

1 Trojans, Sea-monsters, and Long-haired Kings: From Priam to Childeric

The appearance of the Franks on the historical stage and the emergence of Frankish kingship are inherently joined historiographical themes; it is never quite clear where one ends and the other begins. Teasing apart the genesis of a *gens* from the origins of its rulers was as captivating for chroniclers working in the sixth century as it was for those working in the sixteenth. Origin stories, and their attendant claims about both aspects of this issue of ethnic origins versus royal origins, stand at the heart of this chapter. It will chart the continuous process of adaptation of material that deals with the formative period of Frankish history, from its very origins to the end of Childeric I's rule, *ca.* 480. Origin stories are populated by heroes, and it is to these heroes that royal lineages often attempted to trace their ancestries. Still, these stories are significant not just for the legitimacy they lend to dynasties, but also for the broader claims they can make about communities at large. In fact, they can most usefully be read against what we know about the communities for which they were written.

Frankish and French historiographical works used origin stories to express an ever-changing set of narrative constraints. As the product of a particular historical context, each composition had its own vision of the community for which it was intended, whether political, religious, ethnic, or an intersection of the three. Origin stories would have been an opening gambit in the longer game of delineating the contours of a specific community. Since these stories tend to be situated at the very beginning of historiographical treatments, they not only set the tone for what follows, but also frame the discussion and define its terminology. The best among them express an entire ideology in a few short passages. A royal history might place its emphasis on succession, continuity, and heroism. A composition that considers the development of a religious community might prefer to see kings as defenders of the faith or, alternatively, as its enemies. One that focuses on the formation of a *gens* or a political class could adopt a utilitarian outlook on kings, appraising them as either beneficial or detrimental according to their ability to promote certain agendas. Yet, historiographical compositions tend to defy such neat

categorization. Instead, they show a medley of perspectives, reflecting a composite and layered historical vision.¹

Despite the many differences among the historiographical accounts of the Franks and their origins, the birth of Frankishness as a recognizable category of identity and the consolidation of political power around the royal family are present in all such texts. These elements present as an imperative of any narrative that purports to contain a comprehensive history of the Franks. Although chroniclers had different aims when writing about this topic, their narrative choices were bound by earlier traditions, oral as well as written.² Even the earliest compositions at our disposal claim to be speaking on the authority of no longer extant, older sources.³ Certainly, all the later texts bear the marks of an intensive, purposeful quarrying of source material. More importantly, they were engaged in continuous dialog with the ideological programs developed by their predecessors.

The degree to which a chronicler was dependent on sources available to him or her is especially pertinent to the question of origin and authority, which was entwined with communal notions of legitimacy. To explain a community's origin and networks of authority, and especially to employ it in the service of a broader authorial agenda, was to define its role as a force in history. Chroniclers were thus naturally drawn to offering new interpretations of the events, and, indeed, each of the compositions included in the family of texts discussed here—and many that are not—present some version of an origin story.⁴ This is why chronicles, even ones making revisionist historical claims, needed to negotiate an ideological terrain already populated by earlier compositions. The basic structure of Frankish history, origin stories included, emerged not from an abrupt rejection or wholesale adoption of previous historiographical compositions, but rather from a delicate process of interpolation and rearticulation. Chroniclers

¹ H. Reimitz, "Historiography and Identity in the Post-Roman West: An Introduction," in *Historiography and Identity II: Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities*, eds. G. Heydemann, H. Reimitz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), pp. 1–26, at pp. 2, 5–8.

² See H. Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," in *Historiography and Identity II: Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities*, eds. G. Heydemann and H. Reimitz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), pp. 161–211, at pp. 181, 196–197.

³ Gregory of Tours's forays into the origin question are reliant on the accounts of previous historians, as are *Fredegar's*. On this, see pp. 33–57. While the *LHF's* origin story is mostly original, it was based not only on oral traditions, but also on circulating, throughout the Carolingian period and beyond, under the name of Gregory. See N.K. Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne: The Tradition of Trojan Origins," *The Medieval History Journal* 21, 2 (2018), pp. 251–290, at p. 258.

⁴ On origins and their functions, see P. Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," in *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. G. Steinmetz (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 53–75, at pp. 56–57.

broaching the topic built on and adjusted the material they extracted from their sources in ways that allowed them to forward new claims while still adhering to a narrative structure recognized by their prospective readership.

While the motivations and chronologies ascribed to characters and events could be adjusted to conform to new narrative models, the deeper foundations were not so easily unsettled, even when the underlying aims of a composition were quite different from those of its source.⁵ Historiography is cumulative, in the sense that it is creatively constrained by what already exists. This is why the story of the Franks' earliest beginnings, and the emergence of their kings could not be invented anew with each composition. One especially recognizable component of this narrative is the Trojan storyline, which has been among the most extensively studied aspects of Frankish and French historiography. Trojan origins are an important feature of the chronicle tradition, but they are not the whole story. In fact, in most of the compositions that rehearse some version of the Frankish origin story, it is possible to identify three distinct thematic blocks: first, the escape from Troy and the emergence of the Franks as a recognizable group; then, the Franks' interaction with the Romans and their advance into territories previously occupied by the Western Empire; and finally, their settlement in Gaul and the rise of the Merovingian family. Each of these phases has its own cast of characters, most of whom make appearances in several chronicles, and each plays an indispensable role in the larger story. Taken together, this schema sets the Franks against a wider backdrop of other *gentes* and entities, about whose historical role the origin story's author often had much to say.

From the very start, the Frankish origin story exhibits tension between several narrative poles. One strand of the narrative is concerned with the birth of the Franks from the Trojan parent-group. It chronicles the wanderings of peoples, their subsequent divisions into *ethne*, and the constitutive acts by which they merited their ethnonyms. Another strand is preoccupied with the emergence of Frankish political power and its structures, manifestations, and governing principles. One of these governing principles was genealogical, and many of the chronicles I will mention attempt to provide a coherent ancestry for the contemporary ruling dynasty that stretches back to Troy. At least one composition, the thirteenth-century *Roman des rois*,

⁵ For an excellent example of this process in the *Fredegar* chronicler's treatment of source material from Gregory of Tours' *Histories*, see G. Schwedler, "Lethe and 'Delete' – Discarding the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of *Fredegar*," in *Collectors' Knowledge: What Is Kept, What Is Discarded / Aufbewahren oder wegwerfen: wie Sammler entscheiden*, eds. A.-S. Goeing, A.T. Grafton, and P. Michel (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 71–96, at p. 74.

stakes much of its argument on the claim that the royal families of the Franks were linked to each other by kinship, and that the earliest of these families—the Merovingians—could trace its origins to the refugees of fallen Troy, thereby providing a Trojan ancestry for France's kings.⁶

It is this that makes the line separating the history of the Franks from that of their kings so difficult to draw. In the case of the *Roman des rois*, the constraints of patronage and its effects on authorial tone are perhaps better understood than they are for the *Chronicle of Fredegar* or the *Liber historiae Francorum*, the latter written before 727 in either Soissons or Saint-Denis. The *Chronicle of Fredegar* is also not as confined, thematically, to the topic of French kingship. Frankish origins only appear in the abridged version of the Eusebius-Jerome world chronicle found in Book II, and not as they do in the *Roman des rois* and the *LHF*, as an organic point of entry into the whole text. To complicate things further, the *Chronicle of Fredegar* also presented several, possibly conflicting, origin stories, making its position on the question all the more elusive.

Yet all three see the evolution of kingship as a natural outgrowth of ethnic creation and are especially interested in both aspects. Moreover, to these two perspectives one must surely add a third, which prioritizes religion as the most salient criterion for defining the community, focusing on the Church's role as a legitimizing agent for the Franks and their kings.⁷ This is obviously a strand that becomes more prominent after Clovis, but that does not mean that the pagan Franks had no role to play in the overarching agenda of Gregory of Tours writing in the sixth century, Paul the Deacon writing in the eighth, or Primat writing in the thirteenth. As we shall see, the perspective of the chroniclers could shift depending on historical circumstance. By the end of the chronological timeframe defined by the present chapter, the pendulum will have rested squarely at the royal end of its arc, although throughout Frankish history, it could be found at different points along its continuum.

⁶ On this, see, for instance, G.M. Spiegel, "The *Reditus Regni ad Stirpem Karoli Magni*: A New Look," *French Historical Studies* 7, 2 (1971), pp. 145–174; repr. in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 111–137; idem, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography," *History and Theory* 22, 1 (1983), pp. 43–53.

⁷ See Aimoin of Fleury's explanation in *Gesta Francorum*, proemium, PL 139, cols 637C–638C. J. Lake, "Rewriting Merovingian History in the Tenth Century: Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*," *Early Medieval Europe* 25 (2017), pp. 489–525, at pp. 501–502. For an instructive comparison with Romanness, see Y. Hen, "Compelling and Intense: The Christian Transformation of Romanness," in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, ed. W. Pohl et al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 59–69.

1.1 Gregory of Tours's *Histories* and the Unknowable Origins of the Franks

The tale of King Priam of Troy as the progenitor of the Franks is a common feature of the compositions I survey in this book. Yet Gregory of Tours's *Histories*, which was the first attempt to write a broad historical narrative culminating in Merovingian Gaul, did not mention Trojan origins at all.⁸ The omission is perfectly understandable, given that Gregory did not set out to recount a Frankish *origo gentis* story.⁹ He preferred to circumvent the question by presenting any historical inquiry into the matter as futile, given the paucity of available information on the emergence of Frankish kingship. We cannot say with certainty whether the elements of the Trojan story found in later chronicles were simply unknown to Gregory, or whether he purposefully chose to ignore them. The latter seems more probable.¹⁰ Certainly Gregory's friend Venantius Fortunatus drew on this textual tradition when he alluded to the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia in his poem celebrating the union of Sigibert and Brunhild.¹¹ Incidentally, Gregory's city of Tours was itself tied to Trojan traditions in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, although this was not a tradition that would have been familiar to him, writing in the sixth.¹² As we shall see later in this chapter, however, Geoffrey of Monmouth's adaptation of the Brutus storyline from the

⁸ Gregory does mention Troy in *Histories* IV.30, likening the men of the Auvergne caught in the Rhône's current to the Trojans in the Simois. See Reimitz, *History*, p. 86, possibly echoing Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, ed. W.B. Anderson (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1936), vii.7.2, ii, 324–326.

⁹ Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," pp. 173–175.

¹⁰ See Ammianus Marcellinus's mention of Trojans on the Rhine in *Res gestae*, ed. and trans. J.C. Rolfe, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935–1939), 1, xv.9.4–5: "Drasidae memorant re vera fuisse populi partem indigenam, sed alios quoque ab insulis extimis confluisse et tractibus transrhenanis, crebritate bellorum et adluvione fervidi maris sedibus suis expulsos. Aiunt quidam paucos post excidium Troiae fugitantes Graecos ubique dispersos loca haec occupasse tunc vacua." For a discussion of other Trojan traditions on which the Franks could have drawn, see J. Barlow, "Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 29 (1995), pp. 86–95.

¹¹ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, MGH AA 4,1, ed. F. Leo (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), vi.1, pp. 124–29; Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," p. 169.

¹² *Historia Brittonum*, in J. Morris, ed. and trans., *British History and The Welsh Annals* (London: Phillimore, 1980), ch. 10, p. 6: "Et expulsus est ab Italia, et arminilis fuit, et venit ad insulas maris Tirreni, et expulsus est a Graecis causa occisionis Turni, quem Aeneas occiderat, et pervenit ad Gallos usque, et ibi condidit civitatem Turonorum, quae vocatur Turnis"; T. Summerfield, "Filling the Gap: Brutus in the *Historia Brittonum*, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS F, and Geoffrey of Monmouth," *The Medieval Chronicle VII* (2011), pp. 85–102; L. Mathey-Maille, "Mythe troyen et histoire romaine: de Geoffroy de Monmouth au 'Brut' de Wace," in *Entre fiction et histoire: Troie et Rome au Moyen Âge*, eds. E. Baumgartner and L. Harf-Lancner (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997), pp. 113–125.

Historia Brittonum did make its way into the *Roman des rois*, impacting its handling of the Trojan narrative.

Yet we should not take all of this to mean that by choosing to omit Troy from his account, Gregory was resisting an established narrative tradition. Helmut Reimitz has noted that there need not have been only one Trojan story in circulation when he wrote. In other words, it would have been possible for Gregory to offer a vision of his imagined community without resorting to the Trojan narrative, which in any event was probably not yet formalized as a literary convention when he was writing.¹³ The differences between *Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum*, the two earliest compositions to attempt an articulation of the myth, suggest as much.

As an ecclesiastical historian of Gaul, the establishment of royal power there would have been a significant point of interest for Gregory. Nine books out of the *Histories'* ten cover Gaul under the Merovingians. Gregory interacted with Frankish kings and their regional and local proxies often, and even the ecclesiastical structure he so cherished was structured around centralized royal power. The king was an important force in authorizing the convocation of Church councils and in the appointment of bishops; Gregory himself owed his nomination to the See of Tours to the intervention of Sigibert I (d. 575).¹⁴ Gregory therefore had an accommodating view of Merovingian power and, while he was certainly conscious of its vagaries and shortcomings, he never questioned the Merovingians' right to rule. In fact, much of his political ideology used the Merovingians as templates of good (and not-so-good) kingship.¹⁵ The moral lessons that readers were to draw from the *Histories* were nested in a history of Gaul and the kings who ruled it.

Yet the Merovingians in the *Histories* only emerge as a later feature of the Frankish storyline, preceded by a section devoted to the Frankish invasions of the Roman province of Germania and the attack on Cologne in 388. The *Histories'* coverage of this period of Frankish history relied primarily on three historians—Sulpicius Alexander, Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, and Orosius—all of whom yield little in the form of resolution. The bulk of

¹³ See Reimitz, "The Early History of Frankish Origin Legends," pp. 163, 166.

¹⁴ M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 38–41; M. Heinzelmann, "Gregory of Tours: The Elements of a Biography," in *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, ed. A.C. Murray (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 7–34, at pp. 24–26.

¹⁵ Y. Fox, "Revisiting Gregory of Tours' Burgundian Narrative," in *Les royaumes de Bourgogne jusque 1032 à travers la culture et la religion*, eds. A. Wagner and N. Brocard, *Culture et société médiévales* 30 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2018), pp. 227–238; G. Halsall, "Nero and Herod? The Death of Chilperic and Gregory's Writings of History," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, eds. K. Mitchell and I. Wood (Leiden and Cologne: Brill, 2002), pp. 337–50.

information came from Sulpicius Alexander, who tells that the Franks, led by three leaders, named Marcomer, Sunno, and Genobaud, collided with a Roman military contingent under the command of Nanninus and Quintinus that was dispatched from the provincial administrative center of Trier. A Roman victory over a small Frankish detachment ensued. Encouraged, the Romans mounted a punitive expedition across the Rhine but fell prey to an elaborate trap set by the Franks and were cut to pieces. Gregory quotes Profuturus's equally intricate story of imperial politics, and Orosius's terse account of Stilicho's victory over the Franks, but ultimately concludes that neither Sulpicius Alexander, nor any of the others, knew much about the emergence of Frankish kingship.¹⁶ We might surmise from Gregory that Marcomer, Sunno, and Genobaud played a central role in the incursions into Roman territory during the late fourth century, and that at one point the Franks may have been led by a king whose name has not survived.¹⁷

Gregory used these earlier historians as sources for more than just the origin (non-)story. They were critical to his work on the early chapters of Book II, which he devoted to the persecutions endured by Catholic churches and their communities. In the prologue to Book II, Gregory announces his intent to record the deeds of the saints, through whom he proposes to show how these antithetical, yet complementary, forces of saintliness and persecution have ruled history since biblical times.¹⁸ It is within this framework that he discusses the misfortunes that befell the religious community of Tours, the invasions of Gaul by various barbarians, and the persecutions that followed in their wake. The cruelties inflicted on Catholic Christians by the heretical Vandals and Goths provide a preamble to the arrival of the Huns from Pannonia and the destruction they wrought on Metz and Orléans. The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains shifts the discussion to the Roman general Aëtius (d. 454), and it is here that Renuat Profuturus Frigeridus is first introduced as a source. The advent of the Franks is recounted not long afterwards, supported by the same material.

¹⁶ See Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," p. 163; Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, pp. 54–55.

¹⁷ On the fates of Sunno and Marcomer, see Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis libri IV*, in *Carmina*, ed. J.B. Hall, *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1985), 1, lines 239–252: "Ultero quin etiam devota mente tumentur victorique favent. quotiens sociare catervas oravit iungique tuis Alamannia signis! nec doluit contempta tamen, spretoque recessit auxilio laudata fides. provincia missos expellet citius fasces quam Francia reges, quos dederis. acie nec iam pulsare rebelles, sed vinculis punire licet; sub iudice nostro regia Romanus disquirat crimina carcer: Marcomeres Sunnoque docet; quorum alter Etruscum pertulit exilium; cum se promitteret alter exulis ultorem, iacuit mucrone suorum: res avidi concire novas odioque furentes pacis et ingenio scelerumque cupidine fratres."

¹⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, II.prologue.

Readers of Gregory have observed that he did not regard the pre-Christian Franks as essentially different from other barbarians.¹⁹ At least as far as the three Frankish *regales* were concerned, Gregory clearly did not mean for them to function in the plot as the direct forerunners of the Merovingian kings of his day. If anything, when the Franks make their first appearance in Gregory, they are depicted as being like the Huns. Tellingly, the two scourges that descend on the population of Gaul, the Huns and the Franks, had their origins in Pannonia. But of course, so did Martin of Tours, foremost among Gaul's myriad saints.²⁰ Assuming that neither mention is coincidental,²¹ one wonders which of these prototypes—Attila or Martin—the advancing Franks were meant to evoke in the mind of the reader.²² In the beginning, it is likely to have been the former, since Gregory reports that under Marcomer, Sunno, and Genobaud, the Franks proceeded to plunder Cologne and Trier just as the Huns had terrorized Metz and other Gallic cities under Attila only a few chapters earlier.²³ All of this must be understood in the moralistic context of Gaul's invasions which undergirds the beginning of Book II.

Yet there is much in the story of the Franks that speaks to their resemblance to Martin. Notably, this is where Gregory switches from his written sources to a different body of evidence, which seems to have been primarily oral.²⁴ Like the Franks, Martin was a pagan in Pannonia, but it was his life as a Christian in Gaul that mattered to Gregory. Martin's journey, measured in miles but also in terms of spiritual growth, was a process of astonishing personal evolution. The Franks ended up retracing the footsteps of Martin as he made his way from Pannonia to Gaul and from

¹⁹ R. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 13.

²⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* I.36; x.31. See E. Zöllner, *Geschichte der Franken bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 1970), p. 4; E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1988), p. 235.

²¹ Gregory's account is the only one to posit a Pannonian component. On this, see A. Plassmann, *Origo gentis. Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin: Akad.-Verl, 2006), p. 126, n.55.

²² On the possible connections intended by Gregory, see J.D. Niles, "Myths of the Eastern Origins of the Franks: Fictions or a Kind of Truth?," in *Origin Legends in Early Medieval Western Europe*, eds. L. Brady and P. Wadden (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), pp. 385–404, at pp. 394–395.

²³ Huns attack Metz: *Histories* II.6; Franks raid Cologne, Trier: *Histories* II.9. Plassman, *Origo gentis*, p. 153. On some interesting uses of Attila and Clovis in Napoleonic-era historiography, see Wood, *The Modern Origins*, p. 81.

²⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9: "Tradunt enim multi, eosdem de Pannonia fuisse degressus, et primum quidem litora Rheni amnes incoluisse, dehinc, transacto Rheno, Thoringiam transmeasse, ibique iuxta pagus vel civitates regis crinitos super se creavisse de prima, et, ut ita dicam, nobiliore suorum familia." For the continued salience of orally transmitted information in Gregory's world, see Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," pp. 176–178.

paganism to Catholic Christianity, although they did not know it at the time: "At first the Frankish people did not understand this; they would understand later, as the *Histories* will narrate in what follows."²⁵

From Pannonia, the Franks travelled to Thuringia, where they began to elect "long-haired kings" from their most noble families.²⁶ This comment seems to have been a nod to an established tradition, although, if anything, the disjointed series of details that follows Gregory's statement makes the story even more difficult to understand.

Gregory remarks, for instance, that the son of Ricimer, whom he identified as Theudemir, was executed alongside his mother and that Clodio came to power around Duisburg at about the same time. Theudemir is otherwise unknown, although, if his father can be identified as the Richomerus who was appointed consul of 384 and held a long line of senior military commands, the context of the family's activity becomes slightly clearer. Richomerus's ranks are mentioned in the consular annals;²⁷ his battles against the Goths and his imperial appointments are mentioned by Ammianus.²⁸ While this is useful information, it does not support his identification as the figure from the *Histories*. In any event, Ricimer, his wife Ascylla, and their son Theudemir appear out of nowhere and disappear just as quickly. This obscure interjection suggests that Gregory relied on a particular unmentioned source in which these details were included, but it contributes very little to our understanding of early Frankish leaders and the establishment of royal power.

Notably, the *Histories* make no attempt to link Theudemir to Clodio by succession or kinship. The two are presented as ruling separate regions, and Clodio's ancestry and the circumstances of his coming to power are not disclosed. The relationship of Clodio to Merovech, the next named king of the Franks, is similarly ambiguous. Though Gregory reports that some claim that the two were of the same family, he is not willing to commit on this point.²⁹ Gregory's reticence to contextualize the earliest Frankish kings could have stemmed from faulty sources, but he clearly preferred to leave the matter unresolved. Recounting ancient royal ancestries would have shifted focus away from the Franks' paganism and ferocity, as well as from the parallels he was attempting to draw with

²⁵ *Ibid.* II.10: "Haec autem generatio Francorum non intellexit primum; intellexerunt autem postea, sicut sequens historia narrat."

²⁶ *Ibid.* II.9.

²⁷ Flavius Richomerus, in J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1, pp. 765–766 [hereafter, *PLRE*]. Ricomer, father of Theudemir, see Richimer 1, *PLRE* 2, p. 942.

²⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, xxxi.7.5–16, 8.2, 12.4, 12.14–17, 13.9.

²⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9: "De huius stirpe quidam Merovechum regem fuisse adserunt, cuius fuit filius Childericus."

Martin. These, more than any royal origin story, were the real point of this section of the narrative. Like Clodio, Merovech is essentially a nonentity in the *Histories*, whose sole purpose is to move the plot along to the rule of Childeric.

It is quite likely that Gregory saw the rule of Childeric as belonging to another thematic section. The story of Childeric appears after a lengthy segue, which begins with a drawn-out admonition of the Franks' cartoonish paganism in chapter 10 and is followed by the installation of Aegidius (d. 464/5) as *magister militum (per Gallias)*. Aegidius, who ruled a Roman enclave centered on the city of Soissons after the assassination of Majorian (d. 461), becomes a central figure for understanding Childeric's (and Clovis's) career.³⁰ He seems to have commanded Roman as well as Frankish troops, and was the one who deposed Childeric, according to the *Histories* on account of his womanizing. While in Gregory's account Childeric was eventually restored after the Franks tired of Aegidius, this had more to do with the machinations of his ally than with any repentance on his part. Historically, Aegidius's position *vis-à-vis* the Franks was probably more complicated, but in the *Histories* he, and later his son Syagrius, were there primarily to illuminate certain aspects in the careers of the earliest Merovingians.³¹ To add insult to injury, Childeric took as his wife Basina, once the wife of the Thuringian king Bissinus, with whom Childeric found shelter during his eight-year-long exile. Hardly an impressive portrait.³²

Much has been said about the *Histories*' intentional juxtaposition of Clovis and Constantine, which likened the newly christened Frankish king to the first Christian emperor of Rome.³³ Gregory's vigorous claim

³⁰ See W. Liebeschuetz, "Warlords and Landlords," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. P. Erdkamp (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 479–494, at p. 487; R. W. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993), pp. 83–85, 129.

³¹ On Childeric's Hunnic entanglements and Roman realignment following the death of Attila, see H.J. Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 80–83 and the corresponding notes in pp. 220–224 for a comprehensive bibliography. See also S. Lebecq, "The Two Faces of King Childeric: History, Archeology, Historiography," in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. T.F.X. Noble (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 272–288.

³² See comments in Niles, "Myths of the Eastern Origins of the Franks," pp. 389–393.

³³ Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, II.31: "Procedit novos Constantinus ad lavacrum, deleturus leprae veteris morbum sordentesque maculas gestas antiquitus recenti lattice deleturus." See E. Ewig, "Der Bild Constantins des Grossen in den ersten Jahrhunderten des abendländischen Mittelalters," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 75 (1956), pp. 1–46, at pp. 28–29. Ian Wood ascribes it to a Reims tradition. See I. Wood, "Gregory of Tours and Clovis," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 63, 2 (1985), pp. 249–272, at p. 261; Y. Hen, "Clovis, Gregory of Tours, and Pro-Merovingian Propaganda," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 71, 2 (1993), pp. 271–276, at pp. 271–272 agrees. See also K. Sessa, "Constantine and Silvester in the Actus Silvestri," in *The Life and Legacy of Constantine: Traditions*

for Clovis as a *novus Constantinus* leaves one wondering whether he also meant for Childeric to function as a Frankish mirror-image of Constantine's predecessor and polar opposite, Diocletian. The *Histories* do not have very much to say about Diocletian.³⁴ The emperor is charged with carrying out extensive persecutions, resulting in thousands of fatalities. He is also blamed for the martyrdom of Bishop Quirinus of Siscia. This snippet was almost certainly lifted from the *Chronicle of Jerome*, where it appears in the fifth year of the persecution, and three years after Diocletian had "laid down the purple" (i.e., 308).³⁵ If Gregory had access to the late fourth-century *Passio sancti Quirini*, he would have learned that the riverine martyrdom scene, which is mentioned in Jerome, took place in Sabaria (Szombathely, modern-day Hungary).³⁶ Quite the coincidence, given that in the very next chapter, Gregory relates that Martin was born in Sabaria during the reign of Constantine. Unlike the *Chronicle of Jerome*, the *Passio* cast Diocletian as the persecutor instead of Licinius, which coincides with Gregory's chronology, although this could simply be a matter of better storytelling. Diocletian was the archvillain of numerous works, Eusebius-Jerome included, and would have made for a more dramatically pleasing persecutor.³⁷ Gregory discusses the structure of the Eusebius-Jerome chronicle in chapter 36, so we must assume that this was his main

Through the Ages, ed. M.S. Bjornlie (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 77–91, and for the parallel with Clovis, M.S. Bjornlie, "Constantine in the Sixth Century: From Constantinople to Tours," in *The Life and Legacy of Constantine: Traditions Through the Ages*, ed. M.S. Bjornlie (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 92–114, at pp. 106–107. For additional discussion about this and other antithetical couplets, see A. Cain, "Miracles, Martyrs, and Arians: Gregory of Tours' Sources for His Account of the Vandal Kingdom," *Vigiliae Christianae* 59, 4 (2005), pp. 412–437, at pp. 421–422; W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 173–174.

³⁴ Nor, really, about the historical Constantine. See Wood, "Gregory of Tours and Clovis," p. 251. For the account of Diocletian, see Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 1.35. For Gregory's coverage of emperors preceding Constantine, see Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian History," pp. 168–169.

³⁵ Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, eds. R. Helm and T. Mommsen, *Eusebius Werke*, vol. VII.1: *Die Chronik des Hieronymus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913), p. 229 a.308, 2c: "Quirinus episcopus Siscianus gloriose pro Christo interficitur: nam, manuali mola ad collum ligata, e ponte praecipitatus in flumen, diutissime supernatavit et cum spectantibus collocutus, ne sui terrentur exemplo, vix orans ut mergeretur, obtinuit." Gregory would have accessed Eusebius primarily through Rufinus's translation and continuation, although the Quirinus martyrdom originated with Jerome. See Krusch's introduction to Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, pp. xix–xx; M. Heinzelmann, "The Works of Gregory of Tours and Patristic Tradition," in *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, ed. A.C. Murray (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 281–336, at pp. 282–286.

³⁶ *Passio Quirini*, ed. and trans. P. Chiesa, in *Le passioni dei martiri aquileiesi e istriani*, vol. 2, ed. E. Colombi (Rome: Istituto storico Italiano per il medio evo, 2013), pp. 499–583.

³⁷ See J.K. Zangenber, "Scelerum inventor et malorum machinator: Diocletian and the Tetrarchy in Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*," in *Imagining Emperors in the Later*

source, which, other than wrongly identifying the emperor, resembles his account in every detail.³⁸ But the temptation to read intent into Gregory's pairing of Diocletian with the martyrdom of a bishop and Constantine, in the subsequent chapter, with such meaningful events as the discovery of the True Cross and the birth of "Gaul's new light," seems almost too good to pass up.³⁹ Given the consciously antithetical treatment of Diocletian and Constantine, and Clovis's comparison with the latter, we should consider how Diocletian informed Gregory's handling of Childeric. In any event, as Book II structurally mimics Eusebius-Jerome's model of prolonged persecution capped by triumphant imperial conversion, this comparison seems justified.

All of this surely has bearing on Gregory's understanding of Childeric's narrative role as an exemplum of corrupt rule and moral bankruptcy.⁴⁰ As a character, Childeric is not well developed. We hear of his philandering, exile, and return in chapter 12, but the five subsequent chapters have to do with cities that held special importance for Gregory—Clermont, Autun, Tours, and their bishops. Childeric next appears as an actor in the regional reshuffling that followed the death of Aegidius. This chapter presents substantial difficulties, no matter how one chooses to explain its events.⁴¹ The *Histories* wrap up this episode and return to the episcopal history of the Auvergne, focusing on the episcopacy of Sidonius. Coverage of Childeric is concluded in chapter 27 with the report of his death and succession by Clovis. His anticlimactic portrayal was perhaps meant to serve as an inverted version of Clovis's, but in this he was not

Roman Empire, eds. D.P.W. Burgersdijk and A.J. Ross, Cultural Interactions in the Mediterranean, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 39–62; C.S. Mackay, "Lactantius and the Succession to Diocletian," *Classical Philology* 94, 2 (1999), pp. 198–209; T. Africa, "Worms and the Death of Kings: A Cautionary Note on Disease and History," *Classical Antiquity* 1, 1 (1982), pp. 1–17; For the abiding legacy of Diocletian as the persecutor *par excellence*, see E.A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 194–195; A. Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006), pp. 65–86.

³⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* I.36: "Usque hoc tempus historiographus in chronicis scribit Eusebius. A vicessimo primo enim eius imperii anno Hieronimus praesbiter addidit [. . .]."

³⁹ For this phrasing, Gregory of Tours, *Histories* I.39: "Tunc iam et lumen nostrum exoritur, novisque lampadum radiis Gallia perlustratur [. . .]."

⁴⁰ However, see the narrative pairing of Childeric with Avitus in G. Halsall, "Childeric's Grave, Clovis' Succession, and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom," in *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992–2009* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 169–187, at p. 172.

⁴¹ For a discussion of Childeric's takeover of Angers and its circumstances, see D. Frye, "Aegidius, Childeric, Odovacer and Paul," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 36 (1992), pp. 1–14; P. MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 95–100ff.

alone. Gregory had many Diocletians that could play the heel to his “new Constantine.” Since his Clovis was a model of kingly conduct, he could be compared favorably not only to his ancestors,⁴² but also to his contemporaries, most commonly to Gundobad, king of the Burgundians.⁴³

Helmut Reimitz has termed Gregory’s overall approach to the question of the Franks’ origins an anti-*origo*, for its refusal to engage with any coherent origin story. This was, of course, intentional, since neither the Franks nor their Merovingian kings were the heroes of Gregory’s opus. In the *Histories*’ narrative architecture, they had an important role to play, but only insofar as they served a broader agenda—to focus on Gaul against the wider backdrop of Church history.⁴⁴ The Trojan origin story had several unappealing elements as far as Gregory was concerned. Firstly, it rested on a classical mythology that stood in opposition to the biblical reading Gregory brought to bear on history. Secondly, it made a strong identitarian argument that undercut Gregory’s own ideas about the crystallization of a Christian community in Gaul. The Trojan story sidestepped Christianity entirely, in fact, and thus could not be harmonized with Gregory’s authorial objectives. Historians of later generations did not follow Gregory in this regard; the Trojan origin story would become a mainstay of Frankish historiography for a millennium.

1.2 The *Chronicle of Fredegar*: The Ethics of an *origo*

The fall of Troy is a prodigiously popular textual motif featured in a wide range of western compositions, secular as well as ecclesiastical.⁴⁵ For late-antique and early medieval authors, it was an especially useful point of reference for events that carried unique symbolic weight, such as the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410, or that reordered regional geopolitics, such as the Muslim conquest of Spain in the early eighth century.⁴⁶

⁴² Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9: “Quod postea probatum Chlodovechi victuriae traderunt, itaque in sequenti diregimus,” speaking of the nobility of the elected long-haired kings.

⁴³ Fox, “Revisiting,” pp. 229–231. ⁴⁴ Reimitz, *History*, p. 87ff.

⁴⁵ See M. Coumert, “La mémoire de Troie en Occident, d’Orose à Benoît de Sainte-Maure,” *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public*, 36^e congrès: *Les villes capitales au Moyen Age* (2005), pp. 327–347.

⁴⁶ Jerome, *Letter* 127.12, quoting Virgil, *Aeneis* II, 361–365: “Quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando/ Explicit aut posit lacrimis aequare dolorem?/ Urbs antiqua ruit multos dominata per annos/ Plurima perque uias sparguntur inertia passim/ Corpora perque domos et plurima mortis imago”; *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754*, in *Corpus scriptorium muzarabicorum*, ed. J. Gil, 2 vols. (Madrid: Instituto Antonio de Nebrija, 1973), vol. 1, ch. 45, p. 33: “Sed ut in brebi cuncta legenti renotem pagella, relictis seculi innumerabilibus ab Adam usque nunc cladibus, quas per infinitis regionibus et civitatibus crudelis intulit mundus iste immundus, quidquid historialiter capta Troia pertulit, quidquid Iherosolima predicta per prophetarum eloquia baiulabit, quidquid Babilonia per

The Trojan origin of the Franks famously makes its debut in the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, first as an interpolation of the excerpts of Eusebius-Jerome and the continuations of Hydatius that make up the second book, and then again in the early chapters of the third book. Not much can be said about *Fredegar's* treatment of the Trojan material that has not already been covered by the voluminous literature on the topic.⁴⁷ It is nevertheless possible to offer some remarks on the relationship between ethnic formation and kingship in the Frankish case. In the *Fredegar* chronicle, the discussion of the emergence of kingship remains ancillary to the one concerned with the formation of the Franks, and this fact accords with the chronicler's overall assessment of contemporary and near-contemporary Merovingians.

scripturarum eloquia substulit, quiddid postremo Roma apostolorum novitate decorate martialiter confecit, omnia et toth ut Spania condam deliciosa et nunc misera effecta tam in honore quam etiam in dedecore experibit." On Jerome's usage, see E. Fabbro, "'Capitur urbs quae totum cepit orbem': The Fates of the Sack of Rome (410) in Early Medieval Historiography," *The Medieval Chronicle* 10 (2015), pp. 49–67.

⁴⁷ The foundational work on *Fredegar* and the Trojans is František Graus, "Troja und trojanische Herkunftssage im Mittelalter" in *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter*, ed. W. Erzgräber (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 25–43. Also, H. Hommel, "Die trojanische Herkunft der Franken," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 99, 4 (1956), pp. 323–341; H.-H. Anton, "Troja-Herkunft, origo gentis und frühe Verfasstheit der Franken in der gallisch-fränkischen Tradition des 5. und 8. Jhs.," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 108 (2000), pp. 1–30; Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, esp. pp. 150–192; R. Waswo, "Our Ancestors, the Trojans: Inventing Cultural Identity in the Middle Ages," *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7.2 (1995), pp. 269–290; Barlow, "Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks," pp. 86–95; E. Ewig, "Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte" in *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht bei Zülpich" (496/97)*, ed. D. Geuenich (Berlin and New York, 1998), pp. 1–31; E. Ewig, "Troja und die Franken," *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 62 (1998), pp. 1–16. See also N.K. Yavuz, *Transmission and Adaptation of the Trojan Narrative in Frankish History between the Sixth and Tenth Centuries*, PhD dissertation (University of Leeds, 2015); Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne"; N.K. Yavuz, "Late Antique Accounts of the Trojan War: A Comparative Look at the Manuscript Evidence," *Pecia* 17 (2014), pp. 149–170; T. J. MacMaster, "The Origin of Origins: Trojans, Turks, and the Birth of the Myth of Trojan Origins in the Medieval World," *Atlantide* 2 (2014), pp. 1–12. On the usage in late medieval historiography, see C. Beaune, "L'utilisation politique du mythe des origines troyennes en France à la fin du Moyen Âge," in *Lectures médiévales de Virgile: Actes du colloque de Rome (25–28 octobre 1982)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1985), pp. 331–355. On Jewish usage, see R. Ben-Shalom, "The Myths of Troy and Hercules as Reflected in the Writings of Some Jewish Exiles from Spain," in *Jews, Muslims and Christians in and around the Crown of Aragon: Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lurie*, ed. H.J. Hames (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), pp. 229–254. For exhaustive literature on the Trojan myth, see Y. Hen, "Canvassing for Charles: A Context for London, BL Arundel 375," in *Zeit und Vergangenheit in fränkischen Europa*, eds. R. Coradini and H. Reimitz (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), pp. 121–28, at p. 125, n.31; M. Gosman, "Alain Chartier: le mythe romain et le pouvoir royal français," in *Entre fiction et histoire: Troie et Rome au Moyen Âge*, eds. E. Baumgartner and L. Harf-Lancier (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997), pp. 161–182, esp. at p. 165; Niles, "Myths of the Eastern Origins of the Franks," pp. 395–399.

