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**‘Public temper tantrums...frequent weeping and boisterous joy’:  
Tears in Text and Ritual in Frankish Kingship**

**Cynthia Rose Thickpenny**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Research in History

Graduate School

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

September 2013

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**Abstract:**

In recent decades, historians have reassessed scholarly assumptions about the primitiveness of medieval emotional life. For example, Barbara Rosenwein's exploration of emotion words, Geoffrey Koziol and Gerd Althoff's analyses of ritual gesture in political interaction, and Philippe Buc's study of the partisanship in medieval accounts of such rituals have revealed the complexity of medieval modes of expression. However, while theological analyses of Christian tears abound, no historian has yet undertaken an extended investigation of weeping in early medieval kingship, and its role in textual debate and political performance.

This dissertation is a study of royal weeping in the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties, and also explores how Gallic and Frankish bishops used rhetoric on tears to formulate ideals for Christian kingship and put ideological pressure on their rulers. Chapters are divided into three chronological areas of inquiry. The first section examines two distinct streams of ecclesiastical thought emerging from late Roman changes in elite masculine comportment, one which criticized weeping as inappropriate, while the other praised tears as a sign of fitness for rule. The second chapter addresses Gregory of Tours' contribution to the conceptual development of royal weeping, as the first Gallic bishop to unambiguously endorse tears as a kingly virtue. This dissertation then concludes with Emperor Louis the Pious' penitential dethronement of 833, in which his weeping became a cause of political debate. Finally, on a methodological level, the following study demonstrates how analysis of royal tears can further illuminate the political biases of contemporary texts and the function of gestures in political ritual, while contributing to modern appreciation of the sophistication of medieval emotional expression.

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**Acknowledgements:**

With grateful thanks to Dr. Stuart Airlie, for his generous supervision and teaching, to my beloved family and friends for their support and encouragement, and to the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission, for making this academic journey possible.

## Abbreviations:

### Primary Sources in Latin:

CSEL <i>Hist. (Latin)</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum Gregory of Tours. <i>Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Historia Francorum</i> . MGH, SRM 1,1. Edited by W. Arndt and Br. Krusch, 1-450. Hanover: Hahn, 1884.
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
dMGH	Die digitalen Monumenta Germaniae Historica
AA	<i>Auctores antiquissimi</i>
SRM	<i>Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</i>
SRG	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i>
<i>Opera</i>	Venantius Fortunatus. <i>Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici Opera Poetica</i> . dMGH, AA 4,1. Edited by Friedrich Leo, 1-386. Berlin: Wiedmann, 1881. Accessed August 28, 2013. <a href="http://www.dmggh.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00000790_00002.htm?leftTab=toc&amp;sortIndex=010:010:0004:010:01:00">http://www.dmggh.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00000790_00002.htm?leftTab=toc&amp;sortIndex=010:010:0004:010:01:00</a> .

### Primary Sources in English Translation:

Astronomer	The Astronomer. <i>The Life of Emperor Louis</i> . In <i>Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: The Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer</i> . Translated with introductions and annotations by Thomas F.X. Noble, 226-302. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009.
AB	<i>The Annals of St-Bertin</i> . Translated and annotated by Janet L. Nelson. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991.
AF	<i>The Annals of Fulda</i> . Translated and annotated by Timothy Reuter. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.
Cartula	Agobard of Lyon. 'Agobard's attestation to the penance performed by the emperor (833).' Appendix to de Jong, <i>PS</i> , 277-79.
Conf.	John Cassian. <i>The Conferences</i> . Translated and annotated by Boniface Ramsay. New York N.Y. and Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1997.
Einhard	Einhard. <i>The Life of Charles the Emperor</i> . In Noble, <i>Charlemagne and Louis the Pious</i> , 21-50.
Ermoldus	Ermoldus Nigellus. <i>In Honor of Louis, the Most Christian Caesar Augustus</i> . In Noble, <i>Charlemagne and Louis the Pious</i> , 127-86.
GC	Gregory of Tours. <i>Glory of the Confessors</i> . Translated with an introduction by Raymond Van Dam. Rev. ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004.
GM	Gregory of Tours. <i>Glory of the Martyrs</i> . Translated with an introduction by Raymond Van Dam. Reprint, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988.

- Hist.* Gregory of Tours. *The History of the Franks*. Translated with an introduction by Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Letters* J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, trans. with an introduction and notes. *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*. With the assistance of Carole Hill. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press: 2005.
- MM* Gregory of Tours. *The Miracles of the Bishop Martin*. In Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and their miracles in late antique Gaul*. Translated by Raymond Van Dam, 199-303. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Pers. Poems* Judith W. George, trans. with notes and introduction. *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995.
- Polyb.* Seneca. 'The Twelfth Book of the Dialogues of L. Annaeus Seneca, Addressed to Polybius. Of Consolation.' In *L. Annaeus Seneca: Minor Dialogues Together with the Dialogue on Clemency*. Translated by Aubrey Stewart, 353-379. London: George Bell and Sons, 1889.
- Relatio* 'The report of Compiègne by the bishops of the realm concerning the penance of Emperor Louis (833).' Appendix to de Jong, *PS*, 271-77.
- Thegan Thegan. *The Deeds of Emperor Louis*. In Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, 194-218.
- Theodoret Theodoret. *Ecclesiastical History*. In *A history of the church, from A.D. 322 to the death of Theodore of Mopsuestia*.... Edited by Edward Walford. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854.

### Secondary Sources:

- Blanchfield Lyn A. Blanchfield. 'Prolegomenon: Considerations of Weeping and Sincerity in the Middle Ages.' In *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*. Edited by Elina Gertsman, xxi-xxx. New York and London: Routledge, 2012.
- Buc Philippe Buc. *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Cooper Tracy-Anne Cooper. 'The Shedding of Tears in Late Anglo-Saxon England.' In Gertsman, *Crying*, 175-92.
- de Jong, PH Mayke de Jong. 'Power and Humility in Carolingian Society: the public penance of Louis the Pious.' *EME* 1 (1992): 29-52.
- de Jong, *PS* Mayke de Jong. *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious*, 814-840. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- EME* *Early Medieval Europe*
- EHR* *English Historical Review*
- George, *LP* Judith W. George. *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

- Goffart Walter Goffart. *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Heinzelmann Martin Heinzelmann. *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*. Translated by Christopher Carroll. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Koziol Geoffrey Koziol. *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- MacLean Simon MacLean. 'Ritual, Misunderstanding and the Contest for Meaning: Representations of the Disrupted Royal Assembly at Frankfurt (873).' In *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500*. Edited by Björn Weiler and Simon MacLean, 97-120. Turnout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006.
- Pössel Christina Pössel. 'The magic of early medieval ritual.' *EME* 17 (2009): 111-25.
- Rosenwein, *EM* Barbara H. Rosenwein. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Wagner Karen Wagner. 'Cum Aliquis Venerit Ad Sacerdotem: Penitential Experience in the Central Middle Ages.' In *A New History of Penance*. Edited by Abigail Firey, 201-218. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008.

## Introduction: Kings, Temper Tantrums, Political Tears:\*

In his *Decem Libri Historiarum*, the sixth-century bishop Gregory of Tours recorded sordid details from the life of Sigismund, erstwhile king of the Burgundians. When Sigismund remarried upon the death of his first wife, there was immediate discord between the king's son, Sigeric, and his new stepmother. Insulted by Sigeric's taunts, the new wife convinced Sigismund that his son was plotting a hostile takeover. Enraged, Sigismund ordered the boy to be throttled, but once Sigeric was dead, the king returned to his senses. He 'threw himself on the dead body and wept most bitterly,' and then shut himself in a monastery, '[prayed] for pardon,' and wept some more.<sup>1</sup>

Sigismund's instantaneous switch from fury to weeping seems to confirm popular modern misconceptions that medieval people were possessed by schizophrenic swings between senseless brutality and navel-gazing, self-punishing piety. Unfortunately, as the historian Barbara Rosenwein has lamented, some prominent 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholars have also contributed to this stereotype. She pointed to Johan Huizinga's 1924 publication in particular, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.<sup>2</sup> According to Huizinga, 'a tone of excitement and of passion to everyday life...tended to produce that perpetual oscillation between despair and distracted joy, between cruelty and pious tenderness which characterize life in the Middle Ages.'<sup>3</sup> Ignoring the context of his medieval sources, he presented scenes of crowds bursting into spontaneous tears during religious processions or particularly moving executions as though they were National Geographic snap-shots, and concluded: '[a]ll this general facility of emotions, of tears and spiritual upheavals, must be borne in mind in

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\* NB: For convenience I have mainly cited the English translations of key primary sources, but have also consulted the Latin versions to ensure that descriptions of tears (*lacrimae*) or weeping (*lacrimo, fleo*) were reflected accurately in translation. Only when I question a translation, encounter ambiguous words such as *plango*, or wish to flag rhetoric regarding masculine gender values, do I provide my own translation and a specific footnote citation to a Latin edition. Otherwise, both English and Latin editions of crucial sources are available for comparison in the Bibliography, and upon consultation the reader will find that the chapters or poem numbers of each version coincide. Readers should also note that while I have read widely from Latin primary sources, my lack of training in modern European languages prevented me from accessing secondary literature not written in English or published in translation.

<sup>1</sup> For the entire story, see *Hist.*, III.5, pp. 165-66.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying About Emotions in History,' *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 823.

<sup>3</sup> Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, trans. F. Hopman (New York, 1924), 9; (reprint, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), 10, quoted in Rosenwein, 'Worrying,' 823. Here Rosenwein referred to the original 1924 version.

order to conceive fully how violent and high-strung was life at that period.’<sup>4</sup> Lest the reader dismiss Huizinga as outdated, Rosenwein identified his continued influence on more recent scholarship, such as Carol and Peter Stearns’ 1986 study of anger in American society, in which they credited Huizinga explicitly.<sup>5</sup> The Stearns claimed that pre-modern people lacked standards of emotional control: ‘Public temper tantrums, along with frequent weeping and boisterous joy, were far more common in premodern society than they were to become in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adults were in many ways, by modern standards, childlike in their indulgence in temper.’<sup>6</sup> Such theories of medieval melodrama, however, discourage the questions a historian *should* ask, such as why Gregory discussed Sigeric’s murder in the first place, what political agenda coloured his portrayal of Sigismund, and whether medieval rulers actually behaved this way.

Thankfully, in the past two decades, researchers have dismantled assumptions about medieval emotional simplicity. Applying later 20<sup>th</sup>-century anthropological and psychological theories of emotion, Rosenwein, and Piroska Nagy and Damien Boquet of the project EMMA (Les émotions au Moyen Âge) have addressed methodological considerations that Huizinga and company overlooked, such as the complexity of the sources themselves and the fact that our modern worldview can skew our analysis, while formulating new strategies, including lexicographic study of emotion words in medieval texts.<sup>7</sup> In *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, Rosenwein replaced the older ‘bipartite (medieval/modern; unrestrained/restrained) periodization’ with a new paradigm she labelled ‘emotional communities.’<sup>8</sup> These were social groups whose members shared ‘norms’ governing which emotions were good or bad, and how to appropriately express them.<sup>9</sup> Challenging the presumption that one mood characterized the entire Middle Ages, Rosenwein tracked diverse emotional communities through the sixth and seventh centuries

<sup>4</sup> Huizinga, *Waning*, (reprint, 1990), 11-13. This quotation is taken from a 1990 reprint of Hopman’s translation, with different pagination than the 1924 edition that Rosenwein cited. The 1924 version is difficult to find, and so the 1990 reprint is listed instead in the Bibliography, for the reader’s convenience.

<sup>5</sup> Carol Zisowitz Stearns, Peter N. Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), discussed in Rosenwein, ‘Worrying,’ 823-26. For the Stearns’ citation of Huizinga, see *Anger*, 28, discussed in Rosenwein, ‘Worrying,’ 825n19.

<sup>6</sup> Stearns, *Anger*, 25, quoted in Rosenwein, ‘Worrying,’ 825.

<sup>7</sup> For the 20th-century psychological schools of thought (cognitivism and social constructionism) that influenced Rosenwein, Nagy, and others, see Rosenwein, ‘Worrying,’ 836-37. For EMMA’s mission statement on the ‘historical anthropology of emotions,’ see ‘A Research Program on Emotions in the Middle Ages,’ EMMA, accessed July 16, 2013, <http://emma.hypotheses.org/147>. For current methodologies in historical emotion studies, see Piroska Nagy, ‘Historians and Emotions: New Theories, New Questions,’ (transcript of a lecture at the Cultural History of Emotions in Premodernity conference, Umeå University, Sweden, October 2008), EMMA, published October 24, 2008, <http://emma.hypotheses.org/147>.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Plamper, ‘The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns,’ *History and Theory* 49 (May 2010): 252.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 2, 24-25.

and showed how they overlapped and evolved.<sup>10</sup> She based her research on lexicographic analysis of individual words, in order to pinpoint ‘what words signified emotions for the particular emotional community [she was] dealing with.’<sup>11</sup> For example, Rosenwein suggested that Gregory of Tours’ and a contemporary poet named Venantius Fortunatus’ frequent use of ‘dulcedo,’ or sweetness, in their writings connoted their membership in a wider emotional community that ‘privileged’ familial bonds.<sup>12</sup> Rosenwein further argued that word choice did not merely reflect a shared literary convention, for Gregory and Venantius were not only informed by the social behaviour of their peers, but also may have had a political stake in promoting effusive familial affection, for Gregory especially felt disturbed by the Merovingian royal brothers’ constant civil war.<sup>13</sup> Connecting vocabulary with the sources’ social contexts, Rosenwein thus advocated recognition of the sophistication of medieval emotional life.

A second group of historians have also ‘[turned] Huizinga’s Middle Ages... on its head,’ not by studying emotion itself, but the physical gestures that *symbolized* emotion, such as kisses of peace or prostration, in political interactions that scholars commonly term as ‘ritual.’<sup>14</sup> A prominent contributor is Gerd Althoff (of limited availability in English translation), who argued that the demonstrative, even melodramatic, actions depicted in medieval sources did not reflect ‘the anarchic naïveté and spontaneity of a medieval temperament,’ but were instead deliberate ‘signs and firm rules of behaviour’ through which power holders expressed their political relationships or intentions.<sup>15</sup> In fact, these performances of emotion were so un-spontaneous that they were negotiated privately before being ‘staged’ in public.<sup>16</sup> For example, in his discussion of a medieval account that described how, in 1024, Conrad II purportedly halted his coronation procession to hear the petitions of a widow, orphan, and peasant, Althoff argued that this was no random outburst of piety but pre-planned political theatre with which the new king intended to impress his

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>11</sup> Plamper, ‘History of Emotions,’ 253-54. See also Rosenwein, *EM*, chap. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 110-13.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 110-13, 124, 129.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenwein, ‘Worrying,’ 841; and Stuart Airlie, ‘The history of emotions and emotional history,’ *EME* 10, no. 2 (July 2001): 237.

