, vol. 1, p. 114: *...tum deinde in quantum possent praedae inhiantes a sanguine temperarent.*

Orosius's version of the Gothic invasion continually erodes the presupposition of hostility and destruction; particularly when contrasted with the past the event cannot be described as a disaster. The admission that the Goths burned 'a number of buildings' (*aliquantarum aedium*) is quickly minimized by comparison with the burning of Rome around 50 BC and the fire of Rome under Nero, where more damage was done (7.39.15-16, p. 355).<sup>893</sup> The rhetorical technique of *praeteritio* is used to highlight the Gallic sack as a more severe catastrophe: 'Nor do I need, moreover, to recall the Gauls in a comparison of this kind, who directly, over a period of almost a year, held possession of the exhausted ashes of the burned and conquered city.'<sup>894</sup> (7.39.17, p. 355) Then the city was reduced to ashes (*cineres*), burned and conquered (*incensae euersaeque*); now, Orosius argues, the impact of Alaric's attack is barely perceptible:

...although the memory of this even is fresh, nevertheless, if anyone sees the multitude of the Roman people themselves and hears their talk, he will think that nothing took place, as even they themselves confess, unless by chance he is informed by the ruins of the fire still remaining.<sup>895</sup> (7.40.1, pp. 355-6)

Not only does the sack give no reason for complaint, but a consequence of the invasion is even represented in positive terms. The capture and forced marriage of Galla Placidia, daughter of Theodosius I, to the Gothic king Athaulf, is of 'great benefit to the state' in uniting the Goths and Romans in a single commonwealth:

In this attack, Placidia, the daughter of the princely Theodosius and sister of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius, was captured and taken to wife by Athaulfus, a kinsman of Alaric's, as if, by divine decree, Rome had given her as a hostage and special pledge; thus by her marriage with this most powerful barbarian king, she was of great benefit to the state.<sup>896</sup> (7.40.2, p. 356)

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<sup>893</sup> 7.39.15-16, p. 355: 'On the third day after the barbarians had entered the city, they departed of their own accord, after burning a number of the buildings, to be sure, but not so many, indeed, as an accident had caused in the seven hundredth year after the founding of the city. For if I review the conflagration exhibited among the spectacles of her own emperor, Nero, without a doubt this fire, which the anger of the conqueror brought on, would never bear comparison with that which was enkindled by the wantonness of the prince.' 7.39.15-16, vol. 3, pp. 116-7: *Tertia die barbari quam ingressi Urbem fuerant sponte discedunt, facto quidem aliquantarum aedium incendio sed ne tanto quidem quantum septingentesimo conditionis eius anno casus effecerat. Nam si exhibitam Neronis imperatoris sui spectaculis inflammationem recenseam, procul dubio nulla conparatione aequiperabitur secundum id quod excitauerat lasciui principis, hoc quod nunc intulit ira uictoris.*

<sup>894</sup> 7.39.17, vol. 3, p. 117: *Neque uero Gallorum meminisse in huius modi conlatione debeo, qui continuo paene anni spatio incensae euersaeque Urbis adtritros cineres possederunt.*

<sup>895</sup> 7.40.1, vol. 3, p. 117: *...cuius rei quamuis recens memoria sit, tamen si quis ipsius populi Romani et multitudinem uideat et uocem audiat, "nihil factum", sicut etiam ipsi fatentur, arbitrabitur; nisi aliquantis adhuc exsistentibus ex incendio ruinis forte doceatur.*

<sup>896</sup> 7.40.2, vol. 3, pp. 117-8: *In ea inruptione Placidia, Theodosii principis filia, Arcadii et honorii imperatorum soror, ab Athaulfo, Alarici propinquo, capta atque in uxorem adsumpta, quasi eam diuino iudicio uelut speciale pignus obsidem Roma tradiderit, ita iuncta potentissimi barbari regis coniugio multo reipublicae commodo fuit.*

The narrative focus on the positive cannot conceal the forcible nature of Placidia's 'capture', that even with 'divine decree' (*divino iudicio*) she is still a 'hostage' (*obsidem*).<sup>897</sup> Orosius's description elides the gravity of the situation, but Placidia was the only surviving daughter of the emperor Theodosius and a vital link to the Valentinian dynasty. Just as the emperor Valerian's capture by the Persian king Shapur in AD 260 was a huge psychological blow to Rome, so Placidia's must have been.

### 6.2.9 Textual Distraction and a Disrupted Sack

Orosius's authorial strategy for coping with the disaster of the sack not only downplays the invasion but also diverts the narrative attention away from the chronology of events, focusing instead on a spurious anecdote concerning the suspension of the sack and the preservation of the sacred vessels of St Peter. Amidst the confusion of the rampaging barbarians, a powerful Goth stumbles upon an elderly 'virgin of Christ' perhaps sheltering in a church (7.39.4, p. 354).<sup>898</sup> He politely asks (*honeste exposceret*) for gold and silver, and she compliantly hands over 'the sacred vessels of the Apostle Peter' (7.39.5, p. 354).<sup>899</sup> The Goth is astonished by the quantity, weight, and beauty of the riches, and is so 'stirred to religious awe by the fear of God and by the faith of the virgin' that in consternation he sends word to Alaric (7.39.6, p. 354).<sup>900</sup> The order returns to escort all of the vessels, 'just as they were', back to the basilica of the Apostle along with the virgin and any other Christians (7.39.6, p. 354).<sup>901</sup> The Gothic pillage of the city is halted mid-way in religious reverence, and the Goths with the Romans, both Christian and pagan, form a procession through the city:

...to the great wonder of all, the gold and silver vessels, distributed one to each individual and raised above their heads, were carried openly; the pious procession was guarded on all sides for their protection by drawn swords; a hymn to God was sung publicly with Romans and barbarians joining in; in the sacking of the city, the trumpet of salvation sounded far and wide, and invited and struck all, even those lying in hidden places; from all sides the vessels of Christ came to the vessels of Peter.<sup>902</sup> (7.39.8-10, p. 354)

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<sup>897</sup> The question of Galla's willingness or coercion is raised by Hagith Sivan in her biography of Galla. Sivan, (2011), p. 12.