Additionally, the treatment of Frankish origins in *Fredegar* may have been styled to convey a message about *Fredegar's* royal contemporaries. It was undoubtedly intended to evoke in the reader connotations of the Roman origin myth, appropriating it and thereby fielding the audacious claim that the Franks were just as much the inheritors of this myth as were the Romans. By inference, Frankish dominion over extensive swaths of the *orbis Romanus* was justified.⁴⁸

In the *Excerpt from the Chronicle of Jerome* found in Book II, the Frankish origin story appears as an offshoot of the Trojan narrative. *Fredegar* follows Jerome in recounting that Priam, Helen's abductor, unwittingly caused the breakout of the ten-year Trojan war. He likewise reports on Memnon and the Amazons' rally to Priam's aid and on the fall of the city. But there he breaks off from Jerome to explore an alternative storyline: the origin of the Franks. *Fredegar* announces the new topic by declaring, "thereafter was the origin of the Franks," after which he identifies Priam as their first king.⁴⁹ Priam was succeeded by Friga, who led half of the escapees on a circuitous journey that ended in their settlement, under their new king Francio, between the Danube and the Rhine, where they came under Roman rule.⁵⁰ The Franks eventually rebelled against the Romans and freed themselves, never again to be yoked by foreign oppressors. Friga is inserted strategically into the next few chapters, but this is where the interpolation in Eusebius-Jerome ends.

Another version of the Troy story is included in the early chapters of the third book of the chronicle, the so-called *Excerpt from the Chronicle of Bishop Gregory of Tours*.⁵¹ The Trojan narrative, which is absent from the *Histories*, is also *Fredegar's* first departure from Gregory. The account repeats the tale of the destruction of the city and the fate of its survivors.

⁴⁸ E. Ewig, "Le mythe troyen et l'histoire de France," in *Clovis, histoire et mémoire: Baptême de Clovis, l'événement*, ed. M. Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997), pp. 817–847, at p. 822; H.-W. Goetz, "Gens, Kings and Kingdoms: The Franks," in *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, eds. H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut, and W. Pohl (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 307–344, at pp. 339–341; A. Fischer, "Reflecting Romanness in the Fredegar Chronicle," *Early Medieval Europe* 22, 4 (2014), pp. 433–445.

⁴⁹ *Fredegar* II.4, p. 45: "Exinde origo Francorum fuit." For the employment of Jerome by the *Fredegar* chronicler as a conscious refutation of Gregory, see Reimitz, "The Early History of Frankish Origin Legends," p. 161.

⁵⁰ He opens by stating that he received his information *per historicorum libros scriptum est*, which suggests that the chronicler was relying on a separate textual tradition, if not several. For a discussion of *Fredegar's* sources, see Schwedler, "Lethe and 'Delete,'" p. 74.

⁵¹ *Fredegar*, preface to Book III, p. 89: "Incipit capetolares libri quarti, quod est scarpsum de cronica Gregorii episcopi Toronaci." Trans. in Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," p. 185.

Here, too, the refugees split into two groups. One made its way to Macedonia, while the other, under the leadership of Friga, eventually settled on the shore of the Danube. There, another division took place, from which two nations arose—the Turks, led by Torcoth, and the Franks, by Francio.⁵² After this time, adds *Fredegar*, the Franks were led by *duces*.

Fredegar's interpolation in the second book and the opening to the third are primarily concerned with the Franks and their origins. Only later do they turn to discuss the question of Frankish kingship and, even then, in a way that leaves many questions unanswered. In both accounts, the chronicler interpolates into his source text material that was preoccupied with the division into recognizable *ethne*: the Macedonians, the Turks, and the Franks. It is true that the king-figures leading the Trojans on their journey into Frankishness have names and are thus an element of any subsequent lineage one could draw from this text. Yet they are figures that function only as templates for the ethnonyms adopted by the groups they helped constitute, not as active characters in a historical drama. The point of this name-giving process is, of course, to introduce Francio, after whom the Franks are called.

This theme ties into the discussion of Merovingian beginnings rather uneasily. Though the kinship between the semi-historical Frankish leaders, Ricimer, Theudemmer, and Clodio, and their mythological forbears, Priam, Friga, and Francio, is eventually revealed, their link to the Merovingians is left unresolved. The Trojan story is therefore constructed in such a way that prioritizes the formation of the Franks in their various stages of development over the institution of kingship, and certainly over the emergence of the Merovingians. As the many twists in *Fredegar's* treatment of the formation of Frankish kingship make clear, it is by no means obvious that *Fredegar* wished to endow the Merovingians with a Trojan ancestry. The only intent we can attribute to *Fredegar* with any certainty is that he claimed that the Franks more generally shared a Trojan history with other *gentes*, most crucially with the Romans whose traditions the text is clearly usurping, and that in the earliest stage of their history they were led by two sets of kings that had Trojan ancestries and long hair.⁵³

The intervening period of Frankish history under the *duces* is equally important to our understanding of *Fredegar's* origin narrative, as is the story of Clodio and Merovech. As we shall see, the chronicler's treatment of pre-Merovingian kings and *duces* does not promote the notion that the

⁵² On the possible identity of these Turks, see Ewig, "Le mythe troyen," pp. 824–826; M. Wagner, "Die Torci bei Fredegar," *Beiträge zur Namenforschung* 19 (1984), pp. 402–410; Kim, *The Huns*, pp. 84–85.

⁵³ *Fredegar* III.9.

kings of his day had any preferential claim to Trojan origins. Rather, it functions as an important element in a storyline that was meant to delineate the emergence of a Frankish community and perhaps to propose a subtle view of the place of the Merovingian family within it.⁵⁴

The section dealing with the Franks under the three *duces* is imported from Gregory, although their election in the place of kings is original to *Fredegar*.⁵⁵ As Woodruff has noted, the *Fredegar* chronicler may have misunderstood the account in the *Histories* on a number of points, namely the details surrounding the Frankish ambush of Roman legionaries in the Charbonnière and the shift the Franks had made from *duces* to kings after a respite from hostilities with the Romans.⁵⁶ *Fredegar* explains that, since the *duces* were dead, the Franks resumed the habit of electing kings from the same ancestral line as before, which wraps up this section of the narrative and provides a path to the subsequent narrative block—Ricimer, Theudemir, and Clodio.⁵⁷

The chronicle contains no additional information about the *duces* after reporting on the incursions of Arbogast into Frankish territory, which were prompted by his hatred of Marcomer and Sunno.⁵⁸ Arbogast is said to have set the forest ablaze to avert possible traps, and to have depopulated the trans-Rhenish lands ruled by the Amai, most likely a misspelling of the Chamavi, one of the constituent tribes of the Frankish confederation.⁵⁹ Since *Fredegar* leaves open the question of how Arbogast's campaign concluded, one might assume that he meant for his readers to infer that these campaigns led to the deaths of Marcomer and Sunno, and that a change in the model of rulership was now required. Yet *Fredegar* is entirely dependent on Gregory here, who specified quite clearly that, while Arbogast's maneuvers across the Rhine were met with no Frankish opposition, the legionaries sighted a group of Amsivarii and Chatii, led by Marcomir. As far as Gregory was concerned, this is how the story ended, with at least one Frankish *dux* alive and well. This is also where Gregory

⁵⁴ On the *duces* as suggesting a perspective centered on the aristocracy, see Reimitz, "The Early History of Frankish Origin Legends," pp. 170–171.

⁵⁵ See I. Wood, "Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval History," in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. T.F.X. Noble (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 91–98, at p. 94; Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 154–155.

⁵⁶ Woodruff, J.E., "The *Historia Epitomata* (Third Book) of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*: An Annotated Translation and Historical Analysis of Interpolated Material," doctoral dissertation (University of Nebraska, 1987), p. 14, n.16.

⁵⁷ *Fredegar* III.5: "Dehinc, extinctis ducibus, in Francis dinuo regis creantur ex eadem stirpe, qua prius fuerant."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 4: "Arbogastis Marcomerem et Sonnonem ducibus odiis insectans, . . ."

⁵⁹ On this, see James, *The Franks*, pp. 35–36; E. Taayke, "Some Introductory and Concluding Remarks," in *Essays on the Early Franks*, ed. E. Taayke et al., Groningen Archaeological Studies, vol. 1 (Eelde: Barkhuis, 2003), pp. ix–xvi, at p. x.

complains that Sulpicius Alexander abandoned his vague usage of *duces* and *regales* altogether and openly asserted that the Franks were led by a king, whose name he nevertheless failed to mention.⁶⁰ This moved Woodruff to propose that the *Fredegar* chronicler mistook Gregory's intent to mean that the *duces* were dead. While that is possible, *Fredegar's* next move seems to suggest otherwise, as I argue on pp. 47–48. The narrative block which is concerned with the three *duces* stands uncomfortably between the first period of Trojan kingship and the second. The *Fredegar* chronicler had to come up with a workaround to connect the two periods coherently.

The author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* faced a similar problem. He—or she, the evidence seems inconclusive on this point⁶¹—also wanted to keep Marcomir and Sunno, who are called *principes*, so the solution was to make them out to be sons of Priam and Antenor, respectively.⁶² The author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* did not entirely share *Fredegar's* ambivalence toward the Merovingians' Trojan origins. The *LHF* allowed for a smoother transition between the progeny of Priam and the Merovingians proper, although it did leave room for uncertainty by claiming that Merovech was not Clodio's son, only his kinsman, “*de genere eius*.”⁶³ This imprecise terminology could have meant either that Merovech was Clodio's relative or his descendant. If the *LHF* was paraphrasing Gregory's “*de huius stirpe*,” we could be inclined to prefer the latter.⁶⁴ In the *LHF*, Sunno's death prompts Marcomir to nominate his son, Faramund, as the first king of the Franks.⁶⁵ Importantly, Faramund is the first to be described as *rex crinitus*, followed shortly thereafter by Clodio. The *LHF* author adds that from that time, the Franks began to have long-haired kings, which goes some way to assuaging any doubts attached to Merovech's paternity and his eligibility to claim Trojan origins, since he obviously met this criterion.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9, p. 55: “Iterum hic, relictis tam ducibus quam regalibus, aperte Francos regem habere designat, huiusque nomen praetermissum, ait: Dehinc Eugenius tyrannus, suscepto expeticionale procincto, Rheni limitem petit, ut, cum Alamannorum et Francorum regibus vetustis foederibus ex more initis, inmensum ea tempestate exercitum gentibus feris ostentaret.”

⁶¹ On this, see M. Hartmann, “Die Darstellung der Frauen im *Liber Historiae Francorum* und die Verfasserfrage,” *Concilium medii aevi* 7 (2004), pp. 209–237.

⁶² See Yavuz, “Transmission and Adaptation,” pp. 166–169.

⁶³ *LHF*, ch. 5: “Chlodione rege defuncto, Merovechus de genere eius regnum eius accipi.” The B recension contains no mention of this.

⁶⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9, p. 58.

⁶⁵ For Faramund as an eighth-century parable of proper rulership, see J. Kreiner, “About the Bishop: The Episcopal Entourage and the Economy of Government in Post-Roman Gaul,” *Speculum* 86, 2 (2011), pp. 321–360, at p. 328.

⁶⁶ *LHF*, ch. 5: “Mortuo quippe Faramundo rege, Chlodionem, filium eius crinitum, in regnum patris sui elevaverunt. Id temporis crinitos reges habere coeperunt.”

Fredegar does not go that far. Although he ends up keeping Marcomir and Sunno, in order to return to a new cast of characters that boast Trojan origins he needs to kill off the *duces*. His solution is not altogether elegant, but it does allow him to reattach Ricimer, Theudemir, and Clodio to their Trojan roots. Priam, Friga, and Francio, we now learn, were themselves long-haired kings, so *Fredegar* might have intended long hair as a metonym for Trojan origins.⁶⁷ In this *Fredegar* differs from both the *Histories* and the *LHF*, which see the institution of long-haired kings as a constitutive break with the past, not a continuation of it.⁶⁸ The *Histories* never attempted to link Clodio to previous kings and remained on the fence on the question of his connection to Merovech. Yet, for Gregory, the connection between long-haired kings and Merovingians was unquestionable. *Fredegar*'s attitude towards the Merovingians is another matter entirely.⁶⁹ Any conclusions one wishes to draw are grounded in the story of Merovech's birth, for which the *Fredegar* chronicler presents a curious and by now well-known interpolation of the *Histories*:

*It is said that when Clodio and his wife were living by the seaside in the summertime, the wife went to the sea to bathe at midday, and a beast of Neptune, not unlike a Quinotaur, sought her out. When later she became pregnant, either by the beast or the husband, she gave birth to a son named Meroveus, through whom the kings of the Franks were thereafter called Merovingians.*⁷⁰

This is all that *Fredegar* has to say about Merovech. The next passage already turns to the debauchery of Childeric, Merovech's son, making it that much harder to decipher the chronicler's precise intent. The interpolation clearly means to convey a message about the formation of the royal family: Merovech came either from a line of Trojan kings or from an unnatural union with a sea-monster, a question *Fredegar* left intentionally open.

⁶⁷ *Fredegar* III.9: "Franci electum a se regi, sicut prius fuerat, crinitum, inquirentes diligenter, ex genere Priami, Frigi et Francionis super se creant nomen Theudemarem, filium Richemeris, qui in hoc prilio, co supra memini, a Romanis interfectus est."

⁶⁸ *LHF*, ch. 4: "Sunnone autem defuncto, acciperunt consilium, ut regem sibi unum constituerent, sicut ceterae gentes. Marchomiris quoque eis dedit hoc consilium, et elegerunt Faramundo, ipsius filio, et elevaverunt eum regem super se crinitum." It is surely meaningful that, in a passage taken from the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, the *LHF* reported that thereafter the Franks also submitted to the authority of laws.

⁶⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9: "Tradunt enim multi, eosdem de Pannonia fuisse degressus, et primum quidem litora Rheni amnes incoluisse, dehinc, transacto Rheno, Thoringiam transmeasse, ibique iuxta pagus vel civitates regis crinitos super se creavisse de prima et, ut ita dicam, nobiliore suorum familia."

⁷⁰ *Fredegar* III.9, p. 95: "Fertur, super litore maris aestatis tempore Chlodeo cum uxore resedens, meridiae uxor ad mare labandum vadens, bistea Neptuni Quinotauri similis eam adpetisset. Cumque in continuo aut a bistea aut a viro fuisset concepta, peperit filium nomem Meroveum, per co regis Francorum post vocantur Merohingii."

Alexander C. Murray and Ian Wood offer somewhat divergent readings of the episode, but on several points it seems possible to agree—firstly, that a version of this story could have circulated with the purpose of etymologizing the Merovingian dynasty, perhaps at a time when the name Merovech was making a comeback on Chilperic I's side of the family.⁷¹ Secondly, that the overall orientation of this story is classical and should be understood in relation to the Trojan chapters.⁷² The Trojan origin story was certainly meant to correspond to parallel stories recounted by different peoples, most notably the Romans. The version in the *Scarpsum de Cronica Hieronimi*, which contains a more fully developed rendering of the Frankish origin story, moves from Friga to Francio. In a corresponding plotline several chapters later, it suggests that Friga and Aeneas might have been brothers.⁷³ A short treatment of Latin ancestry and Roman republican history then follows. Jerome's *Chronicle* moves straight from the fall of Troy to the Latin kingship of Aeneas, so *Fredegar's* decision to interpolate the story of Frankish origins here, of all places, seems aimed at creating a parallel between Franks and Romans. While Roman history is not expanded upon in any detail in Book III, the Trojan story does lead naturally into a Frankish encounter, under the three *duces*, with the Romans, whose own Trojan ancestry is acknowledged by *Fredegar* in Book II. In the third book, however, the Romans appear without any Trojan connotations as the ultimate losers in their encounter with the Franks, whose own Trojan bloodline frames the entire discussion.

For later chroniclers working from *Fredegar*, the Trojan narrative and the Quinotaur story were irreconcilable. In the end, the Trojan version prevailed. Using the story of Merovech's unusual birth would have meant taking on the challenging task of harmonizing it with the Trojan storyline, which was the more important part of the plot. The Quinotaur story seems also to have carried an unappealing pagan aftertaste. Regarding the source material, the intertextual relationship between the different works of Merovingian historiography has been overwhelmingly conservative. In the case of Marcomir and Sunno, for instance, both *Fredegar* and the *LHF* retain a narrative nucleus extracted from the *Histories*, even when they are forced to make concessions to accommodate it. The Quinotaur

⁷¹ See A.C. Murray, "Post vocantur Merovingii: *Fredegar*, Merovech, and 'Sacral Kingship'," in *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, ed. A.C. Murray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 121–152; Wood, "Defining the Franks," pp. 93–96.

⁷² Although, as noted by Wood, probably not extracted from classical texts but from diplomatic language. See Wood, "Defining the Franks," p. 94; Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, p. 157, highlights *Fredegar's* usage of *bistea*, a term which for him carried negative connotations, and is connected to Basina's prophecy.

⁷³ *Fredegar* II.8, p. 47: "Aeneas et Frigas fertur germani fuissent."

story is different. It was probably lack of awareness of the story that kept the author of the *LHF* from relating to it, but later chroniclers largely deferred to the model proposed by the *LHF*, which on the question of Clodio's paternity of Merovech reflected the view expressed in the *Histories*.⁷⁴ *Fredegar* and the *LHF* are similar in that they maintain some distance between Clodio and Merovech, but neither rules out the possibility that Merovech, and subsequently the Merovingians, were heirs to the line of Priam.⁷⁵ Yet they go about doing this in different ways: The *LHF* takes a simpler approach, which rests on the supposition that Merovech was at the very least a relative but more likely a descendant of Clodio, and in any event shared his status as *rex crinitus*.

Fredegar's narrative contortions suggest that the chronicler had something else in mind, although the reasoning behind his inclusion of the Quinotaur subplot is lost to history. It may have caught an echo of a competing origin story, as suggested by Wood. The relative diversity found in all three major works of Merovingian historiography suggests that the Franks held on to several parallel traditions about the early days of Frankish kingship, and Merovech's birth could easily have been one of them. Indeed, the Trojan story may have derived from myths recounted by the Gallic segment of the population.⁷⁶ Moreover, the overall tone of the Quinotaur story was not a flattering one for the Merovingians.⁷⁷ This is true not only because an ancestry which issues from a random encounter with a sea-monster does little to advance royal prestige, certainly when compared to stories by competing royal lines.⁷⁸ The *Fredegar* chronicler ensured that his readers understood that Merovech's paternity was not attributable to either the Quinotaur or Clodio with any certainty. Taken against the backdrop of *Fredegar's* thoroughly Christianized chronology, its pagan undertones make the Quinotaur element feel even more out of place.

While criticism of the Merovingians is a clear element of the story as related in *Fredegar*, it only really follows from one possible interpretative route of the Quinotaur story and should not be seen as its sole *raison d'être*. Two distinct possibilities, with a moral dimension attached to each, were

⁷⁴ Lake, "Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*," p. 502.

⁷⁵ Although in the *LHF*, it is Aeneas who is the progenitor of the Trojan line, with Priam appearing only later.

⁷⁶ Ewig, "Le mythe troyen," pp. 817–818; Barlow, "Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks," pp. 87–88.

⁷⁷ I. Wood, "Deconstructing the Merovingian Family," in *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts*, eds. R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger, and H. Reimitz (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 149–171, at p. 152.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, H. Wolfram, "*Origo et religio*: Ethnic Tradition and Literature in Early Medieval Texts," *Early Medieval Europe* 3, 1 (1994), pp. 29–38.

envisaged by the chronicler. The content of these moral lessons is less easily determined, although we might suppose that they applied to the circumstances of the Merovingian kingdoms at the time of *Fredegar's* composition in the early 660s. The Quinotaur story was concerned with problematic paternity and its unfortunate result, namely, that a Merovingian of dubious origins would occupy the royal throne. Denial of paternity was a useful weapon for delegitimizing royal candidates;⁷⁹ we might then ask to which candidates *Fredegar* is alluding here. The Grimoald affair that took place in the 650s seems to suggest itself as a possible point of reference. Wood has argued that the *Fredegar* chronicler was sympathetic to the Pippinids, and indeed his appraisal of Pippin I was impeccable. Yet he was not as decisively supportive of Grimoald.⁸⁰ If the story of Merovech's birth was a veiled reference to the coup, then Grimoald was its Quinotaur.