<sup>15</sup> Airlie, ‘The history of emotions,’ 236-37, discussing Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1997), 229-304; and Gerd Althoff, ‘Ira Regis: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger,’ in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 74.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Reuter, review of *Spielregeln*, by Althoff, *German Historical Institute London Bulletin* 23, no. 1 (May 2001): 43.

onlookers.<sup>17</sup> Althoff further suggested that such gestures or ‘signs’ ‘had the goal of transmitting a clear and unmistakable message’ or as Timothy Reuter paraphrased, ‘a strict set of rules and expectations, of which those who observed them and recorded their actions were also perfectly well aware.’<sup>18</sup> Though other historians have expressed concern that medieval actors neither agreed upon so universally nor were equally fluent in these ‘rules,’ and that ritual was instead open to manipulation and subjective interpretation, Althoff has made a groundbreaking contribution by examining the political underpinnings of emotional gestures *on their own terms*, rather than simply dismissing them as evidence of ‘the unrestrainedly emotional nature of medieval men,’ to quote Simon MacLean.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, in his own research, Geoffrey Koziol has discussed how the demonstrative gestures used in liturgy influenced political rituals of petition or surrender in tenth- and eleventh-century France.<sup>20</sup> The verbal and bodily language of secular supplication or submission was ‘assimilated’ to that of prayer, accompanied in both textual descriptions and art by a range of religious gestures of ‘self-abasement’ like kneeling or prostration, so that a petitioner’s entreaty to his lord paralleled mankind’s deference to God, because that earthly lord’s authority was understood to be divinely bestowed.<sup>21</sup> For example, a suppliant’s seemingly emotional address, described in contemporary sources as spoken ‘dolefully, tremulously, or with tears,’ (though Koziol himself doubted whether weeping actually happened), may instead be the adoption of ‘a liturgical tone’ as a formal component of secular petition, ‘a public ritual voice.’<sup>22</sup> Like Althoff’s critics, Koziol also stressed that these rituals were no cookie-cutter templates performed by automatons, but flexible tools open to ‘ambiguity’ that participants could adjust to fit situational needs or for their own benefit.<sup>23</sup> This imbrication of secular and spiritual in Frankish politics further proves that medieval people were not childishly unrestrained, but engaged in a sophisticated culture of interaction.

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<sup>17</sup> Gerd Althoff, ‘The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages,’ in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, eds. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 78.

<sup>18</sup> Althoff, ‘Ira Regis,’ 74; and Reuter, review of *Spielregeln*, 44.

<sup>19</sup> MacLean, 5. For criticisms of Althoff’s assumption that all medieval power holders knew the ‘rules,’ see Airlie, ‘The history of emotions,’ 237; and Buc, 8. For MacLean’s analysis of a situation in which a medieval magnate clearly disregarded or misunderstood common ritual convention, see Chapter 3 below, p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> Koziol, 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9, 12-13. For gestures of ‘self-abasement,’ see 60-63.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 309-11.

Philippe Buc also belongs to this second group of historians, though with reservations. Concerned that scholars like Althoff and Koziol inadequately addressed the ‘textuality of the sources’ by accepting them as ‘raw data’ for medieval ritual, Buc urged historians to ‘give up the attempt to reconstruct events’ and instead limit themselves to ‘readings of...medieval textual practices.’<sup>24</sup> According to Buc, several factors block our ability to access historical reality, the first being that ritual was ‘dangerous,’ because both the ritual actors and their enemies could ‘manipulate or disrupt’ the actual performance (Koziol, however, did address this issue, as noted above).<sup>25</sup> The second obfuscating factor is that medieval authors were predominantly clerical, and clerics’ education in liturgy, hermeneutics, and biblical exegesis trained them not to record events objectively, but to cast them as ‘providential’ or ‘liturgical.’<sup>26</sup> That is, what Koziol saw as the liturgicization of real-life political ritual might reflect a liturgicized writing style, a clerical habit of describing contemporary events like ‘Old Testament [miracles].’<sup>27</sup> Liturgicization also served clerics’ political biases, which further adulterated their often competing reports: whatever had actually happened in reality, writers legitimized events or people by equating them with heroic and divine ‘scriptural archetypes,’ or they could invalidate an event by presenting it as corrupt.<sup>28</sup> Buc illustrated this point by discussing a section of Liudprand of Cremona’s *Antapodosis* to show how the writer’s own political agenda underpinned his flattering description of Otto I, tearfully praying in battle before the Holy Lance, as a new Moses (who held up his staff to ensure Joshua’s victory against the Amalechites).<sup>29</sup> To Buc, it is impossible to weed through such textual pettifoggery to uncover the daily reality of political ritual, much less what emotions were performed or actually felt.

All these historians have touched upon emotions or gestures ranging from sadness to remorse to submission. However, none have focused specifically and at any length on the tears of early medieval secular power holders, such as Bishop Gregory’s Sigismund. For example, in his study of royal anger, Althoff also examined textual representations of the opposite ‘Christian rulership virtues’ of ‘compassion,’ ‘clemency,’ and gentleness, arguing that these became popular from the Carolingian period onward.<sup>30</sup> At the end of his inquiry,

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<sup>24</sup> Buc, 4, 75.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2, 49.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 252-53.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 47-49. Moses however, did not weep; see Exodus 17:8-13.

<sup>30</sup> Althoff, ‘Ira Regis,’ 64-65, 69.

he made passing mention that weeping was one demonstrative ritual gesture with which rulers might signal such intentions: ‘the king demonstrated his determination to go to war with raging anger, his mildness with a flood of tears.’<sup>31</sup> However, Althoff did not elaborate on this latter thought. Otherwise, a body of English-language scholarship devoted to medieval weeping does exist, a representative sample of which is available in Elina Gertsman’s edited collection, *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, but even here, most of the articles address the Central or Late Middle Ages and do not discuss the tears of early medieval rulers. It is to the weeping of such kings that the focus of this dissertation now turns.

Tracey-Anne Cooper’s essay, ‘The Shedding of Tears in Late Anglo-Saxon England,’ is one exception to Gertsman’s collection.<sup>32</sup> Observing the ‘gulf’ between studies of patristic theologies of tears, and historical analyses of later medieval holy weeping, Cooper investigated weeping in late Anglo-Saxon kingship.<sup>33</sup> She concluded that royal tears had political meaning and served three purposes: 1) weeping did not cause ‘public shame or cultural emasculation,’ it rather reflected positively on rulers as evidence of their overall ‘moral character,’ 2) authors used tears to signal the ‘profound significance’ or extraordinary nature of the event under discussion, and 3) as one gesture in a wider ‘demonstrative’ political repertoire, weeping ‘greased the wheels of politics’ by smoothing tension in potentially ‘volatile’ situations.<sup>34</sup> Cooper illustrated each point with an example. Firstly, she discussed how the anonymous 11<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish author of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* praised King Cnut (1017-35) by describing how he wept at saints’ shrines en-route to Rome, but disagreed with other historians that Cnut was performing penance for murder, arguing instead that the Encomiast concocted these scenes in order to make Cnut a model for royal piety.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, Cooper summarized how in several saint’s lives, Anglo-Saxon kings wept while petitioning for abbatial elections, and suggested that clerical writers ‘[embroidered]’ their accounts with such tears to emphasize that lay investiture was an extraordinary ‘presumption,’ not to be repeated.<sup>36</sup> Finally, writers also inserted tears to smooth the historical memory of potentially ugly situations: because their father’s death left ‘a muddled succession,’ Cooper argued that the Encomiast depicted Cnut and his elder brother Harald weeping on each other’s necks in affectionate mourning in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>32</sup> Cooper, 175-92.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 175, 177-79, 186.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 179-80.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 178-79.

order to portray Cnut as ‘a reasonable monarch’ who valued familial deference over personal power.<sup>37</sup> By showing that tears were the stuff of high politics, Cooper knocked the final supports from Huizinga’s assumptions about medieval emotional instability.

One other scholar has discussed the politics of royal tears, this time from the Old Testament, which as we shall see, exerted strong influence on early medieval thought. In an essay on world religions, Gary L. Ebersole echoed Rosenwein and Nagy’s concern with modern biases by urging historians to assess ‘ritual weeping’ according to the ‘social discourses’ of the cultures under examination, rather than their own.<sup>38</sup> Only then can historians correctly identify the ‘cultural capital’ individuals gained by shedding or suppressing tears, or what weeping reveals about ‘social and hierarchical relationships.’<sup>39</sup> To illustrate this, Ebersole discussed how King David’s tears were not just spiritually symbolic, but part of a unique historical political context.<sup>40</sup> Here, as punishment for David’s murder of Uriah, God condemned his son by Bathsheba to death, so in hopes of saving his child’s life, David prostrated, wept, and fasted. But as soon as the child died, David immediately ceased (2 Samuel 12:15-22). According to Ebersole, David modeled his supplication of God on a contemporary Israelite practice in which powerless members of society could beg a king’s protection by prostrating and weeping before him.<sup>41</sup> This act forced the king to cooperate, because disregard would make him appear unjust.<sup>42</sup> David likewise attempted to pressure God, the ultimate king, but when this failed there was no point in weeping any longer.<sup>43</sup> Ebersole sensitively situated David’s act within ‘the cultural complex of ritual weeping, moral contracts, and the ancient Middle Eastern concept of kingship,’ rather than simply dismissing his ability to ‘turn [his tears] on and off at will’ as emotionally immature.<sup>44</sup>

Returning now to early medieval weeping kings, Cooper and Ebersole’s analyses provide the most salient springboard for further research. However, in arguing that Cnut’s tears were not penitential, Cooper leaves unmentioned biblical and early Christian traditions of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 177-78.

<sup>38</sup> Gary L. Ebersole, ‘The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited: Affective Expression and Moral Discourse,’ *History of Religions* 39, no. 3 (February 2000): 213-14.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

repentance to which the *Encomiast* made reference. In fact, the patterns she identified in the late Anglo-Saxon period actually derive from developments that began in Gaul over 500 years earlier, with roots reaching back into the late Roman period. The possible Carolingian royal practice of shedding ritual tears to advertise ‘mildness,’ upon which Althoff commented, would have shared the same early origins, and though his observation is true in a basic sense and accurately reflects some cases, the symbolic import of royal weeping was also more multifaceted and changed over time. No historian, including Cooper, has yet done extended research of royal weeping in the Early Middle Ages, and so the following dissertation fills the breach with a panoramic study of Frankish royal tears, beginning with the first texts addressed to post-Roman kings of Gaul and concluding in the Carolingian ninth century.

As a study of emotional expression, this dissertation is deeply indebted to the scholarship on early medieval emotion and ritual discussed above. However, it will not follow the lexicographic avenue of Rosenwein. For three reasons, her paradigm of ‘emotional communities’ cannot apply to royal weeping. Four centuries of kings were no emotional community, for the latter were ‘transient, short-lived entities’ that faded after ‘a generation or two.’<sup>45</sup> Tears also expressed a more precise emotional range, while emotional communities were wider in scope, nurturing not ‘one or two emotions but rather...constellations.’<sup>46</sup> Lastly, as Cooper and Ebersole have shown, royal weeping could be political in purpose, but Rosenwein’s methodology is less successful in consistently demonstrating the same for emotional communities. For example, she posited that the reserved tenor of the texts written at Lothar II’s (also spelled Clothar) Neustrian court was a reaction to the more effusive preferences of the Austrasian community, (to which Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus belonged,) in part because of ‘Clothar’s hatred of Brunhild [the Austrasian queen] and her brood.’<sup>47</sup> But besides the vocabulary, no historical paper trail supports this speculation about Lothar’s mindset, or reveals how he would have effected such a policy.

Instead, the following investigation belongs to the second scholarly camp, which examines ritual gestures and the texts describing them. This dissertation also works from the shared

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<sup>45</sup> Nagy, ‘Historians and Emotions.’ Nagy summarizes Rosenwein’s theory.

<sup>46</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

understanding that politics in the Middle Ages was a very broad category that was fundamentally religious in tone and liturgical in operation. For example, it builds upon Koziol and Ebersole's independent but overlapping insights on the conceptual link to the divine in political rituals of submission, Buc and Koziol's similar emphases on the medieval employment of scriptural models, Althoff's brief notice on the connection between ritual tears and royal 'mildness,' and Cooper's observations of how writers used weeping to signal the king's morality or flag extraordinary situations. A crucial theme also woven throughout the dissertation is that of interpretation or manipulation in both text and live ritual, à la Buc, Koziol, Simon MacLean, or critics of Althoff (see p. 11 above).

Because reasons of space preclude the documentation of every instance of royal Frankish weeping, this dissertation consists of three chronological areas of focus, which explore the specific moral weight of kings' tears, as distinct from that of women, lesser laymen or churchmen. Each section is therefore also an implicit examination of gender, for this era witnessed a radical shift in elite masculinity, beginning in the late Roman West with the concomitant militarization of the old civic aristocracy and the introduction of Judeo-Christian narratives (for overviews of scholarship on this topic, see pp. 21-24 below). Royal weeping evolved within this process. However, it is impossible to analyze rulers in isolation. Kings must be studied in tandem with the bishops of Gaul and Francia, for they were the main authors of texts depicting tears and were thus responsible for the conceptual development of royal weeping. Before making his brief mention of tears, Althoff argued that Carolingian texts exhibited a 'new leitmotif' of gentler royal virtues like mercy and compassion, which he attributed to increasing Church influence.<sup>48</sup> However, this was nothing new to the Carolingians, for as we shall see, early medieval historians commonly remark that in the Merovingian period and before, bishops already struggled to establish their authority by developing, in Judith George's words, an 'ecclesiastical ideal of kingship' and attempting to enforce it through 'the threat of judgement and the wrath of God.'<sup>49</sup> Namely, they urged kings defer to the clergy and turn their focus from war to similar values of humility, 'charity and kindness.'<sup>50</sup> As part of the process, over the course of four centuries, textual tears became a crucial rhetorical tool for Gallic and Frankish bishops in efforts to promote this ideal and thereby shape the militarized, Christian brand of kingship that had emerged from the fall of Rome. Therefore, royal weeping often

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<sup>48</sup> Althoff, 'Ira Regis,' 64-66.

<sup>49</sup> George, *LP*, 54.

<sup>50</sup> Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and their miracles in late antique Gaul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 97.

appears at flashpoints of contention between bishops and kings, providing historians with an explanatory tool that not only sheds new light on the development of Frankish conceptions of good rulership, but also on how bishops articulated their spiritual authority by utilizing tears as a form of moral leverage to pressure kings to comply.