<sup>898</sup> 7.39.4, vol. 3, p. 114: *uirgo Christi*.

<sup>899</sup> 7.39.5, vol. 3, p. 114: *...Petri apostoli sacra ministeria...* 7.39.3, vol. 3, p. 114: *honeste exposceret*.

<sup>900</sup> 7.39.6, vol. 3, pp. 114-5: *Barbarus uero ad reuerentiam religionis timore Dei et fide uirginis motus*.

<sup>901</sup> 7.39.6, vol. 3, p. 115: *...uniuersa ut erant uasa imperauit*.

<sup>902</sup> 7.39.8-10, vol. 3, p. 115: *Itaque magno spectaculo omnium disposita per singulos singula et super capita elata palam aurea atque argentea uasa portantur; exertis undique ad defensionem gladiis pia pompa munitur; hymnum Deo Romanis barbarisque concinentibus publice canitur; personat late in*

The pagans and Christians mingle together (*admiscentur*) in their profession of faith; the pagans escape an earthly death at the hands of the Goths but compound their heavenly fate in the judgement of God (7.39.10, p. 354).<sup>903</sup> The more thickly the Romans ‘came together’ (*adgregantur*), the more eagerly (*avidius*) the barbarians surrounded them as their defenders (*defensores*).<sup>904</sup>

### 6.2.10 The Sack Reworked: Jerome, Marcella and *Epistula 127*

Orosius’s account of the sack is eclipsed in this remarkable incident, described as ‘one of the strangest and most moving passages of the whole work’.<sup>905</sup> The anecdote originates from a letter of Jerome to Principia, written around AD 412, and has been reworked and interpolated into the narrative of the sack.<sup>906</sup> Orosius’s reliance on Jerome’s *epistula* is not suggested through linguistic parallels; his revision is too extensive to preserve the same use of language. Instead it is evident when both sources are viewed together that the narrative structure of the event in the *Historiae* closely follows Jerome’s, although with different narrative consequences. This is evident in the confusion of the sack, the concentration on one soldier, the demand for treasure, the response of the holy woman that induces a change of attitude in the barbarians, and the escorting of the holy woman to a basilica. The excerpted and modified account from Jerome’s correspondence illustrates how texts were circulated in late antiquity, that a letter written in Bethlehem in AD 412 to a recipient presumably still in Rome could be utilised by Orosius in North Africa only five years subsequently. The letter could have been read by Orosius on visiting the Holy Land or Jerome could have verbally communicated the story to him.<sup>907</sup> But the specific ways Orosius conforms to and

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*excidio Urbis salutis tuba omnesque etiam in abditis latentes inuitat ac pulsat; concurrunt undique ad uasa Petri uasa Christi...*

<sup>903</sup> 7.39.10, vol. 3, p. 115.

<sup>904</sup> 7.39.10, p. 354: ‘the more thickly the Romans in their flight came together, the more eagerly the barbarians surrounded them as their defenders.’ 7.39.10, vol. 3, p. 115: *...quantoque copiosius adgregantur Romani confugientes, tanto avidius circumfunduntur barbari defensores.*

<sup>905</sup> Merrills, (2005), p. 42.

<sup>906</sup> Jerome, *Epistula 127*, to Principia. All quotations are taken from this Letter, chapters 13-14. See bibliography for details of text and translation.

<sup>907</sup> There is another instance in the *Historiae* where, according to Orosius, this appears to be the case: ‘For I myself heard a man of Narbo, of renowned military service under Theodosius, also religious, prudent, and serious, relating at Bethlehem, a town in Palestine, to the most blessed priest, Jerome...’ 7.43.4, p. 361. 7.43.4, vol. 3, p. 128: *Nam ego quoque ipse uirum quendam Narbonensem inlustris sub Theodosio militiae, etiam religiosum prudentemque at grauem, apud Bethleem oppidum Palaestinae beatissimo Hieronymo presbytero referentem audiui...*

digresses from Jerome's narrative suggests that he was working from a written version of *Epistula* 127.<sup>908</sup> The anecdote is attested only in Jerome's *epistula* prior to its incorporation and adaptation in the *Historiae*. The analysis here sees a shift in methodology towards a source critical approach. This was previously disavowed in Chapter One when discussing the *Historiae* in relation to *breviaria*, principally because the issues involved in such a discussion were too weighty in terms of size and importance, and because it was felt that a more useful analysis examined the parallels in style and genre between *breviaria* and the *Historiae*. However the thesis here benefits from close scrutiny of Orosius's version of the sack of Rome and his reliance and reuse of Jerome's *epistula* 127. The sack of Rome is arguably the most important moment of the whole text; it is crucial in a narrative sense, but also apologetically, as the argument and ability of the text to convince rests on the authorial manipulation of the event. The account in the *Historiae* and Jerome's *epistula* are finite and relatively brief, and it is therefore possible to closely examine the sources in parallel. It is also important to acknowledge and explore the connection between the two sources, as this has previously passed unrecognised.