Thus, I suggest that we might read *Fredegar's* interpolation as an expression of unease with the rule of Childebert "the Adopted," Grimoald's putative biological son.⁸¹ The chronicler would surely have been aware of Grimoald's fate, and, depending on the exact date of the composition, could also have known of the death of Childebert, which could have taken place as late as 662. If *Fredegar* was composed in Childeric II's Austrasia or, indeed, in Chlothar III's Neustro-Burgundy, interpreting the story as a call to Merovingian loyalism seems quite plausible. For both *regna*, but especially Austrasia, the early 660s would have been a period of recuperation from the Grimoald affair, punctuated by the Neustrian takeover of the Austrasian throne with the implicit approval of Chimnechild, Sigibert III's widow, who wed her daughter Bilichild to Childeric II.⁸² On a more pragmatic level, *Fredegar's* Quinotaur story functioned, much like Gregory's Pannonia, as a point of narrative inflection, from which our reading of history might unfold in one of two ways. Now, this does not necessarily mean that the author wished for the identification of Grimoald

⁷⁹ E. T. Dailey, "Gregory of Tours, Fredegund, and the Paternity of Chlothar II: Strategies of Legitimation in the Merovingian Kingdoms," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7, 1 (2014), pp. 3–27.

⁸⁰ R. Collins, *Fredegar, Authors of the Middle Ages*, vol. iv, no. 13 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 107–111.

⁸¹ For a recent interpretation of the Grimoald usurpation, see I. Wood, "'There Is a World Elsewhere': The World of Late Antiquity," in *Motions of Late Antiquity: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Society in Honour of Peter Brown*, eds. J. Kreiner and H. Reimitz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), pp. 17–43, at pp. 28–37.

⁸² On this, see J. Hofman, "The Marriage of Childeric II and Bilichild in the Context of the Grimoald Coup," *Peritia* 17–18 (2003–2004), pp. 382–393; J. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History, Subsidia 1 (Oxford 1978), pp. 31–77, repr. in J. Nelson, ed., *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 1986), pp. 1–48, at p. 20. See also Y. Hen, "Changing Places: Chrodobert, Boba, and the Wife of Grimoald," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 90, 2 (2012), pp. 225–243.

with the Quinotaur to be an obvious one. As the framing of the story suggests, other solutions were left on the table. It is only to be construed as an interpretive path that may or may not be followed, at the reader's discretion. If it is, the comparison with contemporary events on the political stage might suggest itself and, with it, the drawing of appropriate moral conclusions. The ethics of the *Fredegar* chronicler continued to play a role in his presentation of the story's next hero, Merovech's son, Childeric I.

As a character, Childeric is certainly amplified in *Fredegar*.⁸³ The general outline of the story's earlier events resembles the one found in the *Histories*, although the motives of Childeric and his supporting cast are explored in much greater depth. *Fredegar* follows Gregory in pointing to Childeric's licentiousness as the reason for his escape to Thuringia. Like his source, *Fredegar*'s Childeric is only able to return once his ally at court appeases the angry Franks, who have since invited Aegidius, the Roman *magister militum*, to rule over them. This ally, who remains unidentified in the *Histories*, is called Wiomad in both *Fredegar* and in the *LHF*. Yet here is where the similarities end. While for the most part the *LHF* sticks to Gregory's narrative, *Fredegar* introduces new details that take the plot in unexpected directions. Especially noteworthy is *Fredegar*'s evaluation of the courtly intrigues that went on when the king was in exile and the international networks that were activated to facilitate his return.

Wiomad appears at the very beginning of the story, where he is credited with having saved Childeric and his mother from Hunnic captivity.⁸⁴ If this indeed reflects a historical event, Wiomad would likely have been a generation older than Childeric, probably one of his father's men.⁸⁵ After Childeric departed for Thuringia, Wiomad won Aegidius's trust and was appointed *subregulus* over the Franks. Determined to bring about Childeric's return, he immediately began to undermine Aegidius's position with his leading men. First, he convinced Aegidius to impose increasingly steep levies on the Franks. Then, Wiomad insisted that the only way to prevent the Franks from rebelling was to carry out a mass execution, for which he selected 100 men described as being useless and unsuitable in times of need—"inutiles et in necessitatibus incongruos."⁸⁶ Later, Wiomad riled up the indignant Franks against Aegidius, reminding

⁸³ *Fredegar* III.11, pp. 95–97.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95: "Wiomadus Francus fidelissimus ceteris Childerico, qui eum, cum a Chunis cum matre captivus deceretur, fugaciter liberaverat [...]." At the very least this is consistent with the timeline of Attila's advances in Gaul and the position of the Franks as imperial allies in the early 450s.

⁸⁵ The most detailed discussion of this is in Kim, *The Huns*, pp. 80–83, although at times unnecessarily dismissive of earlier scholarship on Frankish-Hunnic associations.

⁸⁶ *Fredegar* III.11, p. 96.

them that those scheduled for execution were their *parentes*.⁸⁷ Having heard enough, the Franks were content to invite back Childeric. Wiomad then put into action the second part of his plan: Aegidius was lulled into thinking that his harsh measures were effective, and that now would be an opportune time to request from the emperor in the East financial support to put the neighboring peoples directly under imperial rule.⁸⁸ Wiomad then deceitfully inserted one of his men into the legation sent to Constantinople to procure the funds.

Wiomad's agent also had a secret task—to recall Childeric. The king was apparently ensconced not in Thuringia, his initial place of refuge, but in Constantinople, where he was a guest of the emperor. This is a surprising revelation, to which the *Fredegar* chronicler made no previous allusions. The Byzantine court is known to have regularly harbored foreign dissidents and refugees—Radegund's cousin Amalafid who fled the Frankish conquest of Thuringia is one such example⁸⁹—although in Childeric's case, the entire episode was an ahistorical narrative ploy. A dramatic scene at the imperial court follows, in which Childeric managed to prevail over Aegidius's emissaries, secure the emperor's support, and lay the ground for his return to Gaul. We next read that Wiomad and Childeric held a meeting in Gaul, where they hatched a plan for getting Childeric reinstated. The plan was adopted enthusiastically by the king's supporters, Childeric regained his throne, and went on to defeat Aegidius and his Romans on the battlefield.

Some of the details provided by *Fredegar* seem to have a basis in reality. The *LHF*, which is not dependent on *Fredegar*,⁹⁰ repeats the name Wiomad, likewise casting him in a leading role in Aegidius's court. And while he is not mentioned by name in the *Histories*, the character of Wiomad might nevertheless reflect some measure of historicity. His successful rescue of Childeric and his mother from the Huns is possibly another older, possibly oral, account of historical events. Yet, the

⁸⁷ Given their prior description, these may have been chosen from the elderly.

⁸⁸ *Fredegar* III.11, p. 96: "Dans idemque consilio, laegatus ad Mauricio imperatore dirigi, gentes qui vicinas erant possi adtrahi, ut vel quiquaginta milia soledorum ab imperatore dirigentur, quo pocius gentes accepto in munere se imperio subiecerint." See Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, p. 158.

⁸⁹ On the letters containing this information, see B. Brennan, "The Disputed Authorship of Fortunatus' Byzantine Poems," *Byzantion* 66, 2 (1996), pp. 335–345; A.M. Wasyl, "An Aggrieved Heroine in Merovingian Gaul: Venantius Fortunatus, Radegund's Lament on the Destruction of Thuringia, and Echoing Ovid's *Heroides*," *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 45, 1 (2015), pp. 64–75; I. Fielding, *Transformations of Ovid in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 182–207. Famously, Fortunatus's threnody employs Trojan motifs.

⁹⁰ Although this has recently been questioned, or at least nuanced somewhat. See Reimitz, "The Early History of Frankish Origin Legends," p. 174.

Wiomad story waves several red flags. For one, *subregulus*—Wiomad’s office under Aegidius and probably also under Childeric—is an anachronism when applied to late fifth-century northern Gaul. More likely, it reflects the court hierarchy of *Fredegar*’s own day. It is not a word the chronicler uses again, so we have no way of comparing Wiomad’s position to that of other characters. The long extract from Sulpicius Alexander in Book II of the *Histories* invokes the term to refer to the *duces* Marcomir and Sunno. Gregory frames these men as Frankish leaders who were not answerable to any king, although whether this was how Sulpicius Alexander wished the term to be understood is impossible to say.

Subregulus does appear in hagiographical compositions contemporary with the composition of *Fredegar*—the *Vita Romarici* and the *Vita Arnulfi*—where it is always used to refer to a mayor of the palace.⁹¹ *Fredegar* shares other similarities with these hagiographies, not least of which is its close acquaintance with the *Vita Columbani*, so we might hazard a guess that *subregulus* was understood relatively uniformly by all three. As noted by Roger Collins, the *Fredegar* chronicler looked for particular virtues in his leading men, such as loyalty, patience, and, above all, good counsel.⁹² With regard to these three traits, the wording of “Wiomad the Frank, more loyal to Childeric than all others” is reminiscent of the description of another *maior domus*, the seventh-century Aega. *Fredegar* described Aega as “outstanding amongst the other leading men of Neustria, acting with prudence and imbued with the fullness of patience.”⁹³

⁹¹ *Vita Romarici abbatis Habendensis*, MGH SRM 4, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1902), pp. 221–225, ch. 8, p. 224: “... vir magnificus Grimoaldus subregulus ...”; *Vita Arnulfi episcopi Mettensis*, MGH SRM 2, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1888), pp. 426–446, ch. 3, p. 433: “[Arnulfus] Gundolfo subregulo seu etiam rectori palatii vel consiliario regis exercitandus in bonis actibus traditur.” On this, see Reimitz, *History*, p. 110; H. Grahn-Hoek, “Gundulfus subregulus—eine genealogische Brücke zwischen Merowingern und Karolingern?,” *Deutsches Archiv* 59 (2003), pp. 1–47; G. Halsall, “Growing Up in Merovingian Gaul,” in *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992–2009* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 383–412, at p. 387. For a discussion on the dating of the two Lives, see L. Cracco Ruggini, “The Crisis of the Noble Saint: The ‘Vita Arnulfi,’” in *The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity. Proceedings of a Joint French and British Colloquium Held at the Warburg Institute 8–9 July 1988*, eds. J. Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth (London: Warburg Institute, 1992), pp. 116–153 (see p. 122, n.9 for Arnulf’s duties at court); M.G. Nauroy, “La Vita anonyme de Saint Arnoul et ses modèles antiques: La figure de saint évêque entre vérité historique et motifs hagiographiques,” *Mémoires de l’Académie nationale de Metz* (2002), pp. 293–321; C. M. Nason, “The Vita Sancti Arnulfi (BHL 689–692): Its Place in the Liturgical Veneration of a Local Saint,” *Sacris Erudiri* 54 (2015), pp. 171–199, at pp. 174–176.

⁹² Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 23–24.

⁹³ *Fredegar* III.11, p. 95: “Wiomadus Francus fidelissimus ceteris Childerico ...”; *Fredegar* IV.80, p. 161: “Aega vero inter citiris primatibus Neustreci prudencius agens et plenitudinem pacienciae inbutus, cumtis erat precellentior.” Trans. in R. Collins, *The Fredegar Chronicles*, unpublished English version, p. 57.

The unstinting loyalty of Wiomad to Childeric may be helpfully compared to Aega's devotion to Dagobert I, and, more importantly, to his son, Clovis II. During the young prince's minority, Aega functioned as royal *nutritor* and staunch ally of Queen Nanthild, calling to mind Wiomad's Hunnic rescue of the underage Childeric and his mother. The years Wiomad spent in subterfuge under Aegidius are nothing if not evidence of his *paciencia*. And of course, had it not been for his sound advice, Childeric would never have been able to win back his kingdom. In fact, Wiomad's *consilium* is the main theme of chapter 11. He is a much more active character than Childeric, and his recommendations are the ones that dictate the fates of the episode's other protagonists. Similarly, Wiomad's kings can be juxtaposed with Aega's—Dagobert's debauchery reminds us of Childeric, and his avaricious behavior toward the nobles' property, of Aegidius. It seems likely, then, that *Fredegar* meant for the affair to function as a moral exploration of the power of loyalty and sound advice, and the king's reliance on both, and for this lesson to be applicable to a contemporary readership.

Now, let us consider the imperial angle of the story. Childeric's victory scene at the Constantinopolitan court is unique to *Fredegar*. It gained little traction in later historiography, primarily because it was rejected by Aimoin of Fleury's tenth-century *Gesta Francorum*, the main bottleneck such narrative blocks had to overcome were they to survive and reach medieval chronicles. Aimoin must have been aware of this scene because he made use of *Fredegar* in countless other instances, but here he decided to defer to the less detailed account found in the *LHF*.⁹⁴ More to the point, Aimoin would have had no reason to shine a light on the Constantinopolitan subplot, which would have been superfluous to his treatment.⁹⁵ It is likely that he considered the *LHF* as essentially a product of Gregory of Tours and relied on it and not on *Fredegar* where the two disagreed.⁹⁶

What Aimoin lost by adhering to the *LHF*'s simplified plot, he made up for in the grandiloquence of his characters. Be that as it may, the story of Childeric in Constantinople did not withstand his scrutiny, nor, for that matter, should it withstand ours. As it is portrayed, the episode has several irregularities and here, again, we should read it not as an attempt at disinterested historical reportage; as is so often the case with *Fredegar*, Childeric's Byzantine adventure should probably be understood as a metaphor for contemporary events.

⁹⁴ Aimoin of Fleury, *Gesta Francorum*, I.7., cols. 641–642.

⁹⁵ For some remarks on Aimoin's critical treatment of the Byzantines, see Lake, "Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*," p. 505.

⁹⁶ For some important exceptions to this, see pp. 67–68.

For Childeric to have had some relationship with the eastern court is not out of the question, of course. Coins from the reign of Marcian were found in his tomb, discovered in Tournai in 1653. The story of the tomb and its finds has a riveting history of its own and has been discussed by Bonnie Effros and others in detail.⁹⁷ On the more pragmatic level for our purposes, eastern artifacts recovered from the tomb might suggest some form of contact between Childeric and his *fideles* and the Roman court in Constantinople. As noted by Guy Halsall, however, the tomb and the message it was made to convey were not of Childeric's design, but of Clovis's.⁹⁸ The coins were obviously there to tell a story, but, as Fischer and Lind point out, any assembly of burial goods was "an independent ideological demonstration" that we should interpret separately from the question of its origin.⁹⁹ The contents of the hoard must have been curated to make a statement about legitimacy, and were probably assembled in a western context, but they teach us little about Childeric's relationship with the eastern court.

More likely, the story in *Fredegar* carried a different meaning. The misidentification of the emperor as Maurice (and not Marcian) could, of course, be a simple error; the names of the two emperors were similar.¹⁰⁰ But the *Fredegar* chronicler was well versed in international affairs, with a vista much broader than that of Gregory, who famously misplaced Antioch in Egypt.¹⁰¹ The *Fredegar* chronicler's diplomatic horizons spanned across the Mediterranean, penetrating the Sasanian heartlands and beyond.¹⁰² He is the first to mention the Göktürks, who dwelt to the

⁹⁷ B. Effros *Merovingian Mortuary Archeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 28–51; B. Effros, "Memories of the Early Medieval Past: Grave Artefacts in Nineteenth-Century France and Early Twentieth-Century America," in *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies*, ed. H. Williams (New York: Springer, 2003), pp. 255–280, at p. 259; B. Effros, *Uncovering the Germanic Past: Merovingian Archaeology in France, 1830–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 27–28 and *passim*; Lebecq, "The Two Faces of King Childeric," pp. 275–276; P. Fouracre, "Francia and the History of Medieval Europe," *The Haskins Society Journal* 23 (2011), pp. 1–22, esp. at pp. 5–6; P. Burke, "Images as Evidence in Seventeenth-Century Europe," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, 2 (2003), pp. 273–296, at pp. 284–286.

⁹⁸ Halsall, "Childeric's Grave," pp. 169–187. On the grave and the consequences of its discovery, see D. Quast, *Das Grab des fränkischen Königs Childerich in Tournai und die Anastasis Childerici von Jean-Jacques Chifflet aus dem Jahre 1655* (Mainz: Verlag des römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2015).

⁹⁹ S. Fischer and L. Lind, "The Coins in the Grave of King Childeric," *Journal of Archaeology and Ancient History* 14 (2015), pp. 3–36.

¹⁰⁰ On Maurice's policies, see L. Sarti, "Byzantine History and Stories in the Frankish «Chronicle of Fredegar» (c. 613–662)," *Francia* 48 (2021), pp. 3–22. I thank Laury for sharing with me an unpublished version of this paper.

¹⁰¹ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* IV.40.

¹⁰² Information came, according to Sarti, through a delegation returning from Constantinople. See Sarti, "Byzantine History," pp. 3–6. For contacts between Franks and Byzantines in the run-up to this exchange, see P. Schreiner, "Eine

east of Iran, and is also the first among both western and eastern sources to mention Muslim advances against the Byzantines.¹⁰³ For him to have mistaken characters that were essential to his Frankish storyline was decidedly odd.

The gift of 50,000 *solidi* is evidence that the episode was written with a different message in mind. Memorably, Childebert II received an identical gift from the actual Maurice, given with the specific provision that the Franks invade Italy and dislodge the recently established Lombards.¹⁰⁴ Childeric's story was also about removing unwanted political authority, so the chronicler could have been alluding to a much more recent diplomatic exchange between the Franks and the Byzantines, one which took place in the 580s. It is also possible to see other layers in the story. We know of at least one other incident in which a Merovingian claimant—Gundovald—was laden with gifts and sent by the emperor to undermine the status quo in Gaul.¹⁰⁵ The chronology of Gundovald's departure from Constantinople is quite difficult to assess, although it was located close to Tiberius II's death and the ascent of Maurice in August 582. Whoever financed Gundovald—to the tune of 50,000 *solidi*, if what Walter Goffart suspected is correct—it is clear that Maurice had a stake in his royal aspirations, which unfolded completely within the emperor's first three years in office.¹⁰⁶

However one chooses to read Childeric's story of exile and return, its components were invariably made to correspond to *Fredegar's* understanding of the Byzantine policies of subsidy and intervention enacted under the emperor Maurice in the 580s. Yet this was about more than dressing up Childeric as a late sixth-century character. Contacts with the Byzantines were a developing story with contemporary significance for the *Fredegar* chronicler, evidenced by the detailed account of Heraclius's

merowingische Gesandtschaft in Konstantinopel," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 19, 1 (2015), pp. 195–200.

¹⁰³ See Esders, "Prophesied Rule," pp. 134–137.