Chapter 1 treats the first chronological area of study, and outlines how Roman values of elite male stoicism and the competing Christian penitential tradition of effusiveness influenced the first episcopal consolation literature addressed to post-Roman kings of Gaul. In their letters, sixth-century Gallic bishops started to merge these two conflicting rhetorics on royal weeping, with the Christian discourse beginning to subsume lingering Roman disapproval. In the later sixth century, Gregory of Tours built upon this tradition as the first Gallic bishop to wholeheartedly endorse royal tears, whether in repentance or mourning, as a sign of fitness for Christian rule, and Chapter 2 examines how he utilized weeping in his writing to indicate whether Merovingian rulers fulfilled or failed his expectations for kingship. Chapter 3 presents the full flowering of royal weeping in the ninth-century reign of Louis the Pious and the political role that tears played in the storm of texts that orbited around the rebellion of 833, by which time the classical disapproval of elite male mourning had fallen away.

Finally, each chapter also confronts the early medievalist's eternal conundrum: can we ever recover how past generations truly behaved? Buc is ultimately correct that we cannot, being constrained by the boundaries of text. Yet as Airlie reminds us, '[r]epresentation is primary but the world is not simply a text,' and medieval narratives still tantalize the modern reader with glimmers of live political performance.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, while remaining close to the sources, this dissertation also explores the *possibilities* of royal weeping in historical reality. The bishops' rhetoric on tears would have served little purpose if no Frankish king found it useful in his public dealings. And if political rituals provided an opportunity for manipulation or subjective interpretation in both texts *and* life, tears could have played a part. For by the end of our period, the concept of royal weeping had become so politically charged that it might have transcended the page, with tears becoming a rebel justification for the king's forcible removal from power, and even possibly, this king's own counter-strategy to demonstrate his worthiness for the throne.

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<sup>51</sup> Airlie, 'The history of emotions,' 239.

## 1. Chapter 1: Royal Tears in Gallic Consolation Literature and Early Christian Penance

Around AD 580, Venantius Fortunatus, a court poet and future bishop of Gaul, wrote a consolation poem to the Merovingian King Chilperic after his two young sons had died of dysentery.<sup>52</sup> His poem offered the king striking advice: that he stop weeping for his children immediately. Venantius gave two reasons for this admonition, the first being that because of their innocence, God had taken the children to heaven, making their father's grief unnecessary and senseless.<sup>53</sup> More importantly, however, Venantius reminded Chilperic that his responsibility to his subjects trumped parental emotion, and that as guardian of the realm's wellbeing, it was inauspicious for him to grieve publicly because 'the populace [would] set its expectations by [his] aspect.'<sup>54</sup> Instead, the 'mighty king' should 'bear [his] suffering patiently' and be 'dignified and manful [*virile*].'<sup>55</sup> George has already recognized Venantius' advice to Chilperic on 'his duties as a Christian king' as belonging to the Gallic episcopal tradition of exhortation on the 'ecclesiastical ideal of kingship.'<sup>56</sup> But the specific function of tears in such texts has yet to be highlighted. Despite his sugared language, Venantius communicated with merciless clarity that weeping was an unsuitable activity for a ruler. However, almost 200 years before, Bishop Ambrose of Milan praised Emperor Theodosius I in his obituary speech for having 'wept publicly in church...with groans and tears' after his orders resulted in a massacre of civilians.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to the stoic tenor of Venantius' consolation letter, Ambrose declared that the emperor's tearful penance made him an ideal ruler.<sup>58</sup> When Ambrose's account and Venantius' consolation poem are compared, these two churchmen seem to promote irreconcilable expectations for kingship.

But despite their apparent dissonance, the contrasting views of Ambrose and Gallic consolation authors like Venantius were actually forged from the same historical moment, as elite masculine comportment shifted in the late Roman West. Once developed, the two

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<sup>52</sup> *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 9.2: To Chilperic and Queen Fredegund,' 80n37. For Venantius' late career as a priest and then a bishop, see Judith George, in *Pers. Poems*, xx.

<sup>53</sup> *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 9.2,' 85.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 84. For the Latin text, see *Opera*, lib. IX, II, p. 208, v. 83-85.

<sup>56</sup> *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 9.2,' 80n37; and George, *LP*, 54.

<sup>57</sup> *Letters*, 'Oration on the Death of Theodosius I,' 193.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

views coexisted and increasingly merged along a moral continuum that stretched through the Early Middle Ages. These textual tears also demonstrate the considerable power that early Christian bishops began to develop in relationship with kings, beyond the level of hopeful ecclesiastical prodding. Ian Wood observed that not only could episcopal approval help legitimate a post-Roman king, but also that some kings relied on clerical literacy in the running of their governments, and so the loss of this ideological or logistical support base could be devastating.<sup>59</sup> For example, King Sigismund himself had no court scribe and required ecclesiastical expertise to draft letters of state, but when his bishops expressed dissatisfaction with his conduct by going ‘on strike,’ this accelerated the collapse of his rule.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, while weeping may seem a small textual detail, it behoves modern scholars to heed what bishops wrote about tears.

This chapter will examine the two parallel streams in episcopal thought about weeping and militarized male authority which Venantius and Ambrose represent: that of post-Roman consolation letters, which cluster chronologically around the sixth century, in comparison with the tears of royal repentance, which emerged from early Christian texts, including patristic literature, penitentials, and Old Testament commentary. These two traditions had separate but equally ancient, pre-Christian roots, and despite some injunctions against emotional display, the tears—just as Cooper noted for the late Anglo-Saxon period—always reflected positively on the weeping ruler in both groups of sources. Therefore, textual discussions of weeping provide modern scholars with an analytical tool for gauging how high-ranking churchmen attempted to influence kings by dictating when tears were appropriate, and for understanding how these two seemingly incommensurate ideals for weeping and rulership greatly overlapped in the formative generations on either side of Rome’s fall. Finally, both consolation letters and penance texts contain clues about how tears may have functioned as a demonstrative physical action in public displays of secular power. The reader should also note that this chapter, while focused on the fourth through sixth centuries, proceeds thematically, making necessary chronological deviations to introduce the range of biblical, Late Antique, and medieval texts that informed discussions of royal tears at the time.

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<sup>59</sup> Ian N. Wood, ‘The governing class of the Gibichung and early Merovingian kingdoms,’ in *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, eds. Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 13-14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

### 1.1. Gallic Consolation Literature, Mourning, and Masculine Authority: The Classical Legacy and Christian Adaptation

Though addressed to kings, neither the tears themselves nor the routine injunctions against them made the consolation letters written by Gallic bishops unusual on their own. In the ancient world, tears were already long established, and as Richmond Lattimore emphasized in his survey of classical epitaphs, ancient pagan Mediterranean traditions of consolation, lamentation, and commemorative epigraphy continued to exert influence on Christian thought ‘even in such delicate matters as the interpretation of death.’<sup>61</sup> For example, Lattimore remarked that there was ‘abundant precedent’ for weeping in Homeric epic and classical tragedy.<sup>62</sup> Inheriting this tradition, Venantius borrowed heavily classical poets, and in his verse lament for the Frankish queen, Galswinth, he modelled Galswinth’s tearful parting from her mother on Achilles’ abandonment of Deidameia in the *Achilleid*.<sup>63</sup> Women were not the only weepers in classical literature; in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the weeping Lausus dies defending his father in battle, and his body is later carried off by tearful warrior comrades (10.789-90, 841-42).

Injunctions against weeping were also already a general, pre-conversion concern. In pre-Christian Roman epitaphs, various mourning tropes were available to the bereaved, one of which was the futility of grief, because death was universal and inevitable.<sup>64</sup> Lattimore pointed to a Latin epitaph from the Augustan period that enjoined the mourner not to grieve: ‘do not sorrow, friend...Fate gave this to me.’<sup>65</sup> Lattimore then demonstrated that after Christian conversion, new inscriptions adapted such declarations that mourning was pointless, not because of Fate, but because tears especially were now deemed an unsuitably depressing send-off for those who had earned the joys of eternal life.<sup>66</sup> Rosenwein similarly observed that with the rise of Christian epigraphy from the fourth century onward, mourners ‘meshed’ older pagan paradigms with ‘appropriate’ forms of Christian

<sup>61</sup> Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942), 215-17, 320-21, 339.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 172, 178.

<sup>63</sup> For Venantius’ more general Classical inspirations in the lament for Galswinth see G. Davis, ‘Ad Sidera Notus: Strategies of Lament and Consolation in Fortunatus’ *De Geleswintha*,’ *Agon* 1 (1967): 125-32. For Deidameia, see Michael Roberts, ‘Venantius Fortunatus’ Elegy on the Death of Galswintha (*Carm.* 6.5),’ in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources*, eds. Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), 304-305.

<sup>64</sup> Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, 218-19. For other pagan themes on death, see 219-65.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 219. This is my translation from the Latin that Lattimore provided.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 303-304.

expression.<sup>67</sup> Her translation of a mother's gravestone from Vienne demonstrates this well: 'Let her children cease to be troubled by tears...It is not right to groan...about that which ought to be celebrated.'<sup>68</sup> George has noted that Christian consolation literature likewise warned that weeping was 'inappropriate for the blessed dead,' and echoing his consolation to Chilperic, Venantius wrote another poem for a husband bereaved by childbirth, urging him not to 'chafe with tears at the godly fate of [his] wife,' whose piety God had rewarded with salvation.<sup>69</sup> Christian immortality had replaced Fate, but in early medieval consolation literature, tears (even of male mourners) or injunctions against weeping were not extraordinary in themselves, for both had garden-variety antecedents stretching back into late Roman Christian and pagan, classical traditions.

Consolation addressed specifically to *kings*, however, stood apart from this general classical and early Christian milieu because in their letters, Gallic bishops applied special moral weight to royal weeping in an effort to shape the male, militarized form of political authority developing in the post-Roman west, and to pressure their rulers to achieve this specific ideal. Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser have observed briefly that at this historical moment, elite masculinity was evolving into 'a model...pieced together from elements of classical philosophy, the Hebrew Bible, and the ethos of the warlord.'<sup>70</sup> The specific role of tears in the classical aspect of this amalgamation will be discussed first. As noted above, Venantius made clear to Chilperic that tearful grief was incommensurate with royal authority, but his letter was not an isolated case. Sometime after AD 501, Bishop Avitus of Vienne wrote his own letter to the Burgundian king Gundobad, consoling him on the death of his daughter.<sup>71</sup> The consolation contains the formulaic Christian injunction against mourning, since the girl's virginal state ensured her salvation.<sup>72</sup> However, Avitus then combined praise with caution, warning Gundobad that for great kings, a child's death was a 'small thing' that deserved less attention than the health of the realm.<sup>73</sup> Anticipating Venantius' exhortation to Chilperic, Avitus reminded Gundobad that his fatherly 'affection has prompted everyone to weep with [him],' and because his comportment reflected the state of the nation, he ought to redirect his attention back 'to [his] people, so that they may

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<sup>67</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 61, 78.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.

<sup>69</sup> *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 6.5: On Galsuinth,' 50n102, 'Poem 4.26: Epitaph for Vilithuta,' 14.

<sup>70</sup> Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser, 'The Gender of Grace: Impotence, Servitude and Manliness in the Fifth-Century West,' *Gender & History* 12, no. 3 (November 2000): 547.

<sup>71</sup> Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood, trans. with an introduction and notes, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 208-209.

<sup>72</sup> Avitus of Vienne, 'Epistula 5,' in Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 211-12.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

rejoice.<sup>74</sup> In another consolation letter to Clovis on the death of his (equally virginal and equally saved) sister, Bishop Remigius of Rheims was more straightforward (though he did not explicitly mention tears): ‘You still have to administer the kingdom... You are the head of peoples and preserve the political order. They are accustomed to seeing in you auspicious signs.’<sup>75</sup> In all three letters, weeping or mourning was deemed improper for kings because it distracted from the business of governance and thereby undermined their public image of authority. But though these bishops wrote in the fifth and sixth centuries, and though their efforts were staunchly Christian, they promoted a paradigm of elite, masculine emotional control as ancient as the genre itself. This model had matured in pagan imperial Rome, seeping thence into the early Christian hierarchy, where it survived in post-Roman Gaul as a living thread of *romanitas*. To understand why bishops advocated pre-Christian gender values and why they targeted their ‘barbarian’ kings, it is helpful to trace this ideology back to its Roman roots.

Pre-Christian, Roman elite masculinity centered on emotional moderation, and built upon the ancient Greek theories of Plato, the Stoics, and Aristotle, who philosophized respectively that emotions could lead to irrational “‘womanish” behavior’ such as weeping, distracted from the ‘virtuous life,’ or were only appropriate if felt for the correct reasons and in the proper context.<sup>76</sup> In the imperial heyday, cultured males pursued civic rather than military office, and their self-control was cited as a justification for their political authority over women and barbarian men, who were deemed irrational or uncivilized.<sup>77</sup> In his analysis of Seneca’s consolation letter to Marullus, Marcus Wilson observed that the ‘suppression of grief’ became one such exclusive masculine Roman benchmark.<sup>78</sup> Seneca’s consolation to the imperial secretary Polybius, on the death of his brother in AD 43, made the link between the ‘[restraint]’ of ‘useless tears’ and elite male authority even

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 210, 212, 212n4: in their note, Shanzer and Wood state that this exhortation is similar to Bishop Remigius’ letter to Clovis.

<sup>75</sup> Remigius of Rheims, ‘Letter of Bishop Remigius to Clovis on the Death of the King’s Sister,’ in *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, ed. and trans. Alexander Callander Murray (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), 263.

<sup>76</sup> Christopher Gill, ‘The emotions in Greco-Roman Philosophy,’ introduction to *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, eds. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7. For a summary of the Greek philosophies, see Rosenwein, *EM*, 33-38.

<sup>77</sup> Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 98. See also Cooper and Leyser, ‘Gender of Grace,’ 538-39. Readers should consult Cooper and Leyser’s article on the adaptations of Roman gender values in early Christian ascetic practice, in which they also discuss the received scholarly view that sexual and emotional moderation justified classical elite male social authority.

<sup>78</sup> Marcus Wilson, ‘The Subjugation of Grief in Seneca’s “Epistles,”’ in Braund and Gill, *The Passions in Roman Thought*, 59-60.

clearer.<sup>79</sup> Firstly, as paterfamilias, Polybius had to set a good example of self-control for his remaining brothers, who ‘will think everything honourable that they see [him] doing.’<sup>80</sup> Uncontrolled grief was also inappropriate because it lowered him to the level of his social inferiors, being vulgar and ‘womanish [*muliebre*].’<sup>81</sup> Finally, Seneca informed Polybius that he must not indulge himself because the emperor, the *ultimate* elite male, could not do so either, for just as Polybius had to help keep government business organized, the emperor’s public responsibility overrode all his own private desires.<sup>82</sup>

Seneca’s admonition against tears bears close similarities to the consolation letters of Bishops Remigius and Avitus, and Venantius. In Avitus’ letter to Gundobad, the populace, like Polybius’ brothers, followed their leader’s example: Gundobad’s paternal ‘affection has prompted everyone to weep with [him].’ Venantius’ advice that Chilperic be ‘manful’ paralleled Seneca’s indictment of weeping as ‘womanish,’ and Remigius likewise reminded Clovis that mourning wasted time better spent on governance. To these bishop authors, the kingdom’s survival still depended on its ruler’s self-discipline and concentration, and would rise or fall with the example he set, just as the old imperial order had once depended on the orderliness of the emperor’s emotional life.