Orosius's *uirgo christi*, the figure of central importance in his version of the sack, is in fact Marcella. The polite Christian Goth in the *Historiae* is described by Jerome as a 'bloodstained victor' (*cruentus uictor*) who violently beats Marcella following her refusal to satisfy his request for gold. According to Jerome's *epistula* Marcella pleads against the threat of rape, and the barbarians are made merciful by Christ, escorting Marcella and Principia to the basilica of St Paul where they may find either safety or a tomb. Marcella dies a few days later. The elaborations and elisions Orosius makes reveal his authorial priorities: Marcella's coarse dress (*uili...tunica*) proves her poverty and she has no treasure to surrender, whereas Orosius's virgin readily gives up the gold and silver vessels of St Peter. Marcella is 'scourged' and 'beaten with cudgels' (*caesam fustibus flagellisque*), but Orosius's Goth threatens no violence or rape. Christ softens the hard heart of Marcella's attacker (*Christus dura corda mollivit*), while it is specifically fear of God (*timore Dei*) and the faith of the virgin (*fide uirginis*) that moves Orosius's Goth to religious awe (*reuerentiam religionis...motus*).<sup>909</sup> Jerome's

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<sup>908</sup> On a broader scale the correspondence of Jerome's letter in Orosius's text raises questions about why letters were written and how they were collected, distributed and published in the late ancient world.

<sup>909</sup> 7.39.6, vol. 3, pp. 114-5: *Barbarus uero reuerentiam religionis timore Dei et fide uirginis motus...*

barbarians spontaneously deliver Marcella and Principia to the ‘basilica of the Apostle Paul’ (*apostoli Pauli basilicam*); Orosius’s narrative has the virgin and ‘all Christians who might join her’ escorted to the ‘basilica of the Apostle’ (*apostoli basilicam*).<sup>910</sup> (7.39.6-7, p. 354) This is done on Alaric’s orders, and his involvement reinforces his portrayal as Christian and merciful.

Orosius’s suppression of the basilica dedicated only to ‘the Apostle’ rather than specifically to St Paul is either deliberately obscure or a result of confusion. Where Jerome names the basilica Marcella and Principia are taken to as dedicated to the Apostle Paul, at the same narrative point in the *Historiae* the specific dedication of the basilica is not included. The sacred vessels of Saint Peter have already been centralised within Orosius’s narrative, and mention of a different basilica to Saint Peter’s would muddle the narrative. Featuring the vessels of Saint Peter is preferable perhaps because of the close association of the Saint with the city of Rome already in the fifth century, and the portrayal of Peter as the first Pope, reinforcing the notion of Rome as God’s chosen empire.<sup>911</sup> Following Jerome’s narrative it is most likely that Marcella and Principia were taken to St Paul’s outside-the-walls (San Paolo Fuori le Mura).<sup>912</sup> Orosius describes the geographical location of the basilica in the city: ‘This building, as they say, was far from the sacred places and with half the city in between.’<sup>913</sup> (7.39.7, p. 354) This description accords with St Paul’s outside-the-walls and not St Peter’s, which is relatively close to the ancient centre of Rome. The verb *reportari*, *reportare*, to ‘return’ or ‘carry back’, is used to describe the vessels being brought back to the basilica, but it is nonsensical for the vessels of Saint Peter to be kept and returned to Saint Paul’s basilica. The text here reveals the reliance on and manipulation of the source, in the combination of two narratives, one taken from Jerome and the other created by Orosius, with the result betraying small but significant inconsistencies. According to Jerome’s letter Marcella and her companion Principia are escorted to the church to find safety or a tomb (*ut uel salutem vobis ostenderent, uel sepulcrum*). Orosius transforms the removal of Marcella into the fantastical Christian procession

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<sup>910</sup> 7.39.6-7, vol. 3, p. 115: *...qui continuo reportari ad apostoli basilicam...imperauit, uirginem etiam simulque omnes qui se adiungerent Christianos...*

<sup>911</sup> The preservation of the vessels of Saint Peter is noted by Cassiodorus in a letter written in AD 536. Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 12.20.4.

<sup>912</sup> This is more likely when considering the relatively large size of the basilicas of St Peter and St Paul in Rome and the emphasis in other sources that these were set aside as places of sanctuary during the sack.

<sup>913</sup> 7.39.7, vol. 3, p. 115: *Ea domus a sanctis sedibus longe, ut ferunt, et medio interiectu Urbis aberat.*

through the city, extending the number of participants, ‘with all Christians who might join her’, and centralising the sacred vessels: ‘to the great wonder of all, the gold and silver vessels, distributed one to each individual and raised above their heads, were carried openly’.<sup>914</sup> Jerome’s account ends with the focus on Marcella, on her spiritual and scriptural reaction to her suffering and death as a result of her injuries a few days (*post aliquot dies*) after the attack. Orosius’s virgin is not mentioned again; instead the focus shifts to the ‘pious procession’ (*pia pompa*) protected by drawn swords and accompanied by hymn-singing barbarians and Romans (*hymnum Deo Romanis barbarisque...canitur*), with pagans and Christians alike flocking to the vessels.<sup>915</sup>