¹⁰⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* vi.42, p. 314. On this, see Y. Fox, "The Language of Sixth-Century Frankish Diplomacy," in *The Merovingian Kingdoms and the Mediterranean World: Revisiting the Sources*, eds. S. Esders, Y. Hen, P. Lucas, and T. Rotman (London and New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2019), pp. 63–75; A. Fischer, "Money for Nothing: Franks, Byzantines and Lombards in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries," in *East and West in the Early Middle Ages: The Merovingian Kingdoms in Mediterranean Perspective*, eds. S. Esders, Y. Fox, Y. Hen and L. Sarti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 108–126; A. Gillett, "Love and Grief in Post-Imperial Diplomacy: The Letters of Brunhild," in *Power and Emotions in the Roman World and Late Antiquity*, eds. Barbara Sidwell and Danijel Dzino (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), pp. 127–165.

¹⁰⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* vi.24.

¹⁰⁶ W. Goffart, "Byzantine Policy in the West under Tiberius II and Maurice: The Pretenders Hermenegild and Gundovald, 579–58," *Traditio* 13 (1957), pp. 73–118, at pp. 100–101, 113.

career and his contacts with Dagobert I. As demonstrated by Stefan Esders, in the early 630s the Byzantines were once again interested in cajoling the Franks into a joint military adventure, this time against the Avars.¹⁰⁷ The *Fredegar* chronicler was not only well informed, he was also opinionated, if his later appraisal of Heraclius's demise and the unimaginable success of the Saracens is anything to go by. I would not go so far as to imply that Childeric's Byzantine episode was code for the events of the 580s, or that the attentive reader was meant, by making the correct inferences, to glean the chronicler's opinion about the policies of his own day. It seems safe, however, to read the treatment of Childeric in *Fredegar* as an astute meditation on the risks and benefits of playing along with Byzantine interventionism.

1.3 A Carolingian Interlude: The Trojan Comment in the *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*

As the dynasty that displaced the Merovingians, the Carolingians would have had every reason to suspect *origo* stories that privileged their predecessors. The ambition of Carolingian historiography was primarily to broadcast a message of legitimacy. Dwelling on the accomplishments of the Merovingians was counterproductive, to say the least. It is no surprise, then, that the most iconic Carolingian work depicting the Merovingians is one in which ridicule prevails. The first chapters of Einhard's *Vita Karoli* are a caricature of the late Merovingian kings, whose lethargy becomes their most defining feature. Einhard's vignette is partly true; while the actual career of Childeric III, the very last Merovingian, is almost entirely unknown, it is certain that he was firmly under the thumb of both Carloman and Pippin III.¹⁰⁸ Carloman and Pippin did not inherit Childeric from their father. Charles Martel had ruled without a king for the four final years of his life; the last Merovingian crowned in 743 was their own creation.¹⁰⁹ He was likely every bit as ineffectual as the sources make him out to have been. Still, Einhard does not limit his criticism solely to the final Merovingian. Fault lay equally with Childeric's predecessors. Einhard clearly says that: "... this family

¹⁰⁷ Esders, "The Prophesied Rule," pp. 119–154.

¹⁰⁸ His only surviving charters, in *Diplomata* 96 and 97, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH DD Mer. (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1872), pp. 86–88, are confirmations of previously granted monastic privileges in Sithiu and Stablo-Malmédy, the last of which mentions Carloman prominently.

¹⁰⁹ I.N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 290–292. See also C. Bouchard, "Childeric III and the Emperors Drogo Magnus and Pippin the Pious," *Medieval Prosopography* 28 (2013), pp. 1–16. For discussion of the death of Theuderic IV and the *Calculus* of 737, see [Chapter 5](#).

(i.e., the *gens Meroingorum*), though it may be regarded as finishing with him, had long since lost all power, and no longer possessed anything of importance except the empty royal title.”¹¹⁰ Einhard, and Carolingian historiography more generally, was committed to a narrative of long decline. The sooner the Merovingians began to wane, the sooner Pippinid figures could be brought to the fore.

This is not to say the Merovingian-era chronicles did not have their place within the Carolingian historiographical project. The *Continuations of Fredegar* are perhaps the most conspicuous effort by the Carolingians to reframe Merovingian historiography to suit dynastic needs. They were compiled, together with the original chronicle, into what is essentially a new composition, the *Historia vel gesta Francorum*.¹¹¹ As shown by Helmut Reimitz, the *Fredegar Chronicle* was experimented upon widely in Carolingian *scriptoria*, with the earliest sections of the text arousing particular interest.¹¹² Carolingian authors also knew the *LHF* well and used it extensively, not least in their framing of the *Fredegar* continuations. In fact, most manuscripts containing the composition are Carolingian.¹¹³ Although the initial purpose of the *LHF* was to legitimize Merovingian kingship and its cooperation with the Neustrian elites, the work could certainly lend itself to other interpretations.¹¹⁴ It is not overtly hostile to the Carolingians and contains a quite favorable depiction of Pippin II and Charles Martel.¹¹⁵ The details of the latter’s career after 727 were of course unknown to the author of the *LHF*. One might assume that Martel’s decisive dismantling of late Merovingian power might have changed the composition’s tone.¹¹⁶ Counterfactuals notwithstanding, the *LHF* was a valuable link in the Carolingians’ historiographical chain. It was also the composition that

¹¹⁰ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, MGH SRG 25, ed. O. Holder-Egger (Hanover and Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1911), ch. 1: “Quae licet in illo finita possit videri, tamen iam dudum nullius vigoris erat, nec quicquam in se clarum praeter inane regis vocabulum praeferebat.” Translation taken, with adjustments, from Eginhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. A.J. Grant (In parentheses Publications: Cambridge, Ontario, 1999).

¹¹¹ See Reimitz, *History*, p. 295; Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 82–145; Yavuz, “From Caesar to Charlemagne,” p. 260.

¹¹² Reimitz, *History*, pp. 236–239.

¹¹³ See Krusch’s introduction to the MGH edition, pp. 220–234. See also Yavuz, “Transmission and Adaptation,” pp. 153–159. That it was understood as a component in the Carolingian framing of their ascent is suggested by the existence of manuscripts that contained the *LHF* as an introductory text to the *Annales regni Francorum* and the *Vita Karoli*. See R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 65, 239.

¹¹⁴ Reimitz, *History*, pp. 248–252. ¹¹⁵ *LHF*, chs. 46–53, pp. 319–328.

¹¹⁶ See R. Broome, “Approaches to Community and Otherness in the Late Merovingian and Early Carolingian Periods,” doctoral dissertation (University of Leeds, 2014), pp. 22–23, 88–94.

took the Merovingians' association with Troy the farthest.¹¹⁷ We must therefore assume that the *origines Francorum* presented in *Fredegar* and the *LHF* were on the minds of Carolingian authors and readers.

Of course, Trojan stories were in circulation long before they were ever put in writing, and oral versions probably survived well into the Carolingian period. Whether this corpus of written and oral material was understood to have foregrounded the Merovingians' place in the story or whether it was perceived as a shared myth of common origins applicable to all Franks is difficult to tell. Still, Carolingian authors were actively engaged in altering the stories they found in Merovingian-era chronicles and in oral tradition, such as it was. These authors also came up with fresh uses for the Trojan *origo*, such as the one we find in Paul the Deacon's *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*. Composed in 784 in Francia at the behest of Angilram bishop of Metz, the *Gesta* took a novel approach to Trojan material, all the while consciously reflecting a vision of the Carolingians as they would have liked to be seen. The reworking and continuation of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* into the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* was significant, as was the continued preoccupation with the Trojan theme in other early Carolingian works, such as the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus or the *Historia de origine Francorum* attributed to Dares of Phrygia.¹¹⁸ Yet Paul the Deacon's surprising variation on Ansegisel-Anschisus, to which I shall turn shortly, is a new—and rare—use of the Trojan story by Carolingian historiography.¹¹⁹

In his history of the episcopacy of Metz, Paul would have been able to draw on comparable compositions, such as the *Liber Pontificalis*, which records the deeds of the bishops of Rome, ordered according to the sequence of their succession.¹²⁰ Scholarship has noted that, despite the

¹¹⁷ Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian Historiography," p. 190.

¹¹⁸ See Aethicus Ister, *Cosmographia*, in M. Herren, ed. and trans., *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister: Edition, Translation, and Commentary* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); D. Shanzer, "The *Cosmographia* Attributed to Aethicus Ister as *Philosophen- or Reiseroman*," in *Insignis Sophiae Arcator: Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Michael Herren on His 65th Birthday*, eds. G.R. Wieland, C. Ruff, and R.G. Arthur (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 57–86; I. Wood, "Aethicus Ister: An Exercise in Difference," in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, eds. W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), pp. 197–208; Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne," pp. 259–262. See also now J. Kreiner, *Legions of Pigs in the Early Medieval West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), pp. 72–73.

¹¹⁹ On the uncertain status of the *Historia de origine Francorum* as a product of the *Fredegar* continuators, see Yavuz, "Transmission and Adaptation," pp. 184–187; S. O'Sullivan, "From Troy to Aachen: Ancient Rome and the Carolingian Reception of Vergil," in *Inscribing Knowledge in the Medieval Book: The Power of Paratexts*, ed. R. Brown-Grant et al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 185–196.

¹²⁰ D. Kempf, "Paul the Deacon's *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus* and the Role of Metz in the Carolingian Realm," *Journal of Medieval History* 30, 3 (2004), pp. 279–299, at p. 283. On the so-called "Frankish redactions" of the *Liber Pontificalis*, see C. Viricillo Franklin, "Frankish Redaction or Roman Exemplar? Revisions and Interpolations in the Text of

Gesta's suggestive title, the composition is not so much preoccupied with the deeds of the bishops of Metz as it is with events on a regnal scale.¹²¹ One indication of this is that a seemingly off-topic emphasis on the Carolingian lineage, or rather a heavily stylized version thereof, dominates large swaths of the *Gesta*. This becomes especially apparent in the passages dealing with Metz's twenty-ninth bishop, Arnulf, for whom Paul reserved the role of the Carolingian clan's *paterfamilias*. Paul reports that Arnulf's career, and the marvelous events that it occasioned, were based on stories he heard from the *praecelsus rex Karolus* himself. Charlemagne, adds Paul, was Arnulf's *trinepos*—his great-great-great-grandson, a noteworthy bit of information. It is also significant that this comes on the heels of the episcopacies of the senator Agiulf and his nephew, Arnoald, both of whom, according to Paul, were scions of none other than the daughter of Clovis, king of the Franks.¹²² The qualifier *fertur* seems to introduce some skepticism about the veracity of the claim, though perhaps this reading should not be pushed too far. What is clear is that, for Paul, Merovingian roots were a historical dead end and that the future belonged to the progeny of Arnulf, whose own dynastic success he parades in subsequent passages. Arnulf's sons are presented in the next vignette, and it is here that we learn that his younger son Ansegisel, styled Anschisus, was named after Anschises, the father of Aeneas. Aeneas, so the story goes, went to Italy from Troy, the place where an "old tradition" claims the Franks had their beginning.¹²³ Paul's approach to the question of origins—the Merovingians, the Carolingians, and the Franks as a community—is meant to guide the reader toward certain conclusions about the desirable relationship between all three.

the *Liber pontificalis*," in *Inclusion and Exclusion in Mediterranean Christianities, 400–800*, eds. Y. Fox and E. Buchberger (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), pp. 17–46.

¹²¹ McKitterick, "Paul the Deacon and the Franks," pp. 319–339; G. Koziol, "The Future of History After Empire," in *Using and Not Using the Past After the Carolingian Empire, c. 900–c. 1050*, eds. S. Greer, A. Hicklin, and S. Esders (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 15–35, at pp. 23–24.

¹²² Paul the Deacon, *GeM*, p. 70: "Vicesimus ac sextus Aigulfus, qui fertur, patre ex nobili senatorum familia orto, ex Clodovei regis Francorum filia procreatus. Post istum exstitit nepos ipsius, nomine Arnoaldus." For the factional tensions in the see of Metz at this time, see G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 14–16. Given the years of their tenures (late sixth and early seventh centuries), this hypothetical ancestor can only be Clovis I.

¹²³ Paul the Deacon, *GeM*, p. 72: "Nam venerandus iste vir, ut ad superiora redeam, iuventutis sue tempore ex legitimi matrimonii copula duos filios procreavit, id est, Anschisum et Chlodulfum; cuius Anschisi nomen ab Anchise patre Aeneae, qui a Troia in Italiam olim venerat, creditur esse deductum. Nam gens Francorum, sicut a veteribus est traditum, a Troiana prosapia trahit exordium."

First, the Merovingians. Although they were around for most of the period covered by the *Gesta*, Merovingian kings are nowhere mentioned.¹²⁴ As argued by Goffart, the Merovingian period lay silently in the interim between two important episcopacies, that of Bishop Auctor, who opposed the Huns, and that of Bishop Chrodegang, who enacted a series of ecclesiastical reforms.¹²⁵ The silence is only interrupted to report matters of special consequence, most notably the life of Arnulf.¹²⁶ The bishops who presided over the diocese of Metz in the days of Gregory of Tours are often no more than names in the *Gesta*, as are those that flourished after Arnulf's mid-seventh-century episcopacy.¹²⁷ Not only do the kings that preceded the Carolingians have no place in the account, even the bishops of Metz in their day amounted to little, apart from Arnulf, that is. This invisibility seems suggestive of Paul's understanding of the Merovingians' historical role.

Though he was an important element in Paul's structuring of the composition and merited several long paragraphs in the *Gesta*, not much of Arnulf as a person comes through. The *Vita Arnulfi* is only dimly reflected in the *Gesta*, which prefers to spotlight the contemporary Carolingian benefactors as opposed to the many unknowns of Arnulf's life. What perhaps does shine through Paul's depiction of Arnulf, if we accept Goffart's reading, is a thinly veiled portrait of Charlemagne. To his treatment, Paul appends an elaborate discussion of the progeny of Ansegisel and a set of four eulogies written for Charlemagne's wife and daughters, who were buried outside Metz, in St. Arnulf's oratory.¹²⁸ Since Arnulf was the progenitor of the *gens* that would supplant the Merovingians, it was as fitting a place as any to insert the Carolingian perspective on the Trojan story.

The *Gesta* offers a foundational story for a dynasty of kings, beginning with Arnulf and ending with the progeny of Charlemagne. With resolute strokes, Paul brushes away any ambiguity about the history of Carolingian succession.¹²⁹ According to him, it was a direct and untroubled affair,

¹²⁴ McKitterick, "Paul the Deacon," p. 333. Apart from the comment on Clovis, who is only used as a prop for Paul's discussion of Agiulf.

¹²⁵ Auctor: Paul the Deacon, *GeM*, pp. 62–70; Chrodegang: *ibid.*, pp. 86–88.

¹²⁶ Arnulf: Paul the Deacon, *GeM*, pp. 70–78 is the lengthiest of the four more detailed treatments (Clemens, Auctor, Arnulf, and Chrodegang).

¹²⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 70, where he admits to guessing certain bishops' origins based on their Greek-sounding names: "Successit huic quartus decimus Epletius. Deinde quintus decimus Urbicius. Sextus decimus Bonolus. Septimus decimusque Terentius. Octavus decimus Gonsolinus. Exinde Romanus. Vicesimus denique Fronimius. Post quem Grammatius. Deinde Agatimber. Tres itaque isti quos premisimus, sicut in eorum nominibus adtenditur, de origine credendi sunt emanare Greecorum."

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

¹²⁹ Bouchard, "Images of the Merovingians and Carolingians," p. 299.

from Arnulf to Anschisus and from him to his son, Pippin. Pippin left his position to his son, Charles (Martel), who was then succeeded by Pippin III, and finally by Charlemagne, whose many offspring by his wives were all accounted for in the text. No Grimoald, no Plectrude, and of course no Carloman, Grifo, or Drogo; this is a reductionist schema of Carolingian origins, and it was probably meant to be recognized as such, given that Paul ignores what other canonical Carolingian historiographies tacitly acknowledged, namely the numerous challenges faced by Charlemagne's ancestors in their quest for power.

The significance of Paul's mention of Troy becomes clearer when we consider it in relation to his intentions for the Carolingian *origo* model. Goffart has argued that Paul sought to link Arnulf to the Trojan past, and this is partly true. Going even further, Kempf has claimed that the Carolingians' appropriation of the Trojan *origo* was somehow meant to circumvent the Merovingian claim on this tradition.¹³⁰ Paul's framework, however, ties Troy to the entire *gens Francorum* rather than to any particular family. Not the Merovingians, surely, about whose near-contemporary scions Paul has little to say. But not the Carolingians either, whose progenitor flourished in the early seventh century. The suggestive exegesis of Ansegisel's name does not extend to a claim of exclusivity and is even qualified with a *creditur esse*. What it does is provide context for Paul's next statement about the Trojan origins of the Franks. Paul's Trojan comments and his version of the Carolingian family tree do not, in the end, cohere into a claim about the exclusivity of the Trojan story to any *genus* in particular. It is a tradition that applies to the people as a whole. These people, the Franks, are led by a family that embodies something of the Trojan spirit but whose ideological investment lies not so much in tales of mythological origins as in the Christian values personified by Anschisus.¹³¹

1.4 An Evolving Royalism: Dionysian Historiography and Its Influences

With the late thirteenth-century chronicle, the *Roman des rois*, we are on entirely new terrain. Primat, the author of this Old French work, addressed an audience that could not read Latin but still had a taste for historiography. This was an inquisitive and literate secular readership, dissatisfied with what was then available in the vernacular, namely, versified histories whose

¹³⁰ Kempf, "Paul the Deacon's *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*," pp. 287–288.

¹³¹ See Yavuz, "Transmission and Adaptation," p. 199, who claims that Paul links the Carolingians directly to the Trojan migrants.

emphasis was more on style than on historicity.¹³² It wanted its history in prose, and the *Roman des rois* delivered. For generations, Saint-Denis's *scriptorium* housed authors working on Frankish history, and it is there that one finds the context and the source-base for Primat's work. Primat had expert guidance and unparalleled access to source material in Saint-Denis, and he used these resources fully in his *Roman des rois*. As expected, the monastery and its patron saint take center stage in the composition.¹³³

In the prologue, Primat spells out the work's rationale: "Because many people doubt the genealogy of the kings of France, of what origin and of what line they are descended, he [Primat] set out to compose this work on the order of such a man that cannot be refused."¹³⁴ Whether this person whom one cannot refuse was King Louis IX, as Jules Viard believed, or the abbot of Saint-Denis, Matthew of Vendôme, as suggested by Bernard Guenée, Primat's work carries unmistakable royalist overtones.

It would nevertheless be unhelpful to view Primat's work as an expression of royal ideology as Louis IX or Philip III's courts would have understood it.¹³⁵ While the *Roman des rois* surely presents what it perceives to be the best framing of royal history, the articulation of this history echoes the perspective of a monk of Saint-Denis and his abbot, not the king's, inasmuch as the latter could even be expressed in narrativized form.¹³⁶ More to the point, Primat drew heavily on earlier sources. For example, his statement of doubt regarding the origins of the kings of

¹³² B. Guenée, "The *Grandes chroniques de France*: The Roman of Kings (1274–1518)," in *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Volume 4: *Histories and Memories*, ed. P. Nora (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 205–230, at p. 208. See W.H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. V.E. Bonnell and L. Hunt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 35–61, at pp. 49–50 for comments on "coherence of culture" and Aurell's usage thereof for thirteenth-century historiography in Aurell, "From Genealogies to Chronicles," p. 252.

¹³³ On this, see I. Guyot-Bachy, "Les premiers Capétiens: de la protohistoire dionysienne au *Roman des rois* de Primat," in *La rigueur et la passion: Mélanges en l'honneur de Pascale Bourgain*, eds. C. Giraud and D. Poiré (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), pp. 527–545.