Remigius, Avitus and Venantius’ disapproval of royal weeping thus indicates the preservation and transformation of Roman gender norms in Gallic episcopal circles through the sixth century, though society was more and more dominated by warriors. In the final centuries of the western Empire and after its disintegration, the old civic elite lifestyle eroded in the face of increasing militarization, as ‘ambitious Romans found places in royal armies and entourages...rather than in the steadily simplifying civilian administration,’ until eventually, ‘the only alternative [to a military career] was the church.’<sup>83</sup> Indeed, it is unclear how much of the classical literary tradition was still available in Gaul, and Avitus’ generation was probably the last to receive a complete Roman education.<sup>84</sup> Venantius was a later outlier, as he had first attended a school in

<sup>79</sup> *Polyb.*, chap. V, p. 358. For background information on the letter, see James Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 100.

<sup>80</sup> *Polyb.*, chap. V, p. 359.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. VI, p. 359. For the Latin, see Seneca, *Ad Polybium de Consolatione*, chap. VI, The Latin Library, accessed August 5, 2013, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/sen/sen.consolatione1.shtml>.

<sup>82</sup> *Polyb.*, chap. VI, p. 360, and chap. VII, p. 361.

<sup>83</sup> Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 105-106.

<sup>84</sup> Shanzer and Wood, in *Avitus of Vienne*, 7.

Ravenna before moving north.<sup>85</sup> But whether other Gallic bishops knew of Greco-Roman philosophy or the works of imperial moralists directly, they were often the descendents of the old Roman elite, and as such they brought to the church hierarchy their cultural inheritance of *romanitas*; for example, according to Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood, Avitus and his late fifth-century peers clung to their elite status by exchanging learned and stylistically high-flown correspondence, which included their consolation letters.<sup>86</sup> Wood even suggests that their letters represent an initial development in the ‘Mirror of Princes’ genre, and as the Early Middle Ages progressed, bishops increasingly pressured their rulers by manipulating the theme of weeping in text.<sup>87</sup> As we shall see later, Avitus, Remigius, and Venantius likely did not send their consolations as private correspondence for the king’s eyes only. Such letters were made all the more persuasive by their official, public impact.

Nevertheless, Remigius, Avitus, and Venantius were no cultural fossils, nor did they parrot the ossified conventions of an ancient genre. So far, they appear to have frowned upon tears like Seneca did, but their letters reveal that they actually viewed royal weeping as a positive trait. Indeed, the link between weeping and ‘moral character’ in the late Anglo-Saxon era that Tracey-Anne Cooper identified and that between the possible Carolingian shedding of ritual tears and Christian compassion or clemency that Althoff briefly considered were both indebted to these consolation authors, for it was they who first experimented with the idea that royal mourning tears were a sign of such virtues, rather than of emasculation. As quoted above, Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser noted the biblical impact on changes within late Roman masculine gender narratives, and Rachel Stone likewise observed that after conversion, humility and ‘obedience’ rather than domination and stoic self-control were increasingly considered hallmarks of manliness (for scholarship on the link between tears and obedience, see below pp. 28-29).<sup>88</sup> This Christian influence equally informed our consolation authors, as bishops, and so in this light, exhorting one’s king to stop crying was an underhanded way of praising his pious compassion and lack of hard-heartedness, which together with dry-eyed vigilance were now desirable qualities for rulers.

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<sup>85</sup> George, in *Pers. Poems*, xviii.

<sup>86</sup> Shanzer and Wood, in *Avitus of Vienne*, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Wood, ‘Gibichung,’ 18.

<sup>88</sup> Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 318-19, 327.

While paradoxically urging their kings to maintain a stiff upper lip, Gallic churchmen used the positive veneer of tears—again, as Tracey-Anne Cooper noted similarly for the late Anglo-Saxon era—to whitewash their rulers’ unsavoury deeds, help them resolve tricky political situations, and most of all, to aid instruction on the new ‘ecclesiastical ideal of kingship’ in the Christian era. In his consolation letter, Avitus depicted Gundobad as lovingly family oriented, for he not only mourned his daughter, but also the previous deaths of his brothers ‘with ineffable tender-heartedness.’<sup>89</sup> Royal sorrow also served the same purposes in another contemporary genre, the panegyric, and the comparison is instructive. According to George, a few early Christian thinkers like Ambrose of Milan reformulated this old pagan genre to reflect the ruler’s ‘*fides, misericordia, humilitas, and amor Dei,*’ and his ‘duty to rule in loving concord with the Church and to defend the *regnum Christianum.*’<sup>90</sup> Venantius strategically employed this ideal in his verse panegyric to King Chilperic at the synod at Berny-Rivière, where Bishop Gregory of Tours faced charges for slandering Queen Fredegund.<sup>91</sup> He focused his speech on Chilperic’s ‘championship of justice and truth’ so as to pressure the king to ‘modify his behavior’ (i.e., to exonerate Gregory).<sup>92</sup> Adding to George’s assessment, it is useful to note that specific reference to royal grief aided Venantius in this endeavour. By entreating with the request, ‘*rex bone, ne doleas,*’ (Good King, do no sorrow), Venantius highlighted Chilperic’s supposed emotional distress at the disturbance of the peace.<sup>93</sup> Returning to Avitus, it is unlikely that he wrote his consolation letter unaware that Gundobad and his brother Godigesil had fought viciously for power until Godigesil was killed, so his political purpose in redrawing Gundobad’s possible fratricide as ‘tender-heartedness’ is unclear.<sup>94</sup> But both he and Venantius subtly introduced an idea novel to the otherwise stoic legacy of consolation: a grieving king was not necessarily distracted by self-indulgent emotion. Instead, whatever skeletons hung in the royal closet, Gallic bishops used tears to help push the ideal that royal rule over the ‘*regnum Christianum*’ should be just and compassionate.

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<sup>89</sup> Avitus, ‘*Epistula 5,*’ 210-11.

<sup>90</sup> George, *LP*, 39. For Venantius’ contribution to the development of this ideal in Gaul, without reference to tears, see 61.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. For George’s summary of this political crisis, see 48-49.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-52, 54. See also Julia M.H. Smith, “‘Carrying the cares of the state’: gender perspectives on Merovingian “*Staatlichkeit*,”” in Pohl and Wieser, *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, 232. Julia Smith takes a slightly different view, that Chilperic was already on Gregory’s side, and that Venantius’ panegyric praise thus provided an honourable means of ‘[acquitting] Gregory without a loss of face.’

<sup>93</sup> For the Latin, see *Opera*, lib. IX, I, p. 202, v. 55-58.

<sup>94</sup> Shanzer and Wood, in *Avitus of Vienne*, 209-11. Shanzer and Wood consider different political agendas that Avitus may have expressed beneath this general flattery.

On the other hand, when a consolation writer omitted royal weeping, he may not have been praising a ruler's iron concentration, but making a deliberately negative statement of silence. As described above, Venantius' verse lament for Galswinth practically drowned in tears, as Galswinth, her mother, nurse, and sister took turns mourning their separation or the death.<sup>95</sup> The poem also contains the usual Christian injunction against weeping for the 'blessed': 'it is not right to weep for her who dwells in paradise.'<sup>96</sup> But unusually, Venantius did not address the lament to a specific bereaved individual, and his complete failure to mention Chilperic is telling.<sup>97</sup> Michael Roberts suggested that this 'conspicuous absence' indicates that Venantius at least suspected Chilperic's involvement in Galswinth's strangling.<sup>98</sup> But the lack of tears may be even more damning, and may indicate that Venantius not only knew Chilperic was guilty but also could not—or would not—make an effort to salvage him. In so watery a text, Venantius' omission of royal weeping may have been a passive strategy of announcing that Chilperic was perversely hard-hearted, and therefore lacked the righteousness required for Christian kings.

## 1.2. Tears in Consolation: the Political Impact

One final question about weeping and the consolation genre remains. Wood's sobering anecdote about Sigismund aside, as supreme alpha male and warrior leader, why would an early medieval king submit to a bishop's judgement? Buc's argument is fundamentally true, that textual biases and topoi obstruct our ability to recover how political interactions operated in real life or what truly happened during specific events. However, the medium of consolation does allow the historian to explore the possibilities of *how* bishops used these texts in public attempts to influence their kings, and on a more limited level, why kings might have listened to this episcopal message and incorporated tears into real political performance. Namely, consolation letters had a purpose similar to that of panegyric speeches: they anticipated a future response, had a verbal impact on a wider listening audience than the royal recipient, and an equally immediate performance value beyond the textual level that historians can consider.

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<sup>95</sup> *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 6.5,' 40-50.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, 'Venantius Fortunatus' Elegy,' 301.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

The foregoing observation builds from Andrew Gillett's research on Merovingian ambassadorial correspondence with the eastern Roman Empire. In the sixth century, Queen Brunhild and her son Childebert repeatedly petitioned Constantinople to release her grandson, Athanagild, who had been taken hostage as a result of Eastern Roman conflicts with Visigothic Spain.<sup>99</sup> Though Brunhild used heart-wrenchingly maternal language in her letters, Gillett argued that this was not a direct record of 'her personal feelings,' but instead a strategic 'script' 'to bring indirect pressure on the emperor.'<sup>100</sup> Brunhild and Childebert were really targeting close members of the court to make them aware of the situation's 'moral aspect,' in hopes that resultant public discussion would make the emperor appear unjust and thus force him to return Athanagild to Gaul.<sup>101</sup> Gillett suggested that these letters were made more effective by being read aloud to the court instead of the emperor alone, whom the reader then attempted to sway by '[dramatising]' the content much like a panegyric speech, with expressive voice modulation at the emotional parts—very similar in essence to the tremulous 'public ritual voice' that Koziol suggested was used in both prayer and political petition later on in early medieval France.<sup>102</sup> In short, Gillett encouraged historians not to bind themselves solely to a source's textual content, but to also consider the immediate effect of 'oral delivery' on a live audience.<sup>103</sup>

Gillet's insight applies equally to Gaul and sheds light on how bishops used textual tears to pressure their kings, and why kings might have heeded episcopal exhortation. If read aloud before the royal family, advisors, and leading aristocrats, consolation letters targeted more than the king's private conscience. No ruler would relish a public announcement that grief had made him lose focus. On the other hand, the same injunction against weeping might have encouraged aristocratic listeners to correlate royal tears with Christian justice, resulting in a sort of peer pressure that nudged the king closer to the bishop's ideal. Althoff similarly observed that clerical rhetoric on Christian royal virtues was a two-way street, 'for behind [it] stood expectations that the king could not overlook with impunity,' for rulers needed the 'sacral legitimacy' and 'stabilization' that Church approval could

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<sup>99</sup> Andrew Gillett, 'Love and Grief in Post-Imperial Diplomacy: The Letters of Brunhild,' in *Studies in Emotions and Power in the Late Roman World: papers in honour of Ron Newbold*, eds. Barbara Sidwell and Danijel Dzino (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press LLC, 2010), 129.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 127, 140.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-53.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

provide.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, George noted that because Venantius' panegyric depicted a long-suffering Chilperic who always had 'good motives' towards Gregory of Tours, the poet pressured the real king to behave accordingly, or risk the synod's confusion or opprobrium.<sup>105</sup> Consolation letters were indeed textual productions in the ivory towers of ecclesiastical theory, but their authors wrote with the immediate, lived experience of reading in mind. Though their message may initially appear contradictory (do not weep, but a weeping king is good), Gallic bishops used tears as a flexible hortatory tool for instilling values of Christian kingship, or for simply pressuring a specific short-term action from the king.

### 1.3. Royal Penitential Weeping and the Old Testament Legacy

This positive signification of tears, of the king's Christian justice and compassion, overlapped with the second school of thought on weeping and male authority that ran parallel to the consolation genre from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages. This second tradition derived even more directly from the general biblical element that Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser mentioned as one of the tripartite influences on late Roman masculinity. Weeping here dealt not with the mourning, however, but with a different kind of royal softening: that of repentance for sin. It appears in penitential texts, biblical commentary, historical narratives, and political letters, and may have had an even more dramatic performed component than consolation literature. But unlike the ambivalent tenor of consolation, penitential tears were a totally unambiguous sign of the king's legitimacy and fitness for rule. To understand why this type of royal weeping was so laudable, it is first necessary to also track its equally ancient textual origins.

It is common knowledge that tears featured significantly in Christian practice, and Lyn Blanchfield has succinctly summarized some main concepts that ancient and medieval Christian thinkers applied to weeping. The Church could not judge whether a penitent's contrition was sincere without an external 'sign': tears.<sup>106</sup> Blanchfield illustrated this by summarizing an example of third-century eastern Christian public penance, in which

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<sup>104</sup> Althoff, 'Ira Regis,' 65-66.

<sup>105</sup> George, *LP*, 54.

<sup>106</sup> Blanchfield, xxiii-xxiv.

penitents ‘were required to cry and implore their community...in order to demonstrate...their desire and worthiness to advance to the next stage of penance.’<sup>107</sup> Karen Wagner has also discussed how later Carolingian and Central medieval penitentials stipulated that the sinner had to cry before absolution was granted, because without weeping the penitent’s remorse might be ‘incomplete or insincere.’<sup>108</sup> Blanchfield further observed that even if tears were not shed sincerely, they at least showed that the sinner was *obedient* to the Church’s moral authority and imposition of punishment.<sup>109</sup> Sincerity and submission aside, however, the early Christian community Blanchfield discussed here was still Roman. Presumably, their elite men did penance, but how did public weeping become idealized in a society whose disapproval of masculine tears was so strong that it continued to resound in Gallic letters written after the empire had collapsed?