### 6.2.11 The Integration of Narrative

Jerome’s vivid description of the fall of Rome dramatically interwoven with the death of Marcella made his *Epistula* 127 attractive and appropriate material for Orosius when constructing his own version of the sack, which adopts Jerome’s narrative but with crucial differences: the invading enemy is Christianised and their hostility mitigated; any hint of violence or death is removed; the sacred vessels are added; and the parade through the city that suspends the sack is imagined. The significance of the invasion historically as well as textually is demonstrated by the particular attention Orosius gives to revising the sack, a revision that risked displeasing his patron Jerome who was still alive at the time of composition, as was Principia in all probability, who is completely elided from Orosius’s account. The anonymizing of Marcella and the reworking of her biographical tribute without acknowledgement to source or subject had the potential to irritate Jerome, especially with the consideration of Andrew Cain’s research exposing Jerome’s construction of orthodox authority based on his association with Marcella.<sup>916</sup>

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<sup>914</sup> 7.39.7, p. 354: ‘with all Christians who might join her’; 7.39.7, vol. 3, p. 115: *...qui se adiungerent Christianos...* 7.39.8, p. 354: ‘to the great wonder of all, the gold and silver vessels, distributed one to each individual and raised above their heads, were carried openly’; 7.39.8, vol. 3, p. 115: *...magno spectaculo omnium disposita per singulos singula et super capita elata palam aurea atque argentea uasa portantur.*

<sup>915</sup> 7.39.8, p. 354: ‘pious procession’; 7.39.8, vol. 3, p. 115: *pia pompa*. 7.39.9, vol. 3, p. 115: *hymnum Deo Romanis barbarisque...canitur.*

<sup>916</sup> For example, see Cain, (2009a), p. 57: ‘Jerome brilliantly transformed the historical Asella and Marcella into iconic symbols for his ascetic, scholarly, and theological special interests as part of a sophisticated effort to buttress his claims to spiritual and intellectual authority, internally within his own community of followers and externally to the wider Christian world...By heralding them [Asella and Marcella] not only as *exempla* of piety that all believers should emulate but also as the reputable public faces of his teachings, he was positioning himself with marvellous subtlety as a figure of virtually apostolic proportions, as the pre-eminent advocate of the true Christian faith in all of its ethical and doctrinal dimensions.’ See also Cain, (2009b), p. 83 and p. 93: ‘Jerome sculpts her [Marcella] into his

Orosius's emendation of Jerome's anecdote had consequences for the later textual transmission of the narrative of the fall of Rome; the account of Principia is again distorted by Sozomen in his description of the sack in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, written in the 440's. Marcella is once again not mentioned by name but this time she is young and beautiful. The invading Goth attempts to rape her twice but she resists him, and he is so impressed by her chastity that he escorts her to the church of St Peter's and gives her six pieces of gold.<sup>917</sup> Orosius's alterations to the narrative highlight his authorial method, that factual accuracy is not his primary concern and he is not afraid to transform with added invention the material he finds in other sources, sources that reveal the ecclesiastical context that he was working within.

This Chapter has explored how Orosius reverses the expectations of the reader in finding a dire account of the fall of Rome, with violence, slaughter, horror, and destruction. This portrayal is evident where the Gallic sack of 390 BC is described, but Orosius neutralises the invasion of AD 410 as a disaster: in the interpolated words of the Roman populace, *nihil factum*; the sack is a peaceful non-event.<sup>918</sup> The authorial strategy of minimalisation is combined with distraction, where the reader's anticipation of catastrophe is diverted by concentration on a specific anecdote through which the sack is related. This discrete narrative refocuses from the micro to macro, directing the course of events in the involvement of the Roman populace and the holy procession in praise of God accompanied by drawn swords, the trumpet of salvation and hymns of praise. But Orosius's expanded narrative ultimately did more than this; in opportunistic fashion it transforms the sack entirely, from an obstacle that impedes the discourse of improving time into a narrative moment of pure positivity, rich in figurative significance. The sack is initially portrayed as a punishment ordained by God, with the Gothic invasion as the 'final and long-impending punishment' of pagan Rome (7.38.7,

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*alter ego*...Jerome's literary compartmentalization of her...was a bold move to assert his intellectual and spiritual proprietorship over a woman who in real life had her own mind and was anything but a meek and submissive devotee. And this was while she was alive. When Marcella died, Jerome made sure that posterity would remember her for all time - but wholly on his terms, as his devoted protégée.' Mark Vessey has argued that Jerome used his correspondence with Marcella to portray himself as the next Origen. Vessey, (1993).

<sup>917</sup> Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.10.

<sup>918</sup> 7.40.1, vol. 3, p. 117: *...cuius rei quamuis recens memoria sit, tamen si quis ipsius populi Romani et multitudinem uideat et uocem audiat, "nihil factum"*.



p. 353).<sup>919</sup> The ‘audacious idolatry’ of ‘ungrateful Rome’ could not be pardoned but could be checked by the ‘wrath of God’ (7.37.17, p. 352).<sup>920</sup> The storming of the city takes place because of divine fury and not because of the ‘bravery of the enemy’.<sup>921</sup> (7.39.2, p. 353) The Goths are permitted to attack Rome but only as the ‘chastisement’ of the ‘proud, wanton and blasphemous city’ (7.39.18, p. 355).<sup>922</sup> The sack is imbued with a Christian significance that demonstrates how the force of divine providence directs human events, presiding over the course of history with conspicuous intervention, making the neglect of Christian worship or deliberate ignorance of Christianity particularly nonsensical.