¹³⁴ Viard, ed., *GCh*, p. 1: "Pour ce que plusieurs genz doutoient de la genealogie des rois de France, de quel orignal et de quel lignie ils ont descendu, enprist il ceste ouvre à fere par le commandement de tel homme que il ne pout ne de dut refuser." See G. Tyl-Labory, "Essai d'une histoire nationale au XIII^e siècle: la chronique de l'anonyme de Chantilly-Vatican," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 148, 2 (1990), pp. 301–354, at p. 304, and more generally for the links between Primat's work and the earlier anonymous vernacular composition known as the *Chronique des rois de France*. See also C. Buridant, "Connecteurs et articulations du récit en ancien et moyen français: le cas de la *Chronique des rois de France*," in *Texte et discours en moyen français: Actes du XI^e colloque international sur le moyen français*, ed. A. Vanderheyden et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 73–94.

¹³⁵ For kings writing their own histories, see Aurell, "From Genealogies to Chronicles," pp. 235–264.

¹³⁶ See Ranum, *Artisans of Glory*, p. 6.

France, quoted above, is lifted almost verbatim from the early thirteenth-century *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, by the monk Rigord of Saint-Denis. Rigord helpfully alerts readers to his editorial process: “because many are wont to doubt the origins of the kingdom of France, how and in what manner the kings of the Franks are said to have descended from the Trojans themselves.”¹³⁷ Since some of Primat’s main sources offer an almost identical rationale to his, one hesitates to assign to the *Roman des rois* motives that are wholly subordinate to those of his royal patrons. Put differently, this was not merely a new spin on an old story, recycled here to express contemporary concerns. Primat was indeed tethered to previous traditions, in whose continued relevance Saint-Denis had an important stake.

In the end, Primat was able to produce a mature vision of royal history, one that included a meticulous treatment of the question of royal origins. It contains a historiographical mosaic that reflects distinct stages in the development of the origin story. In the following discussion I take as my main points of reference Aimoin of Fleury’s *Gesta Francorum*, Rigord of Saint-Denis’ *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, and William the Breton’s reworking of the latter, in whose pages we will see a process that culminated with Primat.

The *Roman des rois* presents a fully developed Trojan story that serves as a central pillar of the composition’s rationale.¹³⁸ The first order of business, states Primat in his prologue, is to cover “the noble line of the Trojans, from whom it [i.e., the French monarchy] is descended in long succession. Thus, it is certain that the kings of France, through whom the

¹³⁷ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, ed. H.-F. Delaborde, 2 vols. (Paris: Société de l’histoire de France, 1882), 1, pp. 1–167, at ch. 37, p. 55: “Et quoniam multi solent dubitare de origine regni Francorum, quomodo et qualiter reges Francorum ab ipsis Trojanis descendisse dicantur.” For an English translation and useful background material, see now *The Deeds of Philip Augustus, An English Translation of Rigord’s Gesta Philippi Augusti*, trans. L.F. Field and eds. M.C. Gaposchkin and S.L. Field (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2022). Also, see now M. Clarke, “The Legend of Trojan Origins in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Tapestries,” in *Origin Legends in Early Medieval Western Europe*, eds. L. Brady and P. Wadden (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), pp. 187–212, esp. at pp. 193–196.

¹³⁸ When skepticism about Trojan origins began to mount in humanist scholarship in the fifteenth century, it was usually directed against the version of the story presented in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, which remained largely unchanged once it was put down in writing in the *Roman des rois*. D. O’Sullivan, “Grandes chroniques de France,” *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. G. Dunphy and C. Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2016). Consulted online on 07 May, 2019 ://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_etc_SIM_01173 I make the distinction between Primat’s composition—the *Roman des rois*—and the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, a later evolution of the text that underwent a lengthy process of revision, updating, and expansion in several different centers. On this process, see Guenée, “The Grandes chroniques de France,” pp. 211–217. On Paolo Emilio and the response of humanist historiography, see pp. 100–101, in [Chapter 2](#).

kingdom is glorious and renowned, descended from the noble line of Troy.”¹³⁹

These themes were central to the ideology of the French royalty. Just as their lineage was especially noble, so too were the kings glorious in victory, honorable in renown, and pious in belief. Christian kingship and Trojan origins are tightly intertwined in the prologue. For Primat, Troy was but one, albeit important, element in the glory associated with the kings of France, to whom “Our Lord has given [. . .] through His grace a prerogative and an advantage over all other lands and over all other nations, because never, since it converted and began to serve its creator, was faith more fervently and more righteously protected in any other land; through it was it multiplied, through it sustained, through it defended.”¹⁴⁰ This faith owed its spread to the power of St. Denis, with whose cult Primat’s monastery was so closely associated. As Primat explains toward the end of his prologue, the divine favor enjoyed by France was the product of an alliance between *clergie* and *chevalerie*. The two, he adds, are inseparable; one cannot survive without the other.¹⁴¹ This *clergie* was embodied in the institution of Saint-Denis, whose links to the Frankish kings went back to Merovingian times.¹⁴² Only once these essential elements are in place does Primat turn to narrate the story of Trojan descent.

The details of the story in the *Roman des rois* are familiar—Priam sends his son, Paris, to Greece to kidnap Helen. The enraged Greeks place Troy under a ten-year siege, leading to the deaths of Priam’s sons and his wife, Hecuba, and the destruction and burning of the city along with its many inhabitants. More than a few managed to escape the flames, however, and among them were the three princes Helenus, Aeneas, and Antenor. Helenus and his 1,200 followers reached the kingdom of Pandrasius, whereas Aeneas and his 3,400 Trojans reached Dido’s Carthage on their way to Italy. There, Aeneas was succeeded by his son, Ascanius, who married Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus. From this union would emerge Silvius, and from him Brutus, whose lineage came to rule Britain

¹³⁹ Viard, ed., *GCh*, p. 4: “Li commencement de ceste hystoire sera pris à la haute lignie de Troiens, dont ele est descendue par longue succession. Certaine chose est donques que li roi de France, par les quex li roiaumes est glorieus et renommez, descendirent de la noble lignie de Troie.”

¹⁴⁰ Viard, ed., *GCh*, prologue, p. 5: “Si li a Nostre Sires doné par sa grace un prerogative et un avantage seur toutes autres terres et seur toutes autres nations, car onques puis que ele fu convertie et ele commença à servir à son creatour, ne fu que la foi n’i fust plus fervemment et plus droitment tenue que en nule autre terre; par lie est multipliée, par li est sustenue, par li est defendue.”

¹⁴¹ Viard, ed., *GCh*, prologue, pp. 5–6: “Si com aucun veulent dire, clergie et chevalerie sont touz jors si d’un acort, que l’un ne puet sanz l’autre; touz jors se sont ensemble tenues, et encore, Dieu merci, ne se departent eles mie.”

¹⁴² About Dagobert’s patronage of Saint-Denis, see pp. 183–184, [Chapter 4](#).

after evicting its indigenous giants, a theme adopted from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*.¹⁴³

Primat's account becomes especially illuminating when he turns to discuss the royal cousins Francio and Turcus, the sons of Hector and Troilus, respectively. The two left Troy and proceeded to Thrace, where they crossed the Danube and dwelt for some time on its shores. Later they parted ways, with Turcus heading for Scythia Inferior to settle there with his people and Francio remaining on the Danube, where he founded the city of Sicambria. It was there that his people dwelt for 1,507 years. Eventually, four new peoples emerged from Turcus's Scythian Trojans: the Austrogoths, Hypogoths, Vandals, and Northmen (or Normans). This last element of the story is one of numerous borrowings from Rigord of Saint-Denis's *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, whose third and final version was produced by 1206.¹⁴⁴

In Rigord's *Gesta*, the question of Frankish origins is introduced in a short diversion from the main storyline, the kingship of Philip Augustus. After a discussion of Philip's public works in Paris and its environs, Rigord makes an abrupt turn to the *origo* story in a way that quickly feeds back into the near-contemporary coverage of events. Brief though it is, the diversion is instructive. It begins with a family tree, in which the Trojan ancestry of the Franks and their relationships to the other branches formed by the Trojan exodus is put in order.¹⁴⁵ Priam, the king of Troy, sits at the top of the tree, succeeded by two sons, Hector and Troilus. Whereas the former enjoys a long succession of heirs terminating in Childeric,¹⁴⁶ Troilus receives but one successor, Turcus, from

¹⁴³ This element of the Trojan story is a simplified summary of Geoffrey's account. See p. 70 for relevant literature. Suger (d. 1151) quotes from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Propheciae Merlini*, so may already have known his *Historia regum Britanniae*, marking a relatively early point from which the composition was known and used in Saint-Denis. See E.A.R. Brown and M.W. Cothren, "The Twelfth-Century Crusading Window of the Abbey of Saint-Denis: *Praeteritorum Enim Recordatio Futurorum est Exhibitio*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986), pp. 1–40, at p. 11, n.49. See also E. Leschot, "The Abbey of Saint-Denis and the Coronation of the King of France," *Arts* 9, 111 (2020), pp. 1–15 [url: doi.org/10.3390/arts9040111, accessed April 13, 2022]. Rigord undoubtedly used extracts of Geoffrey's work. See H.-F. Delaborde, "Notice sur les ouvrages et sur la vie de Rigord, moine de Saint-Denis," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 45 (1884), pp. 585–614, at p. 594; F.-O. Touati, "Faut-Il En Rire? Le Médecin Rigord, Historien de Philippe Auguste," *Revue historique* 305, 2 (2003), pp. 243–265, at p. 253.

¹⁴⁴ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 38, p. 56: "sed post paululum temporis, Turchus cum suis, a Francione consanguineo suo recedens, in Scythia inferiore se transtulit et ibi regnavit; a quo descenderunt Ostrogoti, Ypogoti, Wandali et Normanni."

¹⁴⁵ See the family tree at the bottom of Paris, BnF MS Lat. 5925, f. 259. See also the comments in *The Deeds of Philip Augustus*, trans. Field and eds. Gaposchkin and Field, p. 55.

¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, Rigord seems to acknowledge that Childeric was indeed a thematic endpoint, after which began a new epoch in Frankish history.

whom we later learn sprang forth those same four nations mentioned by Primat. Much of what Rigord had to say about Francio found its way into the *Roman des rois*. Unlike Rigord, however, who ignored the particulars of the Trojan war and skipped ahead to Francio, Primat gives Troy its due.

Despite its debt to Rigord, the narrative in the *Roman des rois* is mainly drawn from the *Gesta Francorum*. Primat borrows heavily from Aimoin, but we can detect a difference between the chroniclers' approaches even as early in the plot as the story of Trojan descent. While Aimoin generally followed the outline provided by the *LHF*,¹⁴⁷ Primat's Francio and Turcus are influenced by elements initially codified by *Fredegar*. Primat was not reading *Fredegar* directly; what reached him were refractions of *Fredegar* from his sources, among whom we find Aimoin again, but also Rigord and William the Breton. William's two works, an identically named reworking and continuation of Rigord's *Gesta Philippi Augusti* and an almost 10,000-line-long verse titled the *Philippide*,¹⁴⁸ are factually similar to Rigord's work, yet they narrativize Frankish origins differently. Instead of Rigord's thematic tangent wedged in the middle of the composition, William's *origo* assumes its natural place at the beginning of the composition, yielding a more coherent chronology, one that is at least partially embraced by Primat.¹⁴⁹ It thus seems plausible that the Francio material in the *Roman des rois* originated with Rigord, and that the overarching narrative structure was adopted from William's reworking.

Aimoin, Primat's preferred source, offered little on Francio. We may recall that the *LHF*, whose lead Aimoin seems to have been following, had no need for a Francio, since its royal lineage spanned directly from Aeneas to Merovech. Aimoin does mention Francio in the next chapter, titled *De Francorum appellatione altera opinio* ("A different opinion about the naming of the Franks"), alongside Torchotus, as one possible reason why the Franks were called by that name.¹⁵⁰ The travels of Friga and the associated details of Francio and Torchotus were probably drawn from *Fredegar*, but for Aimoin, Francio was no more than a sidenote to the real storyline.¹⁵¹ The *Gesta Francorum*'s main narrative axis followed the *LHF*'s explanation for the meaning of the Franks' name: that the *Franci* were, in the

¹⁴⁷ Aimoin of Fleury, *Gesta Francorum*, 1, cols. 637–638.

¹⁴⁸ On the *Philippide*, see G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-century France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 269–314.

¹⁴⁹ Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, pp. 284–289.

¹⁵⁰ Aimoin of Fleury, *Gesta Francorum*, 2, col. 639.

¹⁵¹ Aimoin would have been working with a manuscript from Krusch's "Group 3," which contained the relevant material, but not Book IV or the *Continuationes*. See Werner, "Die literarischen Vorbilder," pp. 202–203, and esp. n.33.

Attic language, synonymous with the Latin *feroces*, given to the Trojans by the emperor Valentinian following their exploits in the Meotian Swamps. Aimoin thus knew of *Fredegar's* Francio eponymic, but he bracketed it as an alternative explanation and returned quickly to the Swamps, signifying his clear preference for the *LHF* version.¹⁵²

Yet preference did not mean absolute adherence, and on certain occasions Aimoin tempered the claims made by the *LHF*. Importantly, Aimoin ruled out the direct filiation of the Merovingians in particular, and the Frankish kings more generally, from the line of Trojan kings. In fact, he made no effort to link Marcomir (or his equals in command, Sunno and Genobaudes) to the Trojans. Kings, we gather from Aimoin, had no more of a claim to Trojan origins than did any other Frank. As noted by Justin Lake, Clovis's appeal to the Franks on the battlefield of Tolbiac emphatically insisted on this point.¹⁵³ If anything, in Clovis's address to his fighting men, Aimoin privileged the Christian faith over the ineffective pagan cults which he associated with Troy. What we see in the *Gesta Francorum* then is a political moment in which the Trojan narrative could be again ethnicized, especially as state fracture seemed the order of the day. None of the many claimants to royal power had any privileged stake in this story, although by Primat's day this changed with the crystallization of a particular rhetoric around the Capetians and their origins.

Primat's Trojan version thus had everything to do with the kings of France and, while much of his narrative was directly borrowed from Aimoin, for Marcomir he chose a different path to that of his source by adding that this Marcomir had been the son of King Priam of Austr(as)ia, who descended from the lineage of the great king Priam of Troy, in essence returning to the ancestry model provided by the *LHF*, though here mediated through the lens of Rigord's *Gesta Philippi Augusti* and William's reworking thereof.¹⁵⁴ Rigord elaborates on the *LHF's* material, combining

¹⁵² Lake, "Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*," p. 502.

¹⁵³ Aimoin of Fleury, *Gesta Francorum* 1.16, PL 139, cols 654C–655A: "Franci, inquit, Troiugenae (meminisse etenim vos nominis generisque vestri decet), quibus nunc usque servierimus diis ad memoriam reducere animos vestros virtutemque depono." See Lake, "Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*," p. 513.

¹⁵⁴ Viard, ed., *GCh* ch. 4, p. 18: "En ce tens entra Marchomires en France. Cil Marchomires avoit esté fiuz au roi Priant d'Osteriche, qui estoit descenduz de la lignie le grant roi Priant de Troie." Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti* 38, p. 56: "Egressi inde, Marcomiro [filio Priami regis Austrie], Sonnone [Antenor's filio], et Genebaudo ducibus . . ."; William the Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, ed. H.-F. Delaborde (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1882), pp. 168–320, 4, p. 171: "Francio autem et qui ab illo descenderunt, regnaverunt apud Sicambriam et in partibus illis, mille quingentis septem annis, usque ad Priamum regem Austrie, cui, cum mortuus esset, successit Marcomirus filius eius. Cum autem iidem Franci negarent tributum iuxta morem ceterarum nationum solvere Romanis, Valentinianus imperator christianus,

it with an improved version of the crude genealogy employed by *Fredegar* to link the Trojans of myth and the Frankish *duces* of the late fourth century. In Rigord's account, the descendants of Francio's Trojans were expelled from Sicambria after refusing to pay tribute to Valentinian, causing them to resettle on the eastern banks of the Rhine, within the confines of Germany and Alamannia, in a place called Austria (i.e., Austrasia).¹⁵⁵ The leaders of the Sicambrian exiles at this time were Marcomir, Sunno, and Genobaudes. Tellingly, at this specific textual juncture, Paris, BnF MS Lat. 5925 contains an addition above the name Marcomir of *fili Priami regis Austrie*, and one line below, *Antenor's filio* for Sunno, written in a different hand.¹⁵⁶ The other extant medieval manuscript, a thirteenth-century composition possibly penned at Bourges, is Vatican City, BAV Reg. lat. 88. While at the same point in the text it does not contain a similar addition,¹⁵⁷ it includes an explanation of the Trojan lineage of the *duces* at other points.¹⁵⁸ Whether this suggests that the development of these elements of the plot was not entirely complete when Rigord was working is difficult to say. The superscript note in Paris, BnF MS Lat. 5925 could have been added to prevent confusion of the different Priams. However we choose to explain it, the simplified family tree had become part of the story by William's day.

Valentinian tried again to subdue the Trojans but eventually despaired, giving them the epithet *Franci* on account of their ferocity.¹⁵⁹ From that time, adds Rigord, the Franks were able to subjugate Germany and Gaul entirely, extending their power as far as the Pyrenees. Sunno and Genobaudes decided to remain in Austria, but Marcomir had different plans. For Rigord, relocating Marcomir to Gaul was a significant narrative choice, because it allowed him to focus exclusively on the kings of Gaul, which quickly become synonymous with the Neustrian branch of

anno ab incarnatione CCCLXXVI, eos inde expulit; qui inde egressi, predicto Marcomiro et Somnone filio Antenor's et Genebaudo ducibus, habitaverunt iuxta ripam Rheni inter Germaniam et Alemanniam que regio vocatur Austria."

¹⁵⁵ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, p. 56: "Egressi inde, Marcomiro [^{fili} Priami regis Austrie], Sonnone [^{Antenor's filii}], et Genebaudo ducibus, venerunt et habitaverunt circa ripam Rheni in confinio Germanie et Alemannie, que terra Austria vocatur."

¹⁵⁶ Paris, BnF MS Lat. 5925, f. 259v, col. B.

¹⁵⁷ Vatican City, BAV Reg. lat. 88, f. 182v, col. A: "fuit Faramundus filius Marcomiri filii Priami regis Austrie."

¹⁵⁸ Vatican City, BAV Reg. lat. 88, f. 182v col. B.

