

Origo Gothica... Troiana? Intertwining Trojan and Gothic Identity in Jordanes' *Getica*

This paper examines the use of Vergil's *Aeneid* in Jordanes' *De origine actibusque Getarum*, or simply the *Getica*, a mid-6th century work intended to provide a summary of the origin of the Gothic peoples and their history. Through various direct quotations and allusions, Jordanes forges a Gothic history which places this people—and the Amal family—as faithful federates of Rome while also uplifting Theoderic the Great as a legitimate Roman ruler in the direct line of succession of Zeno. Acting within this programmatic scene, allusions to and direct quotations of Vergil are intended not only to display the author's erudition and to satisfy a common literary trope at the time, but also to directly associate the Goths with the Trojans, that they may be elevated to the status of ultimate federate and junior partner of the Romans.

Scholarship has only recently begun focusing on the intertextuality of Vergil in the *Getica*, though quotations and allusions have been noted in early translations, such as Mierow (1915). Cristini (2020) studies these intertextualities, concluding that Jordanes (or Cassiodorus, the author whose work Jordanes is summarizing) is using these Vergilian references to establish an ancient tradition of Gothic excellence and to connect the Goths to Roman history. Van Hoof (2019) finds that Jordanes's use of Vergil aligns with that of a typical Roman *topos* and Latin education, and several Vergilian references are used to link the Goths with positive aspects that are associated with Romans. Swain (2014) has argued that the use of Vergil within the *Getica* serves to connect the history of the Goths to that of the Trojans and Romans via many critical moments of Gothic history which are compared to the Trojan voyage.

Jordanes's work on Gothic history was written at a particularly fraught moment of Gothic history during which Gothic-Roman relations were most important—and most strained. The Gothic War of Justinian (535-554) seemed to be ending (Totila's miraculous resurgence and almost total reconquest of Italy not yet foreseen) and a wide host of Ostrogoths would need to be reincorporated into direct Roman rule. At the risk of being a touch anachronistic, Totila's appointment as king and

subsequent near-victory over Justinian's forces proves that a sizeable and powerful core of Gothic and Gothic-aligned elites yet remained in Italy. A political and cultural effort was necessary, and Jordanes's *Getica* was written to be part of that process.

Numerous quotations and allusions to Vergil's *Aeneid* can be found in the *Getica*, but most important among them are in chapters 134, 212, 261, and 288. In chapter 134, the Huns have sent the Goths into flight, leaving them as a people in search of a new home. Jordanes alludes to *Aeneid* 3.57 with the use of the phrase *auri sacra fames*, the "wicked hunger for gold." Both peoples are put to flight, and both are taken advantage of by rulers in Thrace. In *Getica* 212, Attila is likened to a lion in a simile that is much like that of *Aen.* 12.4-9, in which Turnus is the lion. This allusion occurs in the context of the battle of the Catalaunian fields, where the Goths and the Romans are depicted as the chief adversaries of Attila: Attila becomes Turnus, and thus Attila's adversaries become the Trojans. A much shorter reference is found in *Get.* 261, where Jordanes shows the Goths fighting with the *contus*, a weapon that is associated with the Trojans. Finally, the most important reference is that of *Get.* 288, where the Goths rest in Illyria, *composita pace quiescunt*, clearly a quotation of Vergil, *nunc placida compositus pace quiescit* in *Aen.* 1.249 describing Antenor and his Trojans resting in Italy. In *Get.* 288, Theoderic is just generating his plea to march to Italy to claim it from Odoacer, thus imitating Antenor's journey into Italy, the exact moment which Jordanes alludes to. Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2021) accept that Alaric's similar journey into Italy serves as an exemplum for Theoderic. Thus, it is difficult to imagine that this specific allusion to Antenor's course into Italy, the same course that both Theoderic and Alaric take, is not meant as a similar example, especially when considering the efforts that Jordanes has expended to blur the line between Roman-Gothic history and Trojan myth.

Works Cited

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