### 6.2.12 The Sack Transformed

As the narrative of the sack progresses the event evolves, with reality receding as the symbolic, complete with Scriptural allusion (which will be discussed overleaf), takes precedence:

O that glorious trumpet of Christian warfare, which, inviting all in general to life by its very sweet tone, leaves those whom it has not stirred up in their disobedience to salvation, for death without an excuse! This mystery, which consisted in the transferring of vessels, in the singing of hymns, and in the escorting of the people, was, I think, like a large sieve, through which from the congregation of the Roman people, as from a great mass of grain, through all the openings of the hiding places from the entire circuit of the city, the living grain flowed forth, moved either by the occasion or by truth; but all who believed in the present salvation were received from the granary of the Lord’s preparation, but the others, like dung and straw, were left for extinction and burning.<sup>923</sup> (7.39.12-14, p. 354-5)

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<sup>919</sup> ‘So, after such a great increase in blasphemies as this and no repentance, that final and long-impending punishment reached the city.’ 7.38.7, vol. 3, p. 113: *Itaque post haec tanta augmenta blasphemiarum nullamque paenitentiam ultima illa diuque suspensa Urbem poena consequitur.*

<sup>920</sup> 7.37.17, vol. 3, p. 111: *Igitur ingrata Roma, quae sicut nunc sensit non ad remittendam, sed ad reprimendam idolatriae praesumptionem, iudicis Dei obliquam misericordiam, ita continuo propter uiuorum mortuorumque sanctorum piam recordationem Dei iram passura non plenam...*

<sup>921</sup> 7.39.2, vol. 3, p. 114: *Accidit quoque, quo magis illa Urbis inruptio indignatione Dei acta quam hostis fortitudine probaretur...*

<sup>922</sup> 7.39.18, vol. 3, p. 117: *Et ne quisquam forte dubitaret ad correptionem superbae lascivae et blasphemae ciuitatis hostibus fuisse permissum...*

<sup>923</sup> 7.39.12-14, vol. 3, p. 116: *O praeclara illa Christianae militiae tuba! quae generaliter cunctos dulcissimo ad uitam modulamine inuitans, quos ad salutem inoboedientes non suscitauit, inexcusabiles reliquit ad mortem. Mystrium hoc quod in transferendis uasis, dicendis hymnis, ducendis populis fuit, tamquam magnum cribrum fuisse arbitror per quod ex congregatione populi Romani tamquam ex magna massa frumenti per omnia ex uniuerso ambitu ciuitatis latebrarum foramina effluxere grana uiua, siue occasione, siue ueritate, commota; omnia tamen de praesenti salute credentia ex horreo dominicae praeparationis accepta sunt, reliqua uero uelut stercora et uelut paleae ipsa uel incredulitate uel inoboedientia praeiudicatae, ad exterminium atque incendium remanserunt.*

The sack here assumes a new level of figurative significance, becoming more than an intrinsic detail in time, expanding into a crucible for the judgement and cleansing of pagan Rome. As the imagery becomes increasingly allegorical the sack adopts a sense of timelessness, that the subjection of the Romans to a divine sorting is of wider consequence for humanity. This is no longer the relation of history, or even the relation of history with philosophical meaning. History has been transformed into a message of Christian morality, an imperative to Christian belief and worship, and a presage of the impending and inescapable judgement of humanity.<sup>924</sup>

### 6.2.13 Scripture Within the Sack

Orosius draws on imagery and narrative from the Old and New Testaments to augment and intensify the rhetorical effect of the transformed sack and to indicate this as a moment of exceptional significance. These Scriptural allusions emphasise the sack as a purge of the unworthy and irreligious, sorting the Christian faithful from the faithless, and the wrathful vengeance as well as the merciful benevolence of God. The pious procession of Goths and Romans through the city to sanctuary is intended to evoke the Book of Exodus and the Israelites's crossing of the Red Sea: the Romans are the Egyptian persecutors and the Christians are the new Israelites, escaping oppression in a final cleansing; the drawn swords of the Goths on every side are the walls of water of the Red Sea held back by Moses's hand; in both narratives for the righteous the procession is the way to safety, for the wicked it is a 'pitfall of unexpected death' (1.10.15, p. 31).<sup>925</sup> Orosius endorses his version of the sack by transposing the biblical imagery of the trumpet, encouraging the association between its Scriptural function and its significance within the sack. The 'trumpet of salvation' sounds far and wide as the city falls, 'calling out' and 'rousing up' (*inuitat ac pulsat*) the Roman populace.<sup>926</sup> (7.39.9, p. 354) The 'glorious trumpet of Christian warfare' calls humanity to life by its 'sweet music' (*dulcissimo...modulamine*), leaving the disobedient who are far from

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<sup>924</sup> Harris's reading of the sack is more literal, interpreting the barbarian invaders as separating the Christians and pagans, violently punishing those pretending to the Christian faith: 'Following this holy moment in the sacking of Rome, Orosius relates that the Goths spared all Christians and slaughtered all pagans. This, Orosius remarks, surely evinces the hand of God since even in crowds into which pagans had deviously insinuated themselves, falsely professing the Christian faith, the uncouth, barbarian Goths were somehow able to discern real Christians from these wily pretenders.' Harris, (2003), p. 98.

<sup>925</sup> 1.10.15, vol. 1, p. 57: *...impium foueam insperatae mortis intrarent*. See Exodus, 14.10-30.

<sup>926</sup> 7.39.9, vol. 3, p. 115: *...salutis tuba...*

salvation and devoid of excuses to die (*reliquit ad mortem*).<sup>927</sup> The narrative operates on two levels of interpretation: the literal events of the sack continue to be related, that those who do not join the procession risk physical harm; and a more prominent discourse overlies this narrative, that the disobedient who ignore the rousing call of Christian salvation will suffer a spiritual ‘death’ in their disbelief.