Simply put, early Christian thinkers also drew heavily on a separate, and even more ancient Old Testament tradition that was unselfconsciously effusive. In her discussion of Jerome’s translation of the Bible into Latin, Rosenwein remarked that in the process he brought forward Old Testament patterns of weeping that were ‘multivalent,’ from lament (‘When Moses died, “the children of Israel wept for [*fleverunt*] him in the plains of Moab”...(Deut. 34:8)’), to joyous outburst (‘When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin after many years, “he embraced...him and wept [*flevit*]: and Benjamin in like manner wept [*flente*] also on his neck”...(Gen. 45: 14-15)’).<sup>110</sup> But some of the biblical weeping Rosenwein linked to ‘unhappiness’ is better understood as repentance or supplication of God, as Ebersole argued for David’s tearful prayer for his stricken child. For example, Rosenwein attributed the tears of Elcana’s wife, Anna, at her barrenness to bitterness, but the first book of Samuel notes that while Anna wept ‘many tears,’ she ‘prayed to the Lord’ at the same time, presumably to petition him for conception (I Sam. 1:5-10).<sup>111</sup> This almost casual frequency of weeping and wailing in the Bible had a profound effect on early Christian thought, for as Wagner observed, the weepiness of medieval ‘penitential spirituality’ drew from Old Testament precedent, such as the seven Psalms that were designated as ‘penitential’ and used as prayers during confession.<sup>112</sup> It should be noted that one such Psalm was regarded in the early Church as sung by a remorseful David successfully

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>108</sup> Wagner, 208-210.

<sup>109</sup> Blanchfield, xxiv.

<sup>110</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 43-44. The bracketed Latin words above are part of Rosenwein’s text. See also Buc, 252-53. It is on this latter biblical episode that the Encomiast likely modelled his depiction of Cnut weeping on Harald’s neck, in what Buc would term a literary ‘scriptural archetype.’

<sup>111</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 43-44.

<sup>112</sup> Wagner, 211.

begging God's mercy for his sins: 'I have labored in my groaning. Every night I will wash my bed, I will water my couch with tears' (Psalms 6:1-10).<sup>113</sup> So despite the Romans' discomfort with lachrymose men, if the greatest biblical king did it, then weeping was worthy of emulation and had a proven track record as a method of appeasing the Lord.

In his survey of early Christian penance, Rob Meens doubted that actual public penance, like the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century group ordeal described above, was ever widely practiced in the West.<sup>114</sup> However, tears were recommended for clerics as an accompaniment of penitential feeling by the early fifth century at the latest. This may reflect the influence of eastern desert ascetics, namely John Cassian, whose theology made a critical and lasting impact on the West.<sup>115</sup> Cassian lived first as a monk in the East, after which he moved to Marseille by 415.<sup>116</sup> His *Conferences*, written in dialogue format sometime in the 420s, recorded the wisdom of Egyptian holy men whom Cassian admired, and explicitly recommended that monks shed tears, because their life was ultimately a form of unending penance.<sup>117</sup> One of Cassian's Egyptian holy men, Abba Isaac, explored the many different reasons that caused men to weep.<sup>118</sup> According to Isaac, tears could fall when "the thorn of sinfulness pricks our heart with compunction."<sup>119</sup> Isaac, or rather Cassian, then supported this position with Old Testament precedent, by quoting David's tearful exclamation from Psalm 6.<sup>120</sup> Though John Cassian was an imperial citizen and classically educated, he based his views of weeping in the Judeo-Christian, biblical tradition of emotive repentance and supplication, which flourished side-by-side with the sterner Roman legacy that informed later Gallic consolation letters.<sup>121</sup>

Cassian intended the *Conferences* for monks, but evidence from over 100 years later shows that penitential weeping had thereafter become universal practice across the board in the

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<sup>113</sup> For early Christian exegesis of Psalm 6, see Cassiodorus, 'Commentary on Psalm 6,' in *Explanation of the Psalms*, trans. and annotated P.G. Walsh, vol. 1 (New York, New York; Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990), 89-99. The translation above is from *Conf.*, pt. 1, conf. IX, chap. XXIX.1, p. 347.

<sup>114</sup> Rob Meens, 'Remedies for sins,' in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, eds. Thomas F.X. Noble, Julia M. H. Smith, and Roberta A. Baranowski, vol. 3, *Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600-c. 1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 402.

<sup>115</sup> Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 111.

<sup>116</sup> Boniface Ramsay, in *Conf.*, 5; and Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, 111.

<sup>117</sup> For the background of the *Conferences*, see Ramsay, in *Conf.*, 8; and Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 111. For tears in monastic spirituality, see Wagner, 211.

<sup>118</sup> *Conf.*, pt. 1, conf. IX, chap. XXIX.1-3, pp. 347-48.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. XXIX.1, p. 347.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> For Cassian's education and personal background, see Ramsay, in *Conf.*, 5.

West. Wagner has cited Cassian's influence on this medieval requirement for penitential tears, but in fact there was another intermediary step.<sup>122</sup> In 591, Pope Gregory the Great published the *Regula Pastoralis*, a clerical handbook on ministry to laymen and lesser brethren.<sup>123</sup> According to Rosenwein's discussion of his *Moralia in Job*, Gregory did express unease with sadness and even found penance potentially problematic, if done wrongly so that tears and despair took the penitent's mind from God.<sup>124</sup> But his disapproval was not total, for in the same treatise Gregory also wrote of weeping as a method of spiritual cleansing, if it elevated the weeper's thoughts to the divine.<sup>125</sup> With Cassian as one of his main scholarly influences, it is therefore unsurprising that in the *Regula*, Gregory advised clerics to make weeping mandatory for all penitents.<sup>126</sup> He not only recommended tears as the usual external sign of sincerity, but also insisted that God himself would reject dry-eyed—or even insufficiently weepy—penance as void: 'the soul of each should in its penitence drink the tears of compunction in proportion' to the grievousness of its sin, 'lest they be the more involved in the debt of evil done, because of the inadequate satisfaction they make by their tears of reparation.'<sup>127</sup> The *Regula* had departed so far from stoic Roman habit that to Gregory, even stingy weepers were better than those who refused to cry. He enjoined priests to warn these individuals 'not to suppose that their sins are forgiven on the mere plea that they have not been repeated, if they have not been cleansed by tears.'<sup>128</sup> Finally, the *Regula*, which quickly gained popularity in the West, made no distinction between the lowliest servant and the mightiest king.<sup>129</sup> Everyone had to weep for God's forgiveness, and their tears had to be genuine.

#### 1.4. Ambrose and Theodosius

Subsequently, bishops could mobilize the Judeo-Christian philosophy of weeping in order to exert another type of pressure on secular rulers to fulfil their 'ecclesiastical ideal,' this time through the medium of public penance. This type of royal weeping was pioneered while Cassian still lived as a monk in the East, long before Remigius or Avitus wrote their

<sup>122</sup> Wagner, 211.

<sup>123</sup> Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, 207-208.

<sup>124</sup> For a summary, see Rosenwein, *EM*, 83.

<sup>125</sup> For a summary, see Rosenwein, *EM*, 84.

<sup>126</sup> Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, trans. and annotated Henry Davis (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), pt. 3, chap. 29, p. 199. For Cassian, see R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>127</sup> Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, pt. 3, chap. 29, p. 199.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pt. 3, chap. 30, p. 206.

<sup>129</sup> For the *Regula* in the West, see Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, 208.

consolation letters. Its invention can be pinpointed to a specific moment, in the mind of Bishop Ambrose of Milan (c. 390), who convinced Emperor Theodosius I to perform public penance, framing it in Old Testament terms of repentant kingship.<sup>130</sup> J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz has remarked that Ambrose's influence on the emperor was unusual in Roman history, implying that it was Ambrose who first established concrete arguments for a bishop's spiritual right to chastise a Christian ruler, and the ruler's duty to obey episcopal judgement.<sup>131</sup> Because historians must rely on Ambrose's own writings, Neil McLynn is wary of taking the bishop's authoritative self-presentation at face value, but he too has recognized Theodosius' penance as novel, innovative and even 'risky' for a Roman emperor.<sup>132</sup> In his analysis of the event, McLynn mentioned Ambrose's stipulation that Theodosius must do penance 'with the appropriate tears' in order to receive divine absolution, but he did not pursue the matter of weeping further.<sup>133</sup> Ambrose's mobilization of tears in this episode, and not just his precocious imposition of penance, deserves specific attention, for his treatment of imperial weeping set a precedent that future bishops would increasingly invoke in their political dealings with kings.

In the twilight of the western Empire, weeping was not yet seen as a royal virtue in political circles, as Ambrose's treatise on David, which he sent to Theodosius, suggests: 'He [David] sinned, as kings are accustomed to do, but he did penance and wept, which kings are not accustomed to do.'<sup>134</sup> This began to change in 390, after Theodosius' crackdown on Thessalonica had caused an unwarranted massacre of civilians, and Ambrose sent the emperor a letter informing him that he would be barred from Mass in Milan until he performed public penance.<sup>135</sup> In this letter, Ambrose outlined two main points. Firstly, Ambrose anticipated Gregory the Great's universal stance in the *Regula* by reminding Theodosius that he was no more than a man vulnerable to 'temptation,' and as such he would have to '[humble his] soul before God' specifically by weeping, because

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<sup>130</sup> For the background on Ambrose's persuasive letter to the emperor and his Old Testament (Davidic) model of kingship, without specific reference to tears, see J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, in *Letters*, 262-63.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 44-45.

<sup>132</sup> Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in A Christian Capital* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994), 291-92, 315-30, especially 329-30. McLynn emphasized Ambrose's cautious tactfulness in his approach of Theodosius.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>134</sup> Ambrose, *Apologia David altera*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, CSEL 32.2, ed. C. Schenkl (Prague, Vienna, Leipzig: F. Tempsky and G. Freytag, 1897), chap.3, sect. 7, p. 362. This is my translation of the Latin. For background information on the treatise, see also Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 111; and de Jong, *PS*, 122.

<sup>135</sup> Liebeschuetz, in *Letters*, 18; and *Letters*, 'Letter on the Massacre at Thessalonica,' 262-63.

‘sin cannot be abolished otherwise than by tears and penitence.’<sup>136</sup> Secondly, Ambrose sweetened his castigation by offering the emperor a carrot, by turning Theodosius into a flattering ‘scriptural archetype,’ to borrow Buc’s term. Ambrose argued that grovelling in public would not humiliate or undermine Theodosius’ masculine authority, because David had debased himself similarly after the murder of Uriah, and in doing so regained God’s favour (and over 1000 years of subsequent admiration): ‘Don’t therefore take it ill, emperor, if you are told: “you have done what the prophet told king David that he had done.” For if you listen to this attentively, and say... “[L]et us weep before the Lord our maker,” you too will be told: “Because you have repented, the Lord will forgive your sin.”’<sup>137</sup> The analogy worked, and Theodosius performed the penance.

After Theodosius’ death in 395, Ambrose gave an obituary oration in Milan in which he upheld Theodosius ‘as an example to all of how a Christian emperor should behave, especially in his dealings with the Church.’<sup>138</sup> Weeping again took an auxiliary role in this argument. Presaging Wagner and Blanchfield’s observations on sincerity and obedience in penitential weeping, Ambrose’s oration explicitly linked tears with genuine remorse (for after Theodosius had ‘wept publicly in church over his sin... with groans and tears,’ ‘not a day passed on which he did not grieve for that fault of his’), and also implicitly with deference, for in weeping Theodosius was also amenable to God’s—or rather to Bishop Ambrose’s, as God’s representative—punishment for his excesses.<sup>139</sup> In doing so, Ambrose mobilized what Koziol has identified as a fundamental aspect of Christian soteriology that crossed over into conceptions of good rulership: God rewarded those who willingly suffered humiliation to make reparation for sin.<sup>140</sup> Ambrose thus explained to his audience, by quoting David’s prayer (‘I the shepherd have done wrong, and these in the flock, what have they done? Let your hand be against me’ (I Chronicles 21:17)), that Theodosius’ willingness to ‘[place] his kingdom under God and [do] penance,’ facing divine wrath for his own misdeed instead of letting it strike his people, was a selfless act of that paradoxically exalted his rule.<sup>141</sup> Ambrose cannot have known whether the emperor

<sup>136</sup> Letters, ‘Massacre,’ 267.

<sup>137</sup> Letters, ‘Massacre,’ 265-66. See also McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 325. Without discussing tears, McLynn similarly noted that Ambrose ‘offered’ David’s role to Theodosius.

<sup>138</sup> Liebeschuetz, in *Letters*, 37.

<sup>139</sup> Letters, ‘Death of Theodosius,’ 193.

<sup>140</sup> Koziol, 90-100.

<sup>141</sup> Letters, ‘Death of Theodosius,’ 190. Ambrose’s oration militates against Tracey-Anne Cooper’s argument that Cnut’s weeping at saints’ shrines (in the *Encomiast*’s words: ‘[lowering] himself to the depths so that he might be able to climb the heights’), was not penitential, since the *Encomiast* was likely aware of Ambrose’s similar description of Theodosius’ humble and yet exalting act of penance, or at least of later Frankish appropriation of Ambrosian precedent, as discussed in Chapter 3. For this excerpt from the *Encomiast*, see

felt truly sorry; more important is the novel connection he stipulated between weeping, ‘which kings are not accustomed to do,’ and legitimate power.

And just as Cooper argued that the Encomiast made his weeping Cnut a moral example for other rulers, Ambrose’s oration also shows that he did not limit his efforts to Theodosius. He addressed the obituary as much to the audience, probably of leading aristocrats and the imperial heir, as to the dead emperor, in order to convince them that good rulers would willingly and tearfully submit to episcopal judgement. McLynn has argued that Ambrose’s greatest legacy was in fact that other churchmen latched onto his larger message of royal deference and episcopal authority, embellishing it until Theodosius’ penance snowballed into ‘a pious fiction.’<sup>142</sup> Liebeschuetz has similarly noted that the fifth-century Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus ‘[dramatised] this episode further in order to hammer home Ambrose’s point that it is the duty of a bishop to discipline an emperor who [had] sinned, and that a pious emperor must submit to the bishop’s discipline.’<sup>143</sup> And where weeping is concerned, McLynn’s broader observation coincides: Ambrose and Theodosius’ groundbreaking introduction of royal tears also exerted lasting influence on clerical thought in the following centuries, for as we shall see, whenever a bishop wished to lay greater stress on a ruler’s subservience to episcopal authority, he ratcheted up that ruler’s tears in accordance. In Theodoret’s version, weeping thus took exaggerated proportions: refused entrance to the basilica and rebuked by an angry Ambrose, his Theodosius meekly ‘shut himself up in his palace, mourned bitterly, and shed floods of tears’ for months, after which he ‘tore his hair, struck his forehead, and shed torrents of tears’ in penance.<sup>144</sup> Lastly, as part of the biblical influence that Cooper and Leyser more generally identified as impacting late Roman norms of masculinity, this positive tradition Ambrose founded between tears and the ruler’s moral character came full circle with the more restrained praise of ‘tender-heartedness’ first introduced in the consolation letters discussed above, and may have even fostered the conceptual climate that allowed fifth- and sixth-century bishops of Gaul to put a positive spin on royal weeping, despite lingering Roman cultural disapproval of elite male tears.

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Alistair Campbell, ed., *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1949), bk. II, chap. 22, p 38-39, quoted and translated in Cooper, 179.