¹⁵⁹ Which is attributed, in ms V, to the *lingua Arctica*, as opposed to the *LHF's Attica lingua*. The etymological link was already made by Isidore of Seville in the seventh century. See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, in *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), ix.ii.101, which also postulated the existence of a Francio.

the Merovingian family. By painting Sunno and Genobaudes out of the picture, Rigord in effect marginalized Austrasia and its contribution to this stage of Frankish history. The *Gesta Philippi Augusti* presents a streamlined chain of filiation that includes only Neustrian kings and plants its roots as far back in the past as Marcomir's departure from what they called Austria, or, in other words, trans-Rhenish Francia. By doing this, Rigord privileged the progeny of Marcomir as the only true heirs of the Trojan lineage. As we shall see, this motif resurfaces when the plot turns to the final Merovingians and the first Carolingians. We should consider how Rigord chose to present Marcomir's advent into Gaul: "But later, when Sunno and Genobaud remained *duces* in Austria, Marcomir, son of Priam, who descended from Francio, the descendant of Priam king of Troy, through numerous successive generations that it would here be slow to enumerate, came to Gaul with his followers."¹⁶⁰

At this point, Rigord offers a synopsis of events recounted thus far—the fates of Helenus, Antenor, Aeneas, and Ascanius—and concludes with the story of Brutus, descendant of Antenor, and his takeover of Albion, henceforth called Britain in his honor. Some of this relied on Geoffrey of Monmouth, to be sure, and in this sense Rigord was engaging with the literary sources available to him as he worked. He was nevertheless more interested in Frankish origins, especially in what they might have meant in his day. Importantly, Rigord leaves out Sunno and Genobaudes's successors, providing instead a brief note on the kings that ruled Austrasia until the time of Childeric II (d. 675). "But," explains Rigord, "because they were deficient, the *duces* known as 'mayors of the palace' Pippin, Charles Martel and the others began to dominate."¹⁶¹

After dispensing with Austrasia, Rigord could finally turn to the adventures of Marcomir in Gaul, and adventures indeed they were. He opens with the exceptional story of Marcomir's alliance with the people of Gaul. This alliance was fated to occur, we learn, because the Gauls were the descendants of a group of 23,000 Trojans who had left Sicambria under the leadership of Duke Ibor, making Gaul their home. These Gallic Trojans founded Lutetia (later Paris), where they weathered the centuries of Roman domination until Marcomir came to their rescue. A mutual recognition of their shared ancestry is not long in the making: "When the

¹⁶⁰ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, pp. 56–57: "Sed postea, Sonnone et Genobaud ducibus in Austria remanentibus, Marcomirus, filius Priami regis Austrie, qui a Francione, nepote Priami regis Troje, per multas successorum generationes quas hic longum esset enumerare, descenderat, in Galliam venit cum suis."

¹⁶¹ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, pp. 57–58: "Sed tunc deficientibus regibus, duces dominari ceperunt qui maiores domus vocabantur ut Pipinus, Karolus Martellus et ceteri."

Parisians heard that he [i.e., Marcomir] was, like them, descended of the Trojans, they received him honorably. Because he instructed them in the use of arms and walled the cities against the frequent attacks of robbers, he was established by them as defender of all of Gaul.”¹⁶² This phrasing is almost identical to that used by Rigord in chapter 20 to depict the actions taken by Philip Augustus in the fourth year of his reign (1183) for the benefit of the people of Paris, demonstrating his desire to equate the two kings in greatness.¹⁶³

Marcomir then moves off the stage to make room for his son. Faramund was the first to be crowned with the diadem of king of France, and under his rule Lutetia was renamed Paris, in honor of the son of Priam whose deeds brought about the Trojan exodus. In William’s *Philippide*, the reunification of Gauls and Franks is developed further:

*After this, however, the Franks learned that the Parisi were born of the same stock from which they themselves had descended, and the Frankish army made friends with them by means of a strong peace. They called them brothers of the Franks and by a perpetual treaty they became with the Parisi one people of Franks. And the city then first earned the name Paris, the very site to which they had previously given the name Lutetia.*¹⁶⁴

Primat adopts and adjusts William’s (and thus, Rigord’s) account in the *Gesta Philippi Augusti* of Ibor’s Sicambrians and Marcomir’s accomplishments in Gaul.¹⁶⁵ He must have been aware of the inconsistencies in the chronologies and storylines of his various sources, because he felt the need to offer an apology in the prelude to the next chapter: “We have heretofore reproduced the opinions of certain authors, but because we do not want anyone to take offense to this text, we shall take the material as it appears in the chronicles, which state thus, that after the Franks left Sicambria, and they conquered Germany and Alamannia, and defeated the Romans in

¹⁶² Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, p. 59: “. . . et audientes Parisii quod de Trojanis descenderat ab ipsis honorifice receptus est: quos quia ad exercitum armorum docuit et civitates, propter frequentes incursus latronum, murari fecit, ab ipsis defensor totius Gallie constitutus est.”

¹⁶³ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, ch. 20, p. 34: “. . . in foro quod Campellis vocatur, ubi ob decorem et maximam institorum utilitatem, per ministeriorum predicti servientis qui in hujusmodi negotiis probatissimus erat, duas magnas domos quas vulgus halas vocat, edificari fecit, in quibus tempore pluviali omnes mercatores merces suas mundissime venderent, et in nocte ab incursu latronum tute custodirent.”

¹⁶⁴ William the Breton, *Philippidos libri XII*, in *Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, ed. H.-F. Delaborde, 2 vols. (Paris: Société de l’histoire de France, 1882), 2, pp. 1–385; translation in G.P. Stringer, “Book 1 of William the Breton’s ‘Philippide’: A Translation,” MA thesis (University of New Hampshire, 2010), p. 81.

¹⁶⁵ The Sicambrian roots of the Franks were already acknowledged by Gregory during Clovis’s baptism scene. See Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.31, p. 77: “Mitis depone colla, Sigamber; adora quod incendisti. Incende quod adorasti.”

two battles, they crowned a king whose name was Faramund.”¹⁶⁶ Primat’s explanation comes just as he abandons Rigord, who did not continue to elaborate past this point. Instead of recounting the deeds of Clodio, Rigord provided an ancestral list, which simply stated: “Faramund begat Clodius, Clodius begat Meroveus, and from this good king the kings of the Franks were called Merovingians . . . ”¹⁶⁷ Rigord’s list worked its way through the sequence of generations, taking a Neustrian trajectory through Childeric I, Clovis I, Chlothar I, Chilperic I, Chlothar II, Dagobert I, and Clovis II. Somewhat unexpectedly, he then went on to name Clovis’s three sons by St. Balthild—Chlothar III, Theuderic III, and Childeric II. Why would Rigord make an exception to discuss all three sons of Clovis II, especially when Childeric II was primarily an Austrasian king?¹⁶⁸

The answer probably lies at the tail end of the list, where we encounter three historically inaccurate kings after Childeric—Dagobert, Theuderic, and Chlothar. Rigord’s understanding of later Merovingian history was obviously faulty, since Childeric’s son Dagobert is not known to have sired any heirs, nor did he occupy the Frankish throne.¹⁶⁹ Rather, it was with the successors of Childebert III, Childeric II’s nephew, that one could find a suitable Dagobert (III), a Theuderic (IV) and possibly also a Chlothar (IV). This confused sequence of kings could have been the result of a simple conflation of Childebert III with Childeric II. A more interesting option is that Rigord faulted the final Merovingians on the list with the degeneration of the Merovingian line, and that by implying that they were Austrasian kings, he was essentially shifting the blame.

Additional surprises lie in store. Historically, Charles Martel was perfectly happy to keep the throne vacant after Theuderic IV’s death in 737. His sons, Carloman and Pippin III, found it necessary to appoint another Merovingian, Childeric III, who may have been related either to Theuderic IV or to Chilperic II. No trace of this remains in Rigord. Rather, the *Gesta Philippi* provides two unexpected names as the successors of the last Chlothar: Ansbert and Arnoald. That these two would be considered Merovingian kings is perhaps not as far-fetched as one would imagine, if we assume that, on this point, Rigord was not following the *LHF* but the

¹⁶⁶ Viard, ed., *GCh*, ch. V, pp. 20–21: “Jusques ci vous avons recites les oppinions d’aucuns actors, mais pour nous ne volons pas que nuls puisse trover contrarieté en ceste letter, nous prendrons la matiere si comme ele gist es chroniques, qui ensi dient que puis que li François se furent parti de Sicambre et il ourent Alemaigne et Germenie conquise et les Romains desconfit par II batailles, il coronerent un roi qui out non Pharamonz.”

¹⁶⁷ Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, p. 59: “Faramundus genuit Clodium: Clodius genuit Meroveum a quo rege utili reges Francorum Merovingi sunt appellati.”

¹⁶⁸ Apart from a brief kingship over Neustro-Burgundy that ended with his murder in 675.

¹⁶⁹ Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 349.

Gesta episcoporum Mettensium. Though in Paul the Deacon's account Ansbert was Arnoald's uncle (or grandfather, but certainly not father), this is replaced by direct filiation in Rigord's version. Nevertheless, in the *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* both were members of the Merovingian family, and thus found their way into Rigord's list.

Ansbert and Arnoald also allowed Rigord to introduce Arnulf as both Arnoald's successor and the father of Ansegisel, identified here importantly as bearing two other names: Anschises and Ansedunus, obviously meant to evoke in the reader the memory of Troy.¹⁷⁰ Through Ansegisel, Arnulf becomes the forefather of another family with an ancestral list, the Carolingians. Their lineage is as follows: Pippin II, Charles Martel, Pippin III, Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, and terminating, in a manner befitting a monk of Saint-Denis, with Charles the Bald.¹⁷¹ Rigord here leaves the question of the relationship between Chlothar and Ansbert unresolved. What remains is a continuous list of royal successions that lead smoothly from the Merovingian to the Carolingian era, without the need to elaborate on the co-existence of kings and mayors or, for that matter, to mention Childeric III, whose reign would have coincided with Pippin III's, described by Rigord solely as *rex*.¹⁷² Rigord does call Pippin II a *maior domus*, but this in no way serves to diminish his stature—quite the contrary, in fact, given his place in the chain of succession. That this all comes as an introduction into the career of Philip Augustus is, of course, doubly significant, given the motif of *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni*, or the return of kingship to the seed of Charlemagne, as argued so convincingly by Werner and Spiegel.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Ansedunum is possibly another name for Cosa, mentioned in Virgil, *Aeneis*, ed. G. Biagio Conte (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2009), x, 168, p. 300: "Massicus aerata princeps secatur aequora Tigris: sub quo mille manus iuvenum, qui moenia Clusi quique urbem liquere Cosas, quis tela sagittae gorytice leves umeris et letifer arcus." For this identification, see H. Tamás, L. Van der Sypt, "Asceticism and Synesaktism in Asterius' *Liber ad Renatum monachum*," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 17, 3 (2013), pp. 504–525, at pp. 509–512.

¹⁷¹ For the Charles the Bald's special relationship with Saint-Denis, see J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 4, 15–17, 62–63, 85, 95, 235; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *A Carolingian Renaissance Prince: The Emperor Charles the Bald* (London: British Academy, 1980), pp. 164–166. For his tomb, see B. de Montesquiou-Fézensac, "Le tombeau de Charles le Chauve à Saint-Denis," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de France* (1963), pp. 84–88; Suger, *Gesta*, in Suger: *Oeuvres*, ed. and trans. F. Gasparri, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belle Lettres, 2008), 1, pp. 102, 130, 132, 150.

¹⁷² Rigord of Saint-Denis, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, p. 60: "Deinde regnavit Ansbertus qui genuit Arnoldum, qui sanctum Arnulfum postea Metensem episcopum; qui Anchisen vel Ansegisem vel Ansedunum, qui Pipinum maiorem domus, qui Karolum Martellum, qui Pipinum regem, qui Karolum Magnum imperatorem, qui Ludovicum pium imperatorem, qui Karolum Calvem imperatorem."

¹⁷³ K.F. Werner, "Die Legitimität der Kapetinger und die Entstehung der 'reditus regni Francorum ad stirpem Karoli'," *Die Welt als Geschichte* 12 (1952), pp. 203–225; Spiegel,

Rigord left us another composition, until now unedited, the *Courte chronique des rois de France*, or the *Brief Chronicle of the Kings of France*.¹⁷⁴ The work, as its name suggests, is a short chronicle focusing on French kings and royal succession. The *Brief Chronicle* offers a version like the one we encounter in the *Gesta Philippi Augusti*. It nevertheless differs from it in ways that are highly revealing:

On Childeric the Fool, king of the Austrasians:

*After Theuderic, Dagobert's younger son Childeric the Fool ruled for nine years. Pippin, son of Charles Martel, who was Childeric's mayor of the palace, sent word to Pope Zacharias, asking him whether it was proper that the kings of the Franks had almost no power and contented themselves solely with the royal name. The Roman pontiff responded that the person called king should be he who ruled the kingdom and put its interests before his own. Childeric was therefore tonsured and made a monk. Then, the Franks made Pippin their king. And with this Childeric, the last king of the Austrasian Franks, the royal line of Meroveus became defunct. And this transfer of the generations was accomplished through Blithild, daughter of Chlothar I, father of Sigibert, who was given in marriage to the senator Ansbert, by whom he begat Arnold. Arnold begat Arnulf, later the bishop of Metz. Arnulf begat Anchises who was also known as Ansegisus, Ansegisilus, and Ansedunus. Anchises begat Pippin the Short by his wife Begua. Pippin the Short begat Charles Martel. Charles Martel begat Pippin, the father of Emperor Charlemagne, [. . .] of Pippin, son of Charles Martel. After Childeric the Fool, the son of Charles Martel ruled with apostolic authority and by election of the Franks. He was anointed by Boniface, archbishop of Mainz, and consecrated king.*¹⁷⁵

"The *Reditus Regni*," pp. 145–174. See also B. Schneidmüller, "Constructing the Past by Means of the Present: Historiographical Foundations of Medieval Institutions, Dynasties, Peoples, and Communities," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, eds. G. Althoff, J. Fried, and P.J. Geary (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 167–206, at pp. 168–175.

¹⁷⁴ On this, and the rest of Rigord's work, see Delaborde, "Notice sur les ouvrages," pp. 599–605. The composition was written before 1196, following a commission by John, the prior of Saint-Denis. See R. Reich, "Rigord," *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, 2 vols., ed. G. Dunphy (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), vol. 2, pp. 1278–1279.

¹⁷⁵ *Brief Chronicle of the Kings of France*, ch. 53, in A.J. Stoclet, "À la recherche du ban perdu. Le trésor et les dépouilles de Waïfre, duc d'Aquitaine (f 768), d'après Adémar de Chabannes, Rigord et quelques autres," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 168 (1999), pp. 343–382, at pp. 353–354: "De Hilderico insensato rege Austrasiorum. Post Theudericum filium Dagoberti iunioris regem austrasiorum regnavit hildericus insensatus annis novem. Pippinus vero filius karoli martelli maior domus hilderici nuntios ad zachariam papam mittit interrogans eum si ita manere deberent reges francorum cum pene nullius potestatis essent, solo regie nomine contenti. Romanus pontifex illum debere vocari regem respondit qui rem publicam regeret et sue utilitati private publicam anteferet. detonso igitur hilderico et monaco facto. mox franci pippinum sibi regem statuunt. Et in isto hilderico rege austrasiorum francorum ultimo defecit genus regale merovei. Et huius generationis translatio facta est per blithildem filiam primi lotharii patris sigiberti qua data fuit in uxorem ansberto senatori ex qua genuit arnoldum. Arnoldus genuit arnulfum post metensem episcopum. Arnulfus genuit anchisem qui quandoque fuit ansegisus vel ansegisilus vel ansedunus. Anchises genuit

With all its obvious faults, the chronology Rigord presents in the *Brief Chronicle* is much more in line with historical reality than the version in the *Gesta*. For one, he does not neglect to mention the kingship of Childeric III, whom he dubbed *insensatus*, “a fool.” While the influence of Paul the Deacon is palpable, so is that of other Carolingian authors, most notably Einhard and the author of the *ARF* (*Annales Regni Francorum*).¹⁷⁶ Rigord’s own understanding of the transfer of royal power nevertheless shines through, especially in his decision to edit out the royal vacancy of 737–743, portraying instead the succession as an uninterrupted process.

But, as Rigord makes clear, the actual dynastic transfer, the *translatio generationis*, occurred much earlier than that, during the time of Blithild, daughter of Chlothar I and sister of Sigibert I. Blithild fills a narrative role, but she was not an actual historical princess. She is a natural evolution of the daughter of Clovis from the *GeM*, only now she has a name and a slightly adjusted place in the Merovingian family tree. Casting her as sister to Sigibert I would have made sense, chronologically speaking, since she had an adult grandson at court in the 620s. Blithild, and Pippin’s alleged claim to Merovingian ancestry through her, was an enduring myth; she even makes a surprise appearance in William Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, where she is used to justify claims to inheritance based on the Salic Law.¹⁷⁷ As mentioned previously, she came into being as part of an extension of Paul the Deacon’s genealogy in the *GeM*, but in her adjusted form she debuted in a text composed in the late eighth century at Metz and titled *Commemoratio de genealogia domni Arnulfi episcopi et confessoris*

pipinum brevem ex begua uxore sua. Pipinus brevis genuit karolum martellum. Karolus martellus genuit pipinum, patrem karoli magni imperatoris [...] de pipino filio karoli martelli. Post hildericum insensatum regnavit filius karoli martelli qui auctoritate apostolica et francorum electione a sancto bonefatio maguntivo archiepiscopo inungitur in regem consecratur.”

¹⁷⁶ Compare *Annales Regni Francorum*, MGH SRG 6, ed. F. Kurze (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1895), s.a. 750. See also R. Broome, “Pagans, Rebels and Merovingians: Otherness in the Early Carolingian World,” in *The Resources of the Past in the Early Medieval World*, eds. C. Gantmer, R. McKitterick, and S. Meeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 155–171, at p. 167.

¹⁷⁷ W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Modern Critical Edition*, ed. G. Taylor et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1529–1606, at p. 1538, act 1, scene 2, lines 97–91: “Besides, their writers say, King Pepin, which deposèd Childeric, did, as heir general, being descended of Blithild, which was daughter to King Clothair, make claim and title to the crown of France.” The Blithild myth is likewise repeated in Paolo Emilio’s *De rebus gestis Francorum*, p. 23. For Emilio and the *DRG*, see discussion in [Chapter 2](#).

Christi.¹⁷⁸ We should, as Oexle pointed out, see her appearance in the context of the episcopal vacancy of Metz after the death of Angilram.¹⁷⁹

Restricting the kingship of the final Merovingians to Austrasia was likely meant to contextualize the ascent of the Pippinids, who were, after all, an Austrasian family. Rigord's intentions with this particular framing of the ancestral line can be traced to certain hints that he embeds in the text. Nonetheless, one might argue for alternative readings, given his insistence on the Neustrian line in the *Gesta* and the associated decision to lay the blame of the dynasty's decline at the feet of Austrasian kings. By using the genealogy of the *Commemoratio de genealogia domni Arnulfi*, Rigord might be insinuating that the progeny of the senator Ansbert and Blithild, daughter of Chlothar I, were the true heirs of the Austrasian line. It is perhaps in this context that we should understand the mention of the Austrasian king, Sigibert I. Yet it is also possible to read the text differently, as implying that the royal line of the Merovingians remained incorrupt until Blithild, who then transferred it intact to her Carolingian progeny. Regardless of which reading we adopt, Rigord insists on the Austrasian limits of early eighth-century royal power, disassociating the kingship of his day from the degeneration of the final Merovingians. It is worth recalling, at this point, his decision to marginalize the Austrasian *duces* and focus instead on Marcomir and his Gallic exploits.