In the Old and New Testaments the image of the trumpet signals human encounter with the divine, often within a context of resurrection, judgement and transformation. In Exodus the sound of the trumpet heralds the meeting of God and the Israelites at the foot of mount Sinai.<sup>928</sup> In Revelation the trumpet accompanies voices in heaven proclaiming that the earth has become the kingdom of Jesus and God, and He will reign eternally. This occurs within an apocalyptic context of judgement, that the raging of the nations prompts the wrath of God, and the judgement of the dead occurs, with the faithful and God-fearing rewarded, and the destroyers of the earth themselves destroyed.<sup>929</sup> In Corinthians the sound of the last trumpet heralds the raising of the dead and a universal transformation of humanity.<sup>930</sup> In Thessalonians with the sound of the trumpet the Lord will descend from heaven, judging the the dead and the living who will ascend with Christ and be with the Lord forever.<sup>931</sup> In the *Historiae* the trumpet raises the spiritual ‘dead’, prompting spontaneous conversion in the euphoria of the

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<sup>927</sup> 7.39.12, vol. 3, p. 116: *O praeclara illa Christianae militiae tuba! quae generaliter cunctos dulcissimo ad uitam modulamine inuitans, quos ad salutem inoboedientes non suscitauit, inexcusabiles reliquit ad mortem.*

<sup>928</sup> Exodus, 19:16-18: ‘On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain.’

<sup>929</sup> Revelation, 11:15-18: ‘Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’ Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, singing, ‘We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saint and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.’

<sup>930</sup> 1 Corinthians, 15:51-53: ‘Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised, imperishable, and we will all be changed.’

<sup>931</sup> 1 Thessalonians, 4:13-18: ‘But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sister, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.’

procession which praises God and protects the citizens of Rome. The ‘glorious trumpet of Christian warfare’ effectively sorts the Roman populace, inviting all to life but leaving those who obstinately refuse the divine truth of Christianity to death.<sup>932</sup> (7.39.12, p. 354)

The transformation of the sack designed to evoke the Last Judgement is facilitated by the metaphorical sieve:

This mystery, which consisted of the transferring of vessels, in the singing of hymns, and in the escorting of the people, was, I think, like a large sieve, through which from the congregation of the Roman people, as from a great mass of grain, through all the openings of the hiding places from the entire circuit of the city, the living grain flowed forth, moved either by the occasion or by truth.<sup>933</sup> (7.39.13, p. 355)

The image of the sieve is an allusion to the book of Amos, where God promises to shake the house of Israel ‘as one shakes with a sieve’ and all sinners will die by the sword.<sup>934</sup> The city of Rome is the sieve and the Roman people are the ‘living grain’ (*grana uiua*), an image derived from the Gospel of Matthew and the analogy of the wheat and the tares: ‘...and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’<sup>935</sup> Following Matthew, Rome is the threshing-floor and the ‘wheat’, the Roman Christians, safely enter the ‘granary’, whilst those worthless and disobedient unbelievers are left for burning: ‘But all who believed in the present salvation were received from the granary of the Lord’s preparation, but the others, like dung and straw, already judged for their very unbelief and disobedience, were left for extinction and burning.’<sup>936</sup> (7.39.14, p. 355) Orosius’s evocation of Matthew gives eschatological overtones to the sack. The event is intended to be understood as an echo of the Final Judgement, where the

<sup>932</sup> 7.39.12, vol. 3, p. 116: *O praeclara illa Christianae militiae tuba!*

<sup>933</sup> 7.39.13, vol. 3, p. 116: *Mysterium hoc quod in transferendis uasis, dicendis hymnis, ducendis populis fuit, tamquam magnum cribrum fuisse arbitror per quod ex congregatione populi Romani tamquam ex magna massa frumenti per omnia ex uniuerso ambitu ciuitatis latebrarum foramina effluxere grana uiua, siue occasione, siue ueritate, commota.*

<sup>934</sup> Amos, 9: 9: ‘...I will command and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the ground. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword...’

<sup>935</sup> Matthew, 4:12. 7.39.13, vol. 3, p. 116: *grana uiua.*

<sup>936</sup> 7.39.14, vol. 3, p. 116: *...omnia tamen de praesenti salute credentia ex horreo dominicae praeparationis accepta sunt, reliqua uero uelut stercora et uelut paleae ipsa uel incredulitate uel inoboedientia praeiudicatae, ad exterminium atque incendium remanserunt.* Orosius is also playing on the similarly apocalyptic analogy of the wheat and the weeds in Matthew, 13:25-30. For example see Matthew 13:40-43: ‘Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with the fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all cause of sin and all evildoers and they will throw them into the furnace of fire...’

righteous and the sinful will be judged and separated by the divine. The central themes of resurrection, judgement and transformation are consolidated by the apocalyptic sense of the sack, which serves to expand the relevance of the narrative; the fate of Rome's citizens is more broadly human, and in temporal terms is not only immediate but has an eternal resonance.