<sup>142</sup> McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 291-92.

<sup>143</sup> Liebeschuetz, in *Letters*, 44. See also McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 328. McLynn also noted that Theodoret’s version was a ‘fifth-century fantasy.’

<sup>144</sup> Theodoret, bk. V, chap. XVII, pp. 220, 222.

Ambrose's influence on later episcopal rhetoric was profound, but it still begs the question: if tears were such a crucial component of legitimate Christian rule, did Theodosius actually weep? Anticipating Buc's discussion of clerical textuality, McLynn independently cautioned readers not to wholeheartedly accept Ambrose's writing as a 'reliable guide' to what happened, because it was 'loaded with biblical language and delivered in a liturgical context.'<sup>145</sup> In this vein, scholars might conclude that repentant tears were just a literary trope drawn from the Old Testament in order to idealize contemporary events, which in reality may not have been so sacred or so tearful. Thus, Ambrose might have praised Theodosius for weeping not because he had truly wept, but because Ambrose wanted his audience to believe that the emperor had been humbler, more Davidic, and more cooperative than in reality.

However, while remaining faithful to the texts, the historian can still explore other clues indicating that Theodosius *could* have shed actual tears. As a do-it-yourself handbook on pastoral care, the emphasis on weeping in Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*—or in any medieval penitential—would have made little sense if tears were just a theological symbol intended for literary appreciation. In the *Conferences*, Cassian's anxiety over the physicality of tears also suggests the same. Abba Isaac's interlocutor expressed deep concerns about his intermittent inability to cry, despite his sincerity: '[S]ometimes, when I wish to excite myself with all my strength to a similar tearful compunction...I am unable to achieve again such an abundance of tears...as much as I rejoice in that outpouring of tears, I regret that I am unable to regain it whenever I wish.'<sup>146</sup> Cassian's anxiety was self-reflective and unrelated to secular office, but tearful compunction is plausible outside of texts in kingly performance, just as consolation literature may have been 'dramatised' aloud in royal households. Christina Pössel also noted that public ritual actions helped large audiences grasp the gist of what they saw, even if they did not fully understand the rhetoric or stood too far away to hear.<sup>147</sup> Because the Milan basilica could hold 3,000 spectators, Theodosius' demonstrative weeping, prostration and other motions would thus have been helpful to the watching congregation.<sup>148</sup> Suffice it to say, Theodosius' penance or tears, or both, were an effective political move, for McLynn noted that no historical source describing the massacre blames Theodosius directly, and at worst attributes his

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<sup>145</sup> McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 291-92.

<sup>146</sup> *Conf.*, pt. 1, conf. IX, chap. XXVIII.1, p. 347.

<sup>147</sup> Pössel, 122.

<sup>148</sup> For the basilica, see Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 112.

mismanagement to the influence of Satan, from whom he then ‘saved himself by his exemplary *humilitas*.’<sup>149</sup>

In conclusion, though Late Antique consolation writers expressed the classical concern that grieving would cripple a king’s ability to rule properly, they also made the first link between tears and the ideals of Christian justice and compassion. In this second sense, descriptions of weeping in consolation literature harmonized with—and perhaps even developed from—Ambrose’s earlier formulation of the legitimizing powers of penitential submissiveness and remorse. Ambrose’s letters and orations on penance, and the consolation letters of Bishops Remigius, Avitus, and Venantius were earliest contributions to an enduring conceptual tradition, and these two ideals continued to coexist and overlap in the following centuries until they merged completely by the Carolingian period, at which point reservations against elite male tears had fallen away. From this point on, the churchmen of Francia would increasingly prefer to praise tears, and the myriad Christian virtues associated with them, as a hortatory means of influencing their kings’ policies or behaviour, or for shaping their historical memory in writing.

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<sup>149</sup> McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 328.

## 2. Chapter 2: ‘And yet he wept no tear’: Kingship and Crying in Gregory of Tours’ *Decem Libri Historiarum*

In the mid-560s, the rivalry between two wives of King Chilperic of Neustria, Galswinth and Fredegund, came to a head. According to Bishop Gregory of Tours’ account in his *Decem Libri Historiarum* (hereafter noted as the *Histories*), Chilperic finally became so fed up that he had Galswinth strangled in her sleep. Oddly, Gregory reported that Chilperic then wept over his victim, but returned to Fredegund’s bed after just a few days.<sup>150</sup> All of Gregory’s writings feature dramatic episodes of weeping, from the *Histories* to his hagiographical works, such as *The Miracles of the Bishop Martin*, the *Glory of the Martyrs*, and the *Glory of the Confessors*, though only in the *Histories* did Gregory focus on kings’ tears (for typical example of non-royal weeping from these other texts, see p. 40 below).

However, at first glance he appears to be a disconcerting speed bump on the developmental road from Ambrose’s late Roman orations and letters, through early Gallic consolation literature, to the full flowering of royal weeping during the Carolingian period. As a historical narrative containing no consolatory verses or advice, the *Histories* were a departure both from earlier episcopal consolation texts and Venantius’ contemporary works, in both genre and tone. And unlike Ambrose of Milan, Gregory did not use tears to shape public understanding of one political landmark or figure; his was no panegyric or oration. In fact, as Walter Goffart has assessed, Gregory appears to have belied his own title by eschewing the genre of ‘conventional history’ as well and presenting the reader with a non sequitur stream of ‘isolated, discontinuous scenes’ ‘broken by the omission of links.’<sup>151</sup> Consequently, his depictions of weeping kings are also disjointed and seem less consistent or transparently strategic than that of Ambrose, Venantius, or the other Gallic consolation authors. His most ideal, pious Christian rulers sometimes failed to weep, while seemingly evil or sacrilegious kings could sob melodramatically. As our main historical (rather than hagiographical or poetic) source for sixth-century Merovingian Gaul, Gregory presents the historian of royal tears with significant difficulties.

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<sup>150</sup> For the entire episode, see *Hist.*, IV.28, pp. 222-23.

<sup>151</sup> Goffart, 182.

In fact, Gregory's judgements of all his characters in the *Histories* were so variable that historians rarely agree on his opinion of each Merovingian monarch, or on the political reasons that underpinned his portrayals of them. This modern debate centres on Gregory's depictions of Kings Guntram and Chilperic. Ian Wood has suggested that Gregory portrayed them as symbolic poster-boys for good and bad Christian kingship respectively, representations that ultimately reflected Gregory's genuine preference for Guntram and dislike of Chilperic.<sup>152</sup> However, Wood also emphasized that Gregory's stock characterizations or personal biases were not totally fixed, and thus he depicted 'a world of inherent inconsistency and permanent flux' in which kings were equally capable of perpetrating both good and bad.<sup>153</sup> Martin Heinzelmann argued similarly that Gregory divided the *Histories* into metaphoric 'themes' about rulership: namely, the godlessness of King Chilperic, who warred against his brothers and challenged Gregory's episcopal authority because of his impious greed, with Guntram as the 'bonus rex sacerdos' or good priest-king, who '[showed] the right, God-given path in Christian society'—both themes which also reflected Gregory's personal opinion of the kings.<sup>154</sup> Guy Halsall challenged this paradigm, marshalling evidence from the *Histories* that Gregory actually had a healthier working relationship with Chilperic and only damned this king's memory after his assassination 'to cover himself,' for Gregory truly feared Guntram instead, who despite his 'piety' was 'murderously paranoid, short-tempered...and... unpredictable.'<sup>155</sup> Writing before all the others, Walter Goffart had dispensed entirely with attempts to identify Gregory's personal judgments and symbolic representations of governance alike, stating that this misrepresents the bishop's purpose.<sup>156</sup> Instead, Gregory's kings—like all other characters in the *Histories*—were mere puppets for his broader message that painted every human action with one of two 'moral [colors]': that of saintliness and its eternal rewards, or in satiric contrast, that of the useless sinfulness 'of merely human gropings' in which the majority of his contemporaries were engaged.<sup>157</sup> In Goffart's view, Gregory's disjointed portrayal of the Merovingians is thus understandable; he purposefully avoided 'unified or homogenous' characterizations for an *ad hoc* style, jumping between scenes of piety and sinfulness to support his sweeping Christian moral, which itself was more important than plot details or character development.<sup>158</sup> However, all these attempts to identify Gregory's

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<sup>152</sup> Ian Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, ed. Judith Loades (Bangor, Gwynedd: Headstart History, 1994), 46-48.

<sup>153</sup> Ian Wood, 'The Individuality of Gregory of Tours,' in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, eds. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 44-45.

<sup>154</sup> Heinzelmann, 36-37, 52, 89, 207.

<sup>155</sup> Guy Halsall, 'Nero and Herod? The Death of Chilperic and Gregory's Writing of History,' in Mitchell and Wood, *World of Gregory of Tours*, 344, 346-49. For Halsall's list of Guntram's crimes, see 340n15.

<sup>156</sup> Goffart, 205.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 175, 180-82. For the *Histories* as satire, see 199-203.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 173, 181-82.

*modus operandi* can be as confusing as the author himself, and the only thing which modern historians agree on is that Gregory was consistent only in his inconsistencies.

Such ‘inherent inconsistency and permanent flux’ highlights the difficulty in determining whether Gregory continued his episcopal predecessors’ efforts in using textual tears to define Christian models for kingship. How can one isolate patterns or identify connections with the efforts of Ambrose, Venantius, or the other consolation authors if the *Histories* continue to defy all scholarly paradigms? Despite this problem, the following analysis contains a comprehensive examination of weeping kings in the *Histories*, and shows that Gregory does indeed represent the continued maturation of clerical attitudes towards royal tears in Francia. In fact, whether or not he made weeping a conscious textual program, Gregory was the first Gallic bishop to approve of royal tears—both of penitence *and* mourning—without reservation, and thus contributed further to the ongoing crystallization of Gallic episcopal authority via the conceptual development of ideal Christian kingship, in which Ambrose’s paradigm-shifting Old Testament philosophy of royal weeping continued to subsume the classically-based stoicism found in the consolation tradition.

For this study, Goffart’s reading (that Gregory’s ‘discontinuous’ characterizations of Merovingian kings did not reflect his personal judgements but rather were didactic ciphers subordinated to his grander moral agenda), and Wood and Heinzelmann’s observation that Gregory used kings as symbols of good or bad governance, provide the best analytical foundation. Accordingly, this chapter compares each king’s specific actions *at the moment of weeping* or in nearby passages in the text, in order to show that Gregory inserted tears into scenes celebrating those values he believed most crucial for Christian rulers, or in contrast, that he explicitly denied or undermined weeping in other scenes intended to criticize a king’s moral failure. This chapter also explores how Gregory likely intended portions of the *Histories* for live audiences, and how he may have used the tears therein—like the consolation authors and Ambrose did—to put moral pressure on his kings.

## 2.1. Gregory, the Consolation Authors, and Ambrose Compared

Turning first to Gregory's position within Late Antique literature, it is worth noting that he did recycle some of the Late Antique mourning tropes that also informed the authors of Gallic consolation letters. Namely, it was not weeping itself that set kings apart in the *Histories*. Just as Venantius described a husband's bereaved tears in his epitaph for Vilithuta, Gregory's average layman was equally capable of mourning. For example, Gregory described how a local roughneck, Waddo, attempted to unlawfully sequester an estate and was mortally wounded by the staff. 'Wailing,' Waddo's son then took his father home to die.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, Gregory also shared the Christian habit of enjoining mourners not to weep for the virtuous dead. In the *Glory of the Martyrs*, the mother of a young monk wept at his death until the monastery's patron saint appeared with the news that her son was happy in heaven and that she must not mourn, for 'it is proper that [she] rejoice rather than grieve.'<sup>160</sup> Gregory may not have had equal knowledge of the poetic models of pre-Christian, classical weeping that Venantius used in his poetry (see below, pp. 41-42), but where general bereavement was concerned, Gregory expressed the longstanding literary attitude that dramatic tears, including those of everyday men, were par for the course. But as in consolation literature, as soon as such tears involved rulers, Gregory's tone changed. He certainly composed scenes like that of Waddo's son to comment on the folly of impious 'human gropings,' to repeat Goffart's point, but he imbued royal weeping anecdotes with a different political and moral weight.

However, Gregory also exhibited new distance from consolation literature. Besides his occasional pious comment that the deceased should be celebrated rather than lamented, his attitude toward effusive weeping was otherwise wholly relaxed, as Rosenwein has observed; for example, he wept for child plague victims himself and never '[upbraided]' others for doing likewise.<sup>161</sup> Most importantly, as we shall see, Gregory extended the same latitude to royal mourners, unlike his fifth- and sixth-century Gallic predecessors, who straddled the cultural divide between early medieval Christianity and Antique romanitas, or even his contemporary Venantius, who had been classically trained in Ravenna. Indeed,

<sup>159</sup> For the whole scene, see *Hist.*, IX.35, pp. 522-23. Thorpe translated Gregory's verb *heiulor* as 'sobbing his heart out,' while I have more directly rendered it as 'wailing.' We are admittedly in a gray area for weeping here, as *heiulor* does not translate directly as 'shed tears' or 'weeping.' For the Latin, see *Hist. (Latin)*, IX.35, p. 391.

<sup>160</sup> *GM*, chap. 75, p. 70.

<sup>161</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 128.

Gregory's treatment of royal tears belonged firmly to the other, Old Testament-inspired tradition of effusiveness that Ambrose had first pioneered for rulers.<sup>162</sup> It is uncertain whether he knew of Ambrose's writings or Theodosius' public penance, and Van Dam has warned historians not to 'overestimate' Gregory's power in 'the difficult and ongoing process whereby bishops first established and then constantly struggled to maintain their authority,' with Peter Brown likewise cautioning that comparisons with Ambrose may be inept, for Gregory never achieved the same authoritative leverage.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, in a manner significantly reminiscent of Ambrose, Gregory promoted his own ecclesiastical ideal of kingship by comparing characters and scenes in the *Histories* to Old Testament precedent.<sup>164</sup> Heinzelmann identified this textual trick as a 'typology' (similar to Buc's 'scriptural archetypes'), or 'a method of Bible exegesis' in which Gregory made biblical events or figures 'equivalents' or 'explanatory models for the history of his own time.'<sup>165</sup> In this arena Gregory's departure from the consolation authors was crucial, for though Venantius did exhort Chilperic to imitate Old Testament kings in his consolation letter, he did so to encourage him to curb his grief rather than express it (for example, just as David managed to rejoice after his own son's death).<sup>166</sup> George has also noted how Venantius likened Chilperic in his suffering and his justice to King Melchisedech, 'the exemplar of royal priesthood in the Old and New Testaments...and in the writings of the early Church.'<sup>167</sup> Melchisedech, however, is never mentioned as weeping (Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 7:3, 6:20). While Gregory certainly praised the same general righteous royal compassion favoured by the consolation authors, he instead mustered Old Testament references in a fashion more similar to Ambrose, especially in his use of David and his wholehearted advocacy of royal weeping.