¹⁷⁸ *Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris*, MGH SS 13, ed. G. Waitz (Hanover: Hahnsee Buchhandlung, 1881), ch. 2, p. 245: "Anspertus, qui fuit ex genere senatorum, praeclarus vir atque nobilis, in multus divitiis pollens, accepit filiam Hlotharii regis Francorum ad coniugem nomine Blithilt et habuit ex ea filios tres et filiam unam. Primogenitus ipsius Arnoldus nominatus est, secundus Feriolus, tertius Modericus, et filia ipsius Tarsicia. [. . .] Arnoldus, primogenitus ipsius, genuit domnum Arnulfum [episcopum]. Domnus Arnulfus genuit Flodolfum et Anschisum. Flodolfus divina annuente gratia episcopus ordinatus est. Anschisus genuit Pipinum. Pipinus genuit Karolum. Karolus vero domnum regem Pipinum. Domnus Pipinus genuit Caesar gloriosum ac principem nobilissimum Karolum." Two other endings to the paragraph are extant in recensions B, D. See H. Reimitz, "Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge in der fränkischen Historiographie," in *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von den Bedeutungen des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. W. Pohl (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), pp. 191–209, pp. 206–207; W. Pohl, "Genealogy: A Comparative Perspective from the Early Medieval West," in *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia: Comparative Approaches*, eds. E. Hovden, C. Lutter, and W. Pohl (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 232–269, at pp. 246–247. See also I. Wood, "Genealogy Defined by Women: The Case of the Pippinids," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, eds. L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 235–256, at pp. 234–235.

¹⁷⁹ O.G. Oexle, "Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1, 1 (1967), pp. 250–364, at pp. 255–262.

Primat was apparently not satisfied with Rigord's terse remarks, and, for the earlier phases of the Merovingians' genealogy at least, relied mainly on Aimoin. Take, for example, the thorny issue of Merovech's paternity. As noted by Lake, Aimoin essentially decoupled Merovech from Clodio's Trojan ancestry.¹⁸⁰ Lake rightly argues that Aimoin's general adherence to the Trojan plot made him indispensable for Primat and the later editors and continuators of the *Grandes Chroniques*. His view that Aimoin and the *Fredegar* chronicler pull in opposite directions is less accurate. *Fredegar's* treatment of Clodio and Merovech indicates that the chronicler had his doubts about the connection between the original Trojan émigrés to Pannonia and their Merovingian successors. Among the Merovingian-era chronicles, it is not *Fredegar*, but the *LHF* that comes closest to depicting a seamless link. Certainly, any ambiguity is eliminated in Rigord's *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, which laconically states *Clodius genuit Meroveum*, a sentiment followed obediently by William.¹⁸¹

Despite the *Roman des rois's* strong royalist bent and clear acquaintance with Rigord and William, it embraces Aimoin's more cautious phrasing. In fact, it seems to go even further than its source in claiming that: "After Clodio had reigned for twenty years, he passed away. After him reigned Merovech. This Merovech was not his son but was from his lineage (*lignage*). From him issued the first generation of the kings of France; it persisted without fail from heir to heir until the generation of Pippin II, father of Charlemagne the Great."¹⁸² Of course, how we read Primat on this point depends on our reading of *lignage* as either a claim of ancestry or more generally of kinship, much like the *LHF's de genere eius*. It is closer to the *LHF* than it is to Aimoin's *eius affinis*, but still stops short of Rigord's decisive presentation. Viard has alerted us to the fact that the commentary on the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties was a new addition, but this tells us only that Merovech was important as the eponymous ancestor of the royal line, not that he was Clodio's relation.

Clodio is anomalous in the *Roman des rois* in other respects, too. Primat uses the king's desire to "enlarge the honors of his kingdom" as a segue to a lengthy discussion of Gaul and its provinces, based largely on Aimoin's

¹⁸⁰ Lake, "Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*," p. 503.

¹⁸¹ William the Breton, *Philippide* 1.171, p. 14: "at ille / Regia descendens Meroveo scepra reliquit, / Patris jure sibi faciens succedere natum." In ms V, this sentence is preceded by "Clodius ipsius successit filius."

¹⁸² Viard, ed., *GCh*, ch. IV, p. 26: "Quant li rois Clodio out regné XX ans, il paia le treü de nature. Après lui regna Merovéés. Cil Merovéés ne fu pas ses fiuz, mais il fu de son lignage. De cetui eissi la premiere generation des rois de France; si dura sans faillir d'oir en hoir jusques à la generation Pepin le secont, la pere le grant Challemaine." That Pippin III is known here as Pippin II is perhaps an indication that, like Rigord, Primat considered Arnulf, not Pippin I, as the Carolingian *paterfamilias*.

treatment in his *proemium*.¹⁸³ Aimoin's clear division between the institutions, religion, and geography of the Gallic past and the more recent Frankish episodes would have been out of place in the *Roman des rois*. Since Primat was not willing to jettison Aimoin's Gallic material entirely, he embedded it in the story of Clodio, a king for whose expansionistic designs he had solid evidence. It seems, then, that Primat regarded the *Gesta Francorum* as a more reliable source than the *Gesta Philippi Augusti*. He follows Aimoin even on this uncomfortable point, modifying only minimally the source's phrasing.

The question of Merovech's kingship is entirely subsumed within Aimoin's treatment of the Hunnic incursions of Gaul, and here Primat follows his source diligently. The miraculous deliverance of Orléans from the armies of Attila, present in both the *Gesta Francorum* and the *Roman des rois*, is a simplified version of the story told in Gregory of Tours's *Histories* II.7. In Gregory's account, Bishop Anianus instructed the terrified inhabitants of Orléans to make three visits to the city walls to seek signs of divine assistance, which eventually materialized with Aëtius and his Visigothic federates. The story was cut down in size by the author of the *LHF*, and from there it made its way to the *Gesta Francorum*.¹⁸⁴ Gregory did not tell the story in conjunction with the kingship of Merovech, but since it matched the chronology of his reign, it was inserted there by the *LHF* author, and continued to occupy this spot in the storyline thereafter.

Coverage of Childeric in the *Roman des rois* essentially echoes what we find in the *Gesta Francorum*. Aimoin drew on the *LHF* but also on *Fredegar* for thematic structure, dramatic elements, and dialogue. Wiomad (Winomad in the *Historia Francorum*, Guinemenz in the *Roman des rois*) is the main protagonist in both Aimoin's and Primat's accounts, but the focus of the story shifts in the *Roman des rois* to the attitude of the Frankish nobility—*les barons*—toward their rightful ruler, their foreign oppressor, and, more generally, the genealogical aspects of kingship. Childeric's *luxure* (lechery), and exile with Bissinus in Thuringia is dispensed with in two sentences. What follows is a flashback scene in which Wiomad counsels the king on the eve of his departure for exile. The barons, here, are driven by passion, their judgement clouded by anger, *l'ire des barons*. Remaining amidst the enraged Franks, Wiomad warns the king, would end in envy and hatred; departing would sway the heart toward

¹⁸³ Viard, ed., *GCh*, pp. 21–22: “Li rois Clodio, qui moult desiroit à eslargir les bonnes de son roiaume, envia ses espies outre le Rin pour savoir quel defense li país avoit,” taken from Aimoin's “Rex autem Clodio angustus regni fines dilatare cupiens, exploratores a Disbargo trans Rhenum dirigit . . .” For Aimoin's discussion of Gallic geography, see *Gesta Francorum*, proemia cap. IV, cols. 632–634 (*De Gallia secundum Caesarem*).

¹⁸⁴ *LHF*, ch. 5.

compassion.¹⁸⁵ After Childeric left for Thuringia, the barons, who did not wish to remain without a master, invited Giles/Gilon (Aegidius) to become their king. Primat follows Aimoin in condemning this choice, noting that “they did not remember the injuries and burdens that were done to them by Rome and by that same Gilon.”¹⁸⁶

Wiomad, being both wise and full of guile, befriended the new king and gained his confidence. Aegidius’s escalating oppression of the Franks was another motif that Primat took from Aimoin, himself paraphrasing *Fredegar*. While *Fredegar* suggested that Wiomad, on orders of his master, condemned to death 100 *inutiles et in necessitatibus incongruos*, Aimoin’s Winomad selected only those who were most vocally opposed to Childeric as a way of eroding the opposition’s powerbase.¹⁸⁷ Primat further expands this structure, placing into Guinemenz’s mouth the words: “You [i.e., Gilon] will not be able to crush the treachery nor the pride of the Franks, if you do not destroy some of their most noble and most powerful; in this way you will be able to easily bend the others to your will.”¹⁸⁸ Gilon agrees, and Guinemenz, who is charged with carrying out the plan, selects those nobles who are Childeric’s staunchest rivals. Ironically, those same nobles who are the most hostile to Childeric are tried before Gilon after having been charged with conspiracy and intent to harm the king.¹⁸⁹ Appalled by Gilon’s cruelty, the other nobles confide in Guinemenz, who proceeds to rebuke them:

*What madness came over you when you threw out of his realm your rightful lord, born of your people, and submitted to a proud person from a foreign nation? [...] You have despised and chased away your king, born and created by you yourselves, who was of good ancestry by nature and could yet be more beneficial and profitable to the realm if he were to give up the wantonness of his flesh, which he did not always control.*¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Viard, ed., *GCh* ch. 7, pp. 28–29: “Cil li loa que il donast lieu à l’ire des barons, car se il demoroit, il acroistroit plus leur malivolence que il ne l’apeticeroit, et la nature humaine si est tele que il portent envie et haine à celui que il voient en present, et quant il ne le voient noient, aucune foiz avient que il en ont compassion.”

¹⁸⁶ Viard, ed., *GCh* ch. 7, p. 29: “Pas n’estoient remembrable des injures et des griés que il avoient fet à ciaus de Rome et à celi Gilon meismes.”

¹⁸⁷ On the *inutilitas*, particularly of Childeric III, and its interplay with elite power, see E. Peters, *Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751–1327* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), esp. pp. 40–44.

¹⁸⁸ Viard, ed., *GCh* ch. 8, p. 30: “Tu ne porras brisier la felonie ne l’orguel des François, se tu ne destruis aucuns des plus nobles et des plus puissanz; par ce porras les autres legierement flechir à ta volenté.”

¹⁸⁹ Viard, ed., *GCh* ch. 8, p. 31: “Guinemenz, [...], comença à ciaus qui avoient esté plus contraire au roi Childeric; de crime les reta et les prist, puis les envoia au roi Gilon pour fere joustice.”

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: “Quel forsenerie vous demenoit quant vous getastes fors de son regne vostre droit seigneur né de vostre gent, et vous souzmeistes à un orgueilleus d’alien nation. [...] Vous avez despit et chacié vostre roi, né et crié de vous meismes, qui estoit debonaires par nature et peust encor estre plus debonaires et profitable au roiaume s’il eust lessié la joliveté de son cors, que il ne maintenist pas touz jors.”

The barons see the light and decide to orchestrate Childeric's return: "We greatly repent the indignity and the humiliations we have done to our rightful king, and, if we knew now where we could find him, we would send him messages and humbly beg him to agree to return to his realm."¹⁹¹ Long story short: the golden half-*besant* is sent; Childeric is summoned, successfully engages Gilon in battle, and wins back his kingdom.

In the *Roman des rois*, the particulars of the Childeric story are not new. His exile, the atrocities of Aegidius's reign, and the dynamics between Wiomad and the leading Franks are all there, with a similar logic and narrative trajectory. But the subtle reframing of the details leaves one wondering whether this account can be taken as a commentary on more recent events. Childeric's liberties, his exile, and his relationship with the nobility were all potential *exempla* from which contemporary lessons might be drawn. Rebellious barons, a recurrent theme in the political narratives of Primat's day, are one such *exemplum*. To the readers of the *Roman des rois*, the scene presented here would have called to mind similar themes addressed in the *Song of Roland*, or, more concretely, the consequences of aristocratic rage epitomized in the murders of Thomas Becket and Charles the Good.¹⁹² Nor was baronial recalcitrance and rebelliousness a foreign concept in the political world of Primat's royal patrons, Louis IX and Philip III. In fact, it was a problem that dogged the kingship of Philip Augustus, Louis's grandfather, whose struggles with the English over their continental holdings had made open enemies of many of his disgruntled barons. The expansion of Capetian power to the south from the 1220s resulted in mass expropriations of landed wealth from southern lords. In the 1240s, rebellions broke out, which soon spiraled into an attempt, backed by the English, to dislodge the Capetians. While Louis prevailed, the specter of future disturbance remained.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Viard, ed., *GCh* ch. 9, p. 32: "Nous nous repentons moult de la honte et des vilenies que nous avons fetes à nostre propre roi, et se nous saviens là où l'en le poust trover, nous envoissons à lui messages et li priissons humblement que il retornast à son regne."

¹⁹² L. Sunderland, *Rebel Barons: Resisting Royal Power in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. pp. 42–52; J. Deploige, "Political Assassination and Sanctification: Transforming Discursive Customs after the Murder of the Flemish Count Charles the Good (1127)," in *Mystifying the Monarch: Studies on Discourse, Power, and History*, eds. J. Deploige and G. Deneckere (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 35–54; F. Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 225–250; S. Gaunt and K. Pratt, "Introduction," in *The Song of Roland and Other Poems of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. S. Gaunt and K. Pratt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. xvi–xvii. On *Pseudo-Turpin* as a source for the *Chronique des rois de France*, see Buridant, "Connecteurs et articulations," p. 77.

¹⁹³ See W. C. Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of Crusade: A Study in Rulership* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), esp. pp. 14–34 and idem, *Men at the Center*:

Louis's barons could certainly be troublesome, and nowhere could this penchant for rebellion have been more devastating than when the king was away on crusade.¹⁹⁴ Well aware of the dangers his journey to Outremer could pose to his rule, Louis cajoled many of his nobles into joining him in his journey to the Holy Land. Count Raymond Berenger of Provence, whose dynastic ambitions were a constant concern for Louis, was a particularly worrisome nobleman. Had his plans come to fruition, they would have severely weakened the king's foothold in the south. Raymond wed his four daughters to leading figures in England and France. Margaret married Louis and Eleanor married Henry III, the king of England. Royal siblings were also part of this matrimonial mix. A third sister, Sanchia, was married off to Richard, Henry's brother.

Richard is an interesting figure whose career took many twists and turns. He was gifted Cornwall by his brother, making him a fortune he partly spent during the crusades when he rebuilt the fortifications of Ascalon.¹⁹⁵ But his more worrying claim, as far as the Capetians were concerned, was to Poitou, with whose governance Louis had charged his own brother, Alphonse. Louis eventually defused this challenge by arranging for Raymond Berenger's fourth daughter, Beatrice, to marry his brother, Charles I of Anjou. After briefly considering purchasing the kingship of Sicily, Richard ended up crowned at Aachen in 1257 as King of the Romans (*Romanorum rex*), a title whose first bearer was none other than Syagrius, thus styled in Gregory's *Histories*.¹⁹⁶ Naturally, in Primat, it is Gilon, father of Siagre, who first bears the title.

Richard would not have been a well-liked person in Dionysian circles, especially since he was responsible for the alienation of property owned by Saint-Denis in Deerhurst on the River Severn and the dispersal of the monks residing there.¹⁹⁷ His plans for transforming the Deerhurst estate into a castle eventually came to naught, although the disruption to the

Redemptive Governance Under Louis IX, Natalie Zemon Davis Annual Lectures, vol. 6 (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2012).

¹⁹⁴ On Louis's nobility and Crusade, see X. Hélary, "French Nobility and the Military Requirements of the King (c. 1260–c. 1314)," in *The Capetian Century, 1214–1314*, eds. W.C. Jordan and J.R. Phillips (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 115–142.

¹⁹⁵ D. Pringle, "King Richard I and the Walls of Ascalon," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 116.2 (1984), pp. 133–147.

¹⁹⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II, 27, p. 71: "Anno autem quinto regni eius (i.e., Chlodovechi) Siacrius Romanorum rex, Egidii filius, apud civitatem Sexonas, quam quondam supra memoratus Egidius tenuerat, sedem habebat." On Richard of Cornwall's German kingship, see B. Weiler, "Image and Reality in Richard of Cornwall's German Career," *English Historical Review* 113, 454 (1998), pp. 1111–1142.

¹⁹⁷ W.C. Jordan, *A Tale of Two Monasteries: Westminster and Saint-Denis in the Thirteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 30; G. Sivéry, *Philippe III le Hardi* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), p. 41.

dependencies of Saint-Denis was an obstacle on the path to a much-desired rapprochement between the English and French courts. While the affair was eventually resolved thanks to King Henry III's direct mediation, it caused Matthew of Vendôme much consternation.

Let us return for a moment to the question of royal absence. Baronial loyalty must have weighed heavily on Louis's mind, and likely on Primat's as well. Louis's time as a prisoner of the Egyptians following the Battle of al-Mansura in 1250 can even be considered an exile of sorts, although securing the king's return was, in this case, much costlier than half a *besant*—the symbolic value of which was obvious to a royal readership: Louis IX, accompanied by his son Philip, would frequent the monastery once a year to offer four *besants d'or* to the protector of the Capetian dynasty.¹⁹⁸ Royal patronage became an important facet of Saint-Denis's self-image. Not only was Louis's devotion to the saint a well-known and much-lauded motif in Dionysian historiography,¹⁹⁹ his institutional links to the monastic leadership were a cornerstone of his policy, culminating in the appointment of Matthew of Vendôme as regent in his absence during the ill-fated Seventh Crusade in 1270.²⁰⁰ If Louis is to be the Childeric of this story, perhaps Matthew is its Wiomad/Guinemenz.

1.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have argued that the nucleus of most of the material presented in the chronicles surveyed can be traced to the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours and to interpolated material in the *Fredegar Chronicle* and the *LHF*. Coverage of the Trojan origins and the histories of the earliest Frankish kings was substantially augmented and recontextualized in later compositions, such as Aimoin of Fleury's *Gesta Francorum*, Rigord's (and William the Breton's) *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, and Primat's *Roman des rois*. Already contained in the nucleus narrative of the Merovingian-era historiographies are all of the themes that would later be developed in Aimoin, Rigord, William, and Primat. It would nevertheless be incorrect to view the evolution of the story as straightforwardly linear. Even when we feel confi-

¹⁹⁸ Jordan, *A Tale of Two Monasteries*, p. 30; G. Sivéry, *Philippe III le Hardi*, p. 41. For remarks about the history of this practice, see E.A.R. Brown, "Saint-Denis and the Turpin Legend," in *The Codex Callixtinus and the Shrine of St. James*, eds. J. Williams and A. Stones (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992), pp. 51–88, at p. 62.

¹⁹⁹ Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*, p. 148ff.

²⁰⁰ As indeed his predecessor Suger had done for Louis VII. See A.D. Hedeman, *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France, 1274–1422* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), p. 10; F. Olivier-Martin, *Étude sur les régence: I. Les régence et le majorité des rois sous les Capétiens directs et les premiers Valois (1060–1375)* (Paris, 1931), pp. 94–108.

dent about the narrative aims of the authors in question, their authorial choices defy easy contextualization. Often, the power of conservatism seems equally decisive, pushing chroniclers to preserve, albeit in a modified form, material which does not coincide with our understanding of their overarching agendas.

Royal history was not meant to be read simply as a diversion. There would have been no point in delving into Merovingian history if the exercise brought no benefit to the reader, royal or otherwise. It is crucial to consider how contemporaneous audiences would have interpreted these texts. The Trojans, the *duces*, and the earliest Merovingians were thematic packages that, when applied correctly, could stand in for characters and circumstances of the present or the near past, and could offer a productive way of thinking about the future. While the analogies are never absolute, the universality and applicability of the lessons conveyed in these stories were intentional, and it is in this light that we must consider them.