#### 6.2.14 The Cleansing of Rome and the Death of Paganism

The wider resonance of the sack as a powerful and transforming moment in human history rather than a specific historical detail extends throughout the final chapters of the text, where the consequence of the sack according to the Orosian vision of history is made evident. Rome has been cleansed of paganism, the gods and their worshippers no longer pollute the city and empire. The Christian community is the true successor to Rome. Only three further references are made to Orosius's pagan detractors following the Gothic invasion, and two focus on the sack as a past event. Echoing the logic of the sack, the insolent disbelievers are justly punished by the wrath of God:

But those who were stubborn and did not believe in God's Gospel, or who were doubly stubborn if they had not even listened to it, and did not give way to God's wrath, were justly caught and overwhelmed by God's exceeding anger.<sup>937</sup> (7.41.6, p. 358)

The subject of this observation is made ambiguous by the textual context: it could refer to the sack, or, as Fear suggests, rather than a pagan opponent it could indicate what Orosius considers to be Christian schismatics.<sup>938</sup> The second remaining reference to paganism observes that it is of little benefit to the pagan and little loss to the Christian that those who were 'obdurate against the faith' were able to survive the sack by masquerading as Christian.<sup>939</sup> (7.41.9, p. 358) The third and final reference comes within the closing passages of the work where Orosius exhorts his 'detractors', who

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<sup>937</sup> 7.41.6, vol. 3, p. 122: *Qui autem non crediderunt euangelio Dei quasi contumaces, uel si etiam non audierunt dupliciter contumaces, non dederunt locum irae, iuste a superueniente ira conprehensi et oppressi sunt.*

<sup>938</sup> Fear, (2010), p. 407, fn. 493: 'Given that he [Orosius] wrote the *Histories* in Africa, the Donatist controversy that centred on what was the appropriate response by Christians to persecution, and which was still a live issue in the region, may also have been in his mind.'

<sup>939</sup> 7.41.9, p. 358: 'For what loss is it to the Christian who is eager for eternal life to be taken away from this world at any time and by whatever means? Moreover, what gain is it to the pagan in the midst of Christians, obdurate against the faith, if he protracts his day a little longer, since he, whose conversion is despaired of, is destined to die?' 7.41.9, vol. 3, p. 122: *Quid enim damni est Christiano ad uitam aeternam inhianti, huic saeculo quolibet tempore et quoquo pacto abstrahi? quid autem lucri est pagano in medio Christianorum aduersus fidem obdurato, si paulo diutius diem protrahat, quandoquidem morituro cui desperata conuersio est?*

have been represented as pagan throughout, to ‘repent’ and ‘blush at the truth’, and to ‘believe, fear, love, and follow the only true God’.<sup>940</sup> This statement is reflexive, standing outside of the narrative of the text. It is an expected and programmatic assertion of authority, that the Orosian apologetic is superior and compelling; it is not necessarily evidence that Orosius’s opponent still exists and is participant in a continual dispute. When considering these three final references to paganism it is evident that paganism has been eradicated. The sack is given profound significance beyond its historical function; the Gothic invasion is authored by the providence of God as a ‘final and long-impending punishment’ of pagan Rome that transforms the city and its empire from disputed religious territory into an exclusively Christian patria.<sup>941</sup> (7.38.7, p. 353) In a text designed to refute pagan attacks on Christianity, there could be no greater claim or preferential Christian outcome.

### 6.2.15 Conclusion

From the opening of the *Historiae* with the beginning of time and the Creation, the fall of Rome has been anticipated. All of history is interpreted through this moment, and the text itself can be understood as a historical-philosophical polemic devised in response. But Orosius does not just prove his apologetical point, that the disasters of the past are much worse than those of the present; he exceeds it, in the opportunistic transformation of the sack. A new narrative is created, where the sack functions in imitation of the Final Judgement, the Parousia without the visitation of Christ. In Christian theology the Final Judgement is usually conceived of in pessimistic terms, with apocalyptic overtones, revelation of sin, and the proximity of eternal damnation and hell. But rather than a source of terror the Christian experience of the sorting and punishing of Rome is in fact one of hope and happiness. God has mercifully liberated Rome from the pagan affliction and the empire is better for it. Orosius’s message is one of salvation, consolation and joy for the surviving Christians who are ultimately protected by God and live in an improved world. This conclusion reveals Orosius’s preoccupation with

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<sup>940</sup> 7.43.18, p. 363: ‘It is left now for our detractors to repent of their deeds and to blush as the truth, and to believe, all of whose deeds they have learned to be good, even those which they think are evil.’

7.43.18, vol. 3, p. 131: *Superest ut obtrectatores nostros molitionum suarum paeniteat ueritatique erubescant, Deumque uerum et solum qui potest omnia credant, timeant, diligant et sequantur, cuius omnia, et quae mala putant, bona esse didicerunt.*

<sup>941</sup> ‘So, after such a great increase in blasphemies as this and no repentance, that final and long-impending punishment reached the city.’ 7.38.7, vol. 3, p. 113: *Itaque post haec tanta augmenta blasphemiarum nullamque paenitentiam ultima illa diuque suspensa Urbem poena consequitur.*

his apologetic agenda rather than the impartial relation of history. The continued suffering of the inhabitants of Rome is necessarily and wilfully repressed in a rationalisation that dismisses their grievances in preference for the wider Christian moral of the providence of God and his just punishment of the sins of humanity.

## Conclusion

This thesis has endeavoured to comprehend Orosius's philosophy of history, a vision of enduring significance and influence up to the end of the nineteenth century, but one that has more recently suffered accumulative critical stereotype and ridicule at the expense of serious engagement with the *Historiae*. Despite the strong Christian agenda of the text, Orosius's universal concept of history centralises the profane and the political, ordering the narration of the past through secular government, principally empires and rulers. The rise and fall of empire reveals a wider purpose within time, where the succession of empire within a providential framework reorientates the grand narrative of human history, beginning with Babylon in the east and culminating with Rome in the west. Rome is presented as the fourth and final empire, divinely favoured and predestined for the continuation of time; but this is Rome in a revised version, cleansed of irreligion, disobedience and wilful ignorance, and most certainly, of paganism. The unique authority of Rome is entwined with Christianity, but again in Orosian guise; Christianity as represented in the *Historiae* favours no doctrine and is not controlled by an institutionalised system of faith and worship; the authority of the established Church is absent. Instead Christianity is characterised by participation within the universal Christian commonwealth and complete devotion to Jesus Christ. Although the empire of Rome irrevocably bound to Christianity is the fundamental imperative behind the *Historiae*, the synchronisation is presented as a consequence of divine providence which works ceaselessly throughout all time and space. Orosius's grand narrative of time, macro and universal, finds correspondence in the omniscient Christian God, the *auctorem temporum* ('author of time'), who is wrathful and merciful in equal measure, and who most significantly is the author of all human experience.<sup>942</sup>