Gregory's departure from older standards of elite, male, Roman self-control may have resulted from his education. Though his father hailed from southern Gallic senatorial stock

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<sup>162</sup> See also *Hist.*, X.1, p. 545; and *MM*, bk. 3, 'preface,' pp. 259-60. For Bishop Gregory's awareness of and agreement with Gregory the Great's rhetoric on the universal requirement for tears in penance, compare his transcription of Gregory the Great's accession speech in this chapter of the *Histories* with an anecdote on the necessity of tears in supplication from the preface to *The Miracles of the Bishop Martin*.

<sup>163</sup> For Gregory's knowledge of Ambrose, see Pierre Riché, *Education and culture in the barbarian West: from the sixth through eighth century*, trans. John J. Contreni (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), 199. For Gregory's authority, see Van Dam, *Saints and their miracles*, 71-72; and Peter Brown, 'Gregory of Tours: Introduction,' in Mitchell and Wood, *World of Gregory of Tours*, 15-16.

<sup>164</sup> See also Guy Halsall, 'The preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*: Its Form, Context and Significance,' in *EHR* 122, no. 496 (2007): 305. Though without mentioning Ambrose or tears, Guy Halsall has similarly analyzed how throughout the *Histories* 'Gregory's views of ideal kingship drew heavily upon the Psalms,' but as will be discussed below, Gregory's biblical borrowings were also more varied.

<sup>165</sup> Heinzelmann, 125, 127, 148.

<sup>166</sup> *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 9.2,' 81-82, 85.

<sup>167</sup> George, *LP*, 91; and *Pers. Poems*, 'Poem 9.2,' 81, 81n48.

and Gregory even peppered the *Glory of the Martyrs* with references to Virgil, historians such as Van Dam believe that Gregory's overall knowledge of classical literature was 'limited.'<sup>168</sup> As noted above, Avitus' early sixth-century generation was likely the last in Gaul to receive a full classical education in school, and Gregory himself had been educated at the Clermont episcopal school, probably without 'access to grammarian's works or to ancient authors.'<sup>169</sup> Conversely, given his friendship with Venantius and his patronage of the latter's writing, Gregory instead may have *chosen* to abandon a legacy that savoured too strongly of paganism.<sup>170</sup> In the preface to the *Glory of the Martyrs*, Gregory explicitly stated his preference for Christian themes: 'it is not proper either to recall deceitful myths or to follow the wisdom of philosophers that is hostile to God, lest we slip into the penalty of eternal death when the Lord passes judgment.'<sup>171</sup> In short, while he was probably aware of Venantius' consolatory admonition that Chilperic stop weeping for his sons and return his attention to the kingdom, Gregory himself harboured no vestigial concerns that weeping was womanish, undisciplined, or demeaning to the royal person.

## 2.2. Royal Weeping in the *Histories*

Perhaps by natural extension of his rhetorical similarities with Ambrose, Gregory of Tours was the first Gallic bishop on record to wholeheartedly endorse royal weeping as an unambiguously positive trait. Building on Wood's, Heinzelmann's, and Goffart's readings, modern historians can therefore read Gregory's depictions of royal tears as a barometer for his judgement of specific Merovingian actions, and for his assessment of the legitimacy of the different styles of governance that each king represented in the text. Gregory most often depicted weeping in moments when a Merovingian king (whatever his overall track record) fulfilled one or more of the three overarching moral themes drawn from the Old Testament, which together comprised a sort of checklist for Gregory's ideal Christian ruler: 1) that of Davidic repentance and subsequent divine favour, 2) Christian familial respect in mourning, and 3) deference toward bishops, the saints, or Christian moral law.

<sup>168</sup> For Gregory's father, see Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, 5. For Van Dam on Virgil and the limits of Gregory's education, see *GM*, 1n1, 2, 2n2.

<sup>169</sup> Riché, *Education and culture*, 191. Riché asserts that Gregory later caught up by educating himself on the classics, but the observations above still stand.

<sup>170</sup> For Gregory's friendship and patronage of Venantius, see Rosenwein, *EM*, 100-102.

<sup>171</sup> *GM*, 'preface,' 2.

Gregory's first moral paradigm for royal weeping directly echoed Ambrose's message to Theodosius: good kings tearfully repented like David and accept episcopal or divine chastisement not just to save their own souls, but also to avert God's punitive destruction of their kingdoms. In the *Histories*, Clovis railed against Christian conversion until the Alamanns began to defeat his army, at which point Gregory reported that Clovis 'felt compunction in his heart and was moved to tears,' and begged God for aid, promising his own conversion in return.<sup>172</sup> In the next chapter, Clovis showed equal humility to Bishop Remigius, who came to council Clovis on his new beliefs, and to whom Gregory made the king reply: 'I have listened to you willingly, holy father.'<sup>173</sup> Obdurate disregard from Merovingian rulers constantly undermined Gregory's own authority, and so his tearfully deferent portrayal of their dynastic founder was as calculated as it was idealized. Just as Ambrose exhorted Theodosius to emulate David's repentance, Gregory held up Clovis as a similar mirror for his contemporaries.

Gregory returned to this theme in Book III of the *Histories*, in the story of the Burgundian king Sigismund, whom we met above. Here Gregory made more direct allusion David's weeping after his murder of Uriah: in remorse for his filicide, Sigismund wept and 'spent a long time praying for pardon' at the monastery of Agaune.<sup>174</sup> Gregory further illustrated Sigismund's repentance in the *Glory of the Martyrs*, though without reference to tears, stating that Sigismund did penance in this monastery, properly deferred to God's judgment by '[praying] that divine vengeance would punish him for his misdeeds,' and donated richly to the establishment.<sup>175</sup> While none of this could save Sigismund from Frankish invasion and assassination in divine retribution, in the *Glory of the Martyrs*, Gregory still emphasized the king's admittance of wrongdoing and his openness to punishment, which did earn him a miraculous sainthood, complete with healing powers.<sup>176</sup> This shows that Gregory did not intend to portray Sigismund's tears as foolish or farcical, despite the heinousness of his crime, but as an action he expected from decent Christian kings. Like Ambrose, Gregory drew a connection between penitential tears and legitimate rule: as it had been in the Old Testament, weeping was an external indicator of the king's internal willingness to sacrifice his dominance and appease God in order to avert divinely-driven

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<sup>172</sup> *Hist.*, II.30, p. 143.

<sup>173</sup> *Hist.*, II.31, p. 143.

<sup>174</sup> *Hist.*, III.5, p. 165-66.

<sup>175</sup> *GM*, chap. 74, p. 69.

<sup>176</sup> *Hist.*, III.6, p. 166; and *GM*, chap. 74, p. 69.

destruction of the kingdom, an act which, as Koziol explained (see the discussion of soteriology above, p. 33), would glorify him in life—or at least in death.

Gregory also based his second moral paradigm for royal weeping, this time in familial mourning, on biblical precedent and likewise linked it to the realm's wellbeing. As other historians frequently note, Gregory's primary complaint against contemporary Merovingians was their constant civil war, which he blamed on their insatiable greed.<sup>177</sup> Gregory's protest is most pointed in his direct address to his kings in the Preface of Book V, in which he harangued them for forgetting their ancestors' morals and 'stealing from each other' rather than renewing the honourable, outward conquests of old, a message Halsall observed that Gregory lifted from Psalm 72 and threaded repeatedly throughout the *Histories*.<sup>178</sup> Gregory also supported this admonition in the Preface with an apocalyptic reference to the New Testament: '[W]e now seem to see the moment draw near which our Lord foretold as the real beginning of our sorrows: "The father shall rise up against the son, and the son against the father; brother shall rise up against brother"' (Matthew 10:21, 24:7).<sup>179</sup> As Rosenwein noted in *Emotional Communities*, Gregory called for familial respect and cohesion between the Merovingians instead, and he chose King Guntram as his model for this particular virtue.

As scholars have often remarked, Gregory's Guntram was usually a paragon of piety, in his respect of churchmen, faith in God, and interest in Christian morality.<sup>180</sup> Historians all point to similar passages in the *Histories*: when his troops plundered churches and killed clergy, Guntram rebuked them with a reminder of God's wrath; Guntram desired all the bishops of his nephew's kingdom to hold a synod and combat the rising 'decline in personal morality'; and during an epidemic, Guntram urged his people to do penance so vigorously that 'he might well have been taken for one of our Lord's bishops, rather than for a king.'<sup>181</sup> More importantly, Gregory emphasized Guntram's 'commendable concern for his dynasty,' as a watchdog for peace between his two nephews.<sup>182</sup> For example, when

<sup>177</sup> See for example, Halsall, 'The preface to Book V,' 303-304.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 305; and *Hist.*, V, 'preface,' p. 253.

<sup>179</sup> *Hist.*, V, 'preface,' pp. 253, 253n1.

<sup>180</sup> See for example, Heinzelmänn, 63-64; and Ian Wood, 'The secret histories of Gregory of Tours,' *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 71 (1993): 259-60.

<sup>181</sup> *Hist.*, VIII.30, pp. 460-62, IX.20-21, pp. 508-10. For Heinzelmänn's analysis of Guntram's chastisement of his soldiers as a contrived set-speech concocted by Gregory, see Heinzelmänn, 63. For an opinion on the synod and Guntram's response to the epidemic, see Wood, 'The secret histories,' 261-62.

<sup>182</sup> Wood, 'The secret histories,' 259-60.

Childebert II had his first son, Guntram supposedly sent him an admonitory message that suspiciously echoed Gregory's New Testament quotation from Preface V: 'Through this child, God...will exalt the kingdom of the Franks, if only his father will live for him and he will live for his father.'<sup>183</sup> However Guntram actually behaved in life, Gregory chose to grace him with the highest number of praiseworthy scenes out of all the kings in the *Histories* and to make him the vehicle for the promotion of familial pietas.

It is no surprise then that Guntram shed more tears than any other of Gregory's Merovingians. In her own analysis, Rosenwein linked Gregory's promotion of familial affection (as the defining trait of his emotional community) to his textual descriptions of dramatic maternal or spousal mourning.<sup>184</sup> In this spirit, Gregory made Guntram doubly laudable by depicting him as mourning not just for any relatives, but for those who had been dangerous or potentially hostile to him in life. For instance, Guntram 'wept bitterly when he heard of his brother Chilperic's death,' returning to political business only when his mourning period was finished.<sup>185</sup> Gregory's acceptance of this funeral holiday was a vast departure from Bishop Remigius' stoic advice to Clovis that mourning wasted time better spent on governance. Later, when Gregory confessed to Guntram that he had dreamt of Chilperic's eternal punishment, Guntram admitted that he too had a nightmare in which the bishop-saints Tetricus of Langres, Nicetius of Lyons, and Agricola of Chalon took custody of Chilperic's soul in hell, broke his limbs, and boiled him, at which point Guntram recalled that he had 'wept to see what happened.'<sup>186</sup> Guntram's admirable fraternal bond even overcame his subconscious acknowledgement that Chilperic (at least in Gregory's view) deserved his fate.

Gregory praised Guntram again five chapters later, for when Guntram recovered the bodies of his nephews Clovis and Merovech (both driven to death or killed by their father, Chilperic), he wept (*plangens*) no less for them 'than when he saw his own sons buried.'<sup>187</sup> His tears reflected especially well because Merovech was a civil warmonger and could

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<sup>183</sup> *Hist.*, VIII.37, p. 470.

<sup>184</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 117-18.

<sup>185</sup> *Hist.*, VII.5, p. 391.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII.5, pp. 437-38.

<sup>187</sup> *Hist. (Latin)*, VIII.10, p. 331. This is my translation from the Latin. *Plango* literally means to lament or mourn for someone, but the fact that Gregory implied Guntram's tears is corroborated by his use of *plango* in another chapter of the *Histories* that referenced an Old Testament passage in which David actually wept (*flere*). See below, pp. 49-50. For Merovech and Clovis' deaths, see *Hist.*, V.18, pp. 282-83, V.39, pp. 303-304.

have presented a potential threat to Guntram, having in Halsall's words, gone rogue in an attempt 'to carve a kingdom for himself.'<sup>188</sup> Gregory may even have intended Guntram's virtuous tears to resemble David's, who lamented the death of his rebellious son, Absalom (for Gregory on David and Absalom, see below, pp. 49-50). Thus through Guntram, Gregory of Tours was the first Gallic bishop to commit to an idea with which the consolation authors only flirted: mourning tears for relatives, especially hostile ones, embodied the virtue of royal compassion. In doing so he also anticipated the possible link between royal weeping (though not specifically in mourning) and the Christian virtues of 'mildness' and mercy that Althoff mentioned for the Carolingians. By the late sixth century, according to Gregory, a kingdom's survival no longer depended on its ruler's dry-eyed emotional control, but on his willingness to do penance and his reverence for family, each of which were accompanied by tears. These masculine virtues new to Christianity were well on the way to subsuming the classical emphasis on elite male stoicism.

In contrast, to show his disapproval of royal behaviour, Gregory did more than follow Venantius' example of omitting all reference to weeping in a negative statement of silence. In the case of Chilperic, Gregory either condemned his sinful failure to shed tears outright, or undermined them when he did weep, to highlight this king's dereliction of Christian royal duties. Halsall is correct to remind readers that Gregory occasionally portrayed Chilperic's more equitable tendencies, but in these moments he never wept, and on the whole Gregory still memorialized him as 'a second Nero persecuting the church.'<sup>189</sup> As Gregory thundered in the oft-cited passage after Chilperic's assassination, this king distrusted bishops and ran roughshod over their authority, disrespected the saints, constantly devastated his people with civil war (a sin which, as we have seen, Gregory blamed on greed)—and most telling of all, 'showed no remorse at what he did, but rather rejoiced in it.'<sup>190</sup> Chilperic's weeping, or lack thereof, neatly confirms this image of hard-heartedness. In Gregory's account, Chilperic imprisoned his son Clovis at the youth's stepmother Fredegund's behest, upon which messengers reported that he then committed suicide in captivity. However, Gregory believed that Chilperic had murdered his son in cold blood: 'in my opinion it was the King who had delivered Clovis up to death, and yet he wept no tear.'<sup>191</sup> Gregory may have depicted Chilperic's chilling remorselessness not

<sup>188</sup> For Merovech's political plans, see Halsall, 'The preface to Book V,' 310.

<sup>189</sup> For a list of some of Chilperic's better moments, as related by Gregory, see Halsall, 'Nero and Herod?', 342-43. For Chilperic as a 'second Nero,' see Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, 46-47.

<sup>190</sup> *Hist.*, VI.46, pp. 380-81. For one such scholarly study of this passage, see Heinzelmann, 182-83.