As previously noted, in the *Historiae* imperial authority is the construct through which history is told, divine providence is the process in which history happens, and monotheism is the progression, almost verb-like, from fractious political diversity and polytheism to a eventual reduction to the one.<sup>943</sup> The monotheism of one Christian God finds reflection in one (imperial) ruler, one Christian religion, and one Christian commonwealth which is conveniently universal. Orosius's version of Christian

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<sup>942</sup> 1.3.4, vol. 1, p. 42: *auctorem temporum*.

<sup>943</sup> Introduction: 0.10, 'Thesis: Reasoning and Objective'.



monotheism is strongly providential; with the accession of Augustus and the beginning of Rome's empire, the complexion of time shifts away from the disasters of the past, following an upward trajectory of progress and optimism that culminates with Theodosius and the sack of Rome, the event which effectively cleanses the city (and the empire) of the last remnants of paganism. The sack of Rome functions as the final consequence of the Incarnation, the event that essentially determines the construction of the work. The significance of the Incarnation extends beyond a facet of Orosius's historical philosophy; it operates in practical terms as a crucial point of division, leaving a very literal impression on the text. The emperor Augustus, sanitized by divine providence and with tacit Christian affiliation, is the narrative tool which enables the Incarnation. Orosius's revision of history compliments the pagan version which finds centrality with the first emperor, but the success of empire is firmly the consequence of Christianity. The construction of time through political institution and religious affiliation elides paganism and avoids the organised authority of the church; Orosius does not write ecclesiastical or theological history. Instead the focus is on a purified version of Christianity where the political authority of the emperor on earth mirrors the divine authority of Christ in heaven, and the world is united in a Christian commonwealth of peace, harmony, and political accord.

But the divine coincidence of the birth of Christ and the rise of Rome's empire occurs at a reasonably late stage in the text; the Incarnation is the crucial turning point, where previously the apologetic narrative was occupied with proving the misery and catastrophe of the pre-Christian world. The polemical comparison of the past with the present is designed to demonstrate that without Christian worship human history is blighted by afflictions like disease, famine, earthquake, flood, and especially warfare. Orosius presents a revisionist version of history where warfare and belligerence are not celebrated; instead the slaughter, violence, enslavement, and tragedy of war is revealed. Orosius's approach which questions the morality of the Roman ideology of glory and victory in warfare emphasises the negative both for conquerors and the conquered alike. Where war has been a central part of a glorified version of the past, in victory over others, the expansion of empire, and individual heroism and success, Orosius instead takes the opposite view and presents war in the most dire terms. But Orosius's critique of war and empire is swiftly curtailed with the interweaving of Christianity and imperial authority in the Roman empire. The sanctifying power of the Incarnation reconciles the difficulty of empire in the creation of a universal and peaceful Christian commonwealth

where war no longer exists or is 'bloodless', Roman law is obeyed, and only the Christian God is worshipped.

An episode in the final stages of the narrative, the sack of Rome, presents the opportunity not only to prove Orosius's apologetical agenda, but to exceed it, in the propitious transformation of the sack from devastating catastrophe to non-event. A new narrative of the Gothic invasion is created, an exclusively religious, specifically Christian adaptation of events, which functions in imitation of the Final Judgement, the Parousia without the physical embodiment of Christ. Orosius's narrative is barely acknowledged by modern critics, with critical preference for an historian whose work only survives in fragments, Olympiodorus of Thebes.<sup>944</sup> Orosius's rendering sees that the scourge of paganism, tolerated by a merciful God for so many centuries, could be endured no longer. But the sack as the Final Judgement is not an event to fear and dread, and the eschatological narrative is not pessimistic. It is instead a cause for celebration and hope: there is no suggestion of Christians themselves being subject to judgement, God has mercifully liberated Rome from the pagan affliction, and the empire, which in Orosian reality is the world, is better for it. Orosius's message is one of salvation, consolation and joy for Christians who shelter under the protection of God following the inauguration of a new and wholly Christian epoch of time. The sack of Rome exemplifies Orosius's particular desire to find meaning in history, specifically a Christian theological meaning, that necessitated a revisionist re-writing of past, present and future events. The synchronisation of the classical and the Christian created a new frame for world history, bringing a unique perspective to the un-improved past and the Christian present in an ultimate grand narrative. The *Historiae* represents a seismic historiographical shift in the relationship of Roman history to world history and, most significantly, Christian history, an influence not properly appreciated in modern criticism but reflected in the status and treatment of the text in the middle ages and early modern period.

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<sup>944</sup> An exception is Edward Gibbon, who reproduces the Orosian mitigation of the sack in Chapter thirty-one of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: 'In less than seven years the vestiges of the Gothic invasion were almost obliterated, and the city appeared to resume its former splendour and tranquillity. The venerable matron replaced her crown of laurel, which had been ruffled by the storms of war, and was still amused in the last moment of her decay with the prophecies of revenge, of victory, and of eternal dominion.' Gibbon, (1994), vol. 2, p. 217.

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