<sup>191</sup> *Hist.*, V.39, p. 304.

only to boost Guntram's image (for Guntram had shown proper familial respect by weeping for Clovis), but also to contrast it with the sainted Sigismund, who had also committed filicide at the urging of a stepmother, but was still a model king because like David, he shed tears afterward, indicating that he had softened with genuine regret and accepted divine punishment.

Finally, the single time Gregory did depict Chilperic's tears, he carefully undercut them. As noted above, after Chilperic had his Visigothic bride, Galswinth, garrotted because of her rivalry with Fredegund, Gregory claimed that the king wept for her. While Chilperic could have had psychotic tendencies, it is far more likely (taking a leaf from Goffart's book) that Gregory portrayed the king's bizarre grief in satiric contrast to Guntram's familial respect. Gregory informed his readers that Chilperic had initially loved Galswinth, but only out of his usual greed, for 'she had brought a large dowry with her,' and even this did not prevent him from killing her and sleeping with Fredegund again shortly afterwards.<sup>192</sup> Gregory thus did not describe Chilperic's weeping to praise the king's self-reflection and reform. Just as Venantius may have purposefully omitted Chilperic from his otherwise lachrymose verse lament for Galswinth, Gregory contrasted Chilperic's absent or twisted tears with the purer emotions of Sigismund and Guntram to further emphasize this king's immoral perpetration of internecine violence and his perversion of the Christian compassion that Guntram so nobly personified in mourning. More bluntly, Gregory created his tearless Chilperic to show that rulers who obdurately abused the biblical values for which Gregory stood lacked the righteousness required of Christian rulers, and deserved to be boiled in hell.

Gregory, by placing Chilperic beside Clovis I, Sigismund or Guntram, seems to offer a straightforward manual for how weeping pertained to his episcopal conceptions of good Christian kingship. However, the moment the reader identifies a literary pattern in the *Histories*, Gregory immediately defies it. For example, even more so than Guntram (because of the former's occasional imperfections), King Theudebert I (r. 533-48) was Gregory's ultimate pious hero.<sup>193</sup> Historically, Theudebert was an outward-looking, aggressive conqueror who expanded Frankish power into Italy, minted gold coins in the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., IV.28, pp. 222-23.

<sup>193</sup> Heinzelmänn, 136. Here Heinzelmänn already noted Gregory's glorification of Theudebert and his similarity to Guntram.

imperial manner, and was even later suspected by a Byzantine writer to have planned an attack on Constantinople.<sup>194</sup> For Gregory, however, Theudebert was also ‘distinguished in every virtue. He ruled his kingdom justly, respected his bishops, was liberal to the churches, relieved the wants of the poor and distributed many benefits with piety and friendly goodwill.’<sup>195</sup> Theudebert died before Gregory’s time, and so Gregory should have been free from political restraint to concoct many flattering stories about his pious tears. Having set up Theudebert to be a major weeper, it is thus surprising that Gregory never once makes him cry.

Conversely, Gregory granted undeserved opportunities to weep to other Merovingians who insulted the church and attacked their relatives. One notable example was Childebert I (d. 558), whom Gregory portrayed, in Goffart’s words, as an ‘especially contemptible’ grasping idiot.<sup>196</sup> He and his brother Lothar plotted to murder their two young nephews before they could grow up into rivals. Lothar brutally slaughtered the first boy, but when the second child clung to Childebert in terror, ‘tears streamed down Childebert’s face’ and he begged Lothar to stop. Gregory could have made this a redeeming moment for Childebert, but when Lothar threatened to kill Childebert instead, he ‘pushed the child away’ toward Lothar’s waiting blade.<sup>197</sup> Gregory may have depicted Childebert’s weeping for no other reason than to add dramatic colour and heighten the horror of a vivid action scene, which is admittedly another of his authorial habits. Or perhaps he made Childebert weep because of some ulterior desire to make Lothar look even more despicable when he ‘climbed on his horse and rode away, showing no remorse for the slaughter.’<sup>198</sup> Or, as Goffart might argue, Gregory could have simply written in satiric disparagement of the pathetic emptiness of Merovingian kings’ impious ‘human gropings.’<sup>199</sup> This unwholesome affair seems to unravel all theories about the connection between textual tears, bishops’ struggles to promote their authority, and their ideals of Christian kingship.

However, Gregory may have subtly tied Childebert’s weeping to an episode eight chapters before, in which the king had fought an honourable (that is, not civil) war and behaved

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<sup>194</sup> Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 114.

<sup>195</sup> *Hist.*, III.25, p. 185.

<sup>196</sup> Goffart, 221-22.

<sup>197</sup> For the whole episode, see *Hist.*, III.18, p. 181.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> For Goffart’s reading of Gregory’s understated satire and deadpan descriptions of foolish and empty secular struggles, see Goffart, 180.

generously toward the church. Indeed, Wood suggests that such links are key to understanding Gregory's agenda, and that his unpredictable characterizations or non-sequitur transitions between seemingly unrelated passages actually contained a 'subtext,' or hidden meaning.<sup>200</sup> In this earlier chapter, Childebert had marched against Visigothic Spain because he heard that King Amalaric had abused his (Childebert's) sister. In the process he acquired a hoard of Arian church plate, which he did not disperse but gave to the Frankish Church.<sup>201</sup> In the *Glory of the Confessors*, Gregory further related that on his way to Spain, Childebert met the hermit Saint Eusicius and treated him with great respect. Assuming Eusicius was a pauper, Childebert offered him money, but Eusicius then advised him to save it for the truly needy. The king dutifully followed these instructions and also promised that if he were victorious in battle, he would build a church for the elderly saint.<sup>202</sup> In these two passages, Childebert fulfilled moral expectations for generosity and deference to the Church, and exhibited familial respect in a roundabout way by fighting the type of *external* warfare that Gregory approved. Therefore, Gregory may have thematically linked Childebert's good conduct here to his later tears during an otherwise unforgivable child murder in the *Histories*. According to this 'subtext,' even unsavoury kings were more likely to shed tears when they behaved well, either at the moment of weeping, or several chapters before.

This insight about Childebert also applies to Gregory's characterization of Lothar I. Despite Lothar's remorseless murder of his nephews and his attempt to overtax the churches of his realm, Gregory portrayed him as increasingly heedful of bishops and of God's will as his reign continued.<sup>203</sup> Finally, in battle with his rebellious son Chramn, Gregory depicted him as a lamenting (*plangens*) David forced by circumstance to fight his own son Absalom, rather than as a guilty fomenter of civil war.<sup>204</sup> That Gregory implied tears with the verb *plango* is corroborated by the fact that in its Latin Vulgate version, to which Gregory likely referred, this Old Testament episode specifically describes David as weeping (*flere*) (II Samuel 15:30, 18:33).<sup>205</sup> It is still possible that Gregory intended no

<sup>200</sup> Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, 58-59. See also Heinzlmann, 116-17.

<sup>201</sup> *Hist.*, III.10, pp. 170-71.

<sup>202</sup> For the whole episode, see *GC*, chap. 81, pp. 62-64.

<sup>203</sup> *Hist.*, IV.2, p. 197, IV.14-15, pp. 209-11.

<sup>204</sup> For the Latin *plangens*, see *Hist. (Latin)*, IV.20, p. 157. See also Heinzlmann, 137. Heinzlmann also remarked on Gregory's depiction of Lothar, as both a tyrant and a David.

<sup>205</sup> The Latin Vulgate version of these Bible passages can be found at 'Regum II – Chapter 15, 2 Samuel,' The Latin Vulgate Old Testament Bible, *Vulgate.Org*, accessed September 3, 2013, [http://vulgate.org/ot/2samuel\\_15.htm](http://vulgate.org/ot/2samuel_15.htm); and 'Regum II – Chapter 18, 2 Samuel,' The Latin Vulgate Old Testament Bible, *Vulgate.Org*, accessed September 3, 2013, [http://vulgate.org/ot/2samuel\\_18.htm](http://vulgate.org/ot/2samuel_18.htm).

connection between Childebert's Visigothic war or Chlothar I's increased responsiveness to the Church, and their weeping. And despite Theudebert I's goodness, his complete tearlessness also contradicts the paradigm. Nevertheless, the larger pattern still holds: Gregory most often inserted weeping in passages about royal policies or actions of which he approved, whatever the larger picture. Gregory may not have consciously utilized tears for this effect, but his condemnation of Chilperic's filicide as unrepentantly dry-eyed suggests otherwise.

### 2.3. The Political Impact of Textual Tears

So far, this analysis of royal weeping has remained strictly text-based, noting how Gregory moved kingly characters through his narrative like puppets in the service of larger moral lessons. In this regard, the *Histories* harmonize with Buc's observation that clerical authors were predisposed by an ecclesiastical worldview to present their accounts of political ritual as representations of 'higher Truth, identified with the Good (what ought to have happened), rather than fact (what actually happened).'<sup>206</sup> Therefore, Gregory may simply have claimed that Guntram wept for his nephews to identify him with the 'higher Truth' of familial cohesion that 'ought to have happened,' and denied Chilperic's tears at his son's death because he wished to 'deny [the] sacrality' (and therefore legitimacy) of Chilperic himself or his style of rule.<sup>207</sup> On the other hand, Gregory's more general interest in biblical models could explain his inclusion of weeping, rather than any deliberate effort. From this angle, Lothar's tears in battle against Chramn were not particularly important to Gregory's anti-civil war moral, but a by-product of his copying from an Old Testament scene that *did* help him make this larger argument. Historians could thus argue that tears were shed nowhere but in Gregory's writing, as a deliberate, high-flown literary trope, or as an unconscious absorption of weeping imagery from the Bible.

However, Gregory's depictions of royal tears need not solely be a liturgical habit leftover from his days at the Clermont episcopal school, or otherwise sealed from early medieval reality. Wickham has pointed out that Gregory was a moralist, and as such his narrative

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<sup>206</sup> Buc, 249.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 252-53.

could only influence others if he ‘[anchored] it in recognizable experience.’<sup>208</sup> Wickham further observed that in the *Histories*, ‘this king or queen may or may not have executed his or her opponent in this inventive way...but this is the kind of thing that people thought rulers...might well have done in [Gregory’s] society.’<sup>209</sup> His insight applies equally to tears. While Gregory’s censure probably lacked the extreme repercussions of the earlier sixth-century Burgundian episcopal ‘strike’ against King Sigismund, historians can still assess the potential impact of his rhetoric on contemporary elites. In fact, historians have uncovered clues that Gregory originally intended some of his hagiographical and historical writing for live audiences. Van Dam suggested that Gregory originally composed parts of the *Glory of the Martyrs* as sermons or homilies, since saints’ lives or passion stories were a typical component of feast-day liturgies.<sup>210</sup> Accordingly, he listed Gregory’s strategies for steering his listeners’ emotional response, including ‘verbal cues’ like set-piece dialogue between his characters or personal exhortation to the audience.<sup>211</sup> Gregory may have directed one such warning from *The Miracles of the Bishop Martin* specifically to kings. In this vignette, King Charibert died by divine wrath because of his abusive theft of property from St Martin’s church. If Gregory had meant it only for silent reading, it is difficult to understand why he included the exclamation, ‘Listen to this story all you who exercise power!’<sup>212</sup> Likewise, Halsall has marshalled convincing evidence that Gregory’s Preface to Book V, with its address ‘O King,’ may have first been a letter or sermon addressed to a Merovingian.<sup>213</sup>

If Van Dam and Halsall are correct, then Gregory may have used tears as one tactic in his persuasive arsenal for putting public pressure on his kings, just as Gillett suggested for other types of emotional expression that Brunhild had included in her diplomatic letters to the Byzantine court. So like other bishops before him, Gregory may have publicly exposed his rulers to the concept of Old Testament royal piety and repentance—in which weeping played an important part—while influencing the expectations of other powerful strongmen amongst the royal entourage in the process, whose interests the king also had to consider. Finally, Merovingian kings lived in the same Christian society as Gregory, and so some surely recognized the benefits of emulating great Old Testament heroes, just as Theodosius may have understood: they too would reign long and powerfully, and could also (re)gain

<sup>208</sup> Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 14.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Raymond Van Dam, in *GM*, xxi, xxviii.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, xx-xxi.

<sup>212</sup> *MM*, bk. 1, chap. 29, p. 221.

<sup>213</sup> Halsall, ‘The preface to Book V,’ 313-15.

divine favour by ‘watering their couches with their tears’ when diplomatic occasion demanded.

Tears are thus a helpful explanatory tool for navigating the narrative difficulties in the *Ten Books of Histories*, and for placing it in the wider context of Gallic episcopal literature. It is true that royal weeping was just one detail in Gregory’s vast moral agenda, and on some occasions it did not even fit the pattern. However, such inconsistencies must be accepted as one of the analytical perils of studying Gregory. As Wood summarized, ‘Gregory himself was not entirely consistent...different issues struck him as important at different moments.’<sup>214</sup> His idiosyncrasies should not give scholars undue anguish, for he is just one more historical source from the period, no different than Venantius, whose own inconsistencies do not cause the same worry (compare for example Venantius’ praise of Chilperic’s righteousness in his panegyric versus the king’s sinister absence from the lament for Galswinth). The *Histories* still firmly belong to the wider development of the three-part conceptual triangle linking episcopal authority, Frankish kingship, and royal weeping. In fact, Gregory looked both backward and forward along this chronology. His positive endorsement of royal weeping and use of the Old Testament linked him most strongly with Ambrose’s legacy, but his writing also carried forward the more understated approval of royal tears as a sign of the king’s Christian lack of hard-heartedness, as first expressed in Gallic consolation literature. As noted above, his depiction of Guntram’s compassionate mourning for enemy relatives also presaged the possible connection between ritual weeping and royal virtues of ‘mildness’ and clemency that Althoff flagged for the Carolingian dynasty. Finally, in his use of tears in the articulation of his desire for ‘a society...where there existed co-operation with royal government,’ Gregory was also stepping stone for the coming intensification of episcopal power in the Carolingian period, when for the first time, bishops deliberately returned to Ambrose’s philosophy of royal weeping for further inspiration in their own dealings with Emperor Louis the Pious.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Wood, ‘Individuality of Gregory,’ 30.

<sup>215</sup> Heinzelmann, 207. This insight builds from Heinzelmann’s remarks that Gregory’s writings were in general a prelude to the increased organization and authority of bishops later on in the Early Middle Ages.

### 3. Chapter 3: ‘Soften and Acquiesce’: Louis the Pious and the Penance of 833

Leaping ahead from Gregory’s world to the ninth century, this dissertation concludes with the veritable explosion of Carolingian episcopal writing about royal tears, including some shed for new reasons not encountered before. Descriptions of royal weeping became especially frequent during the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840), featuring in a tangle of textual accounts so divisive that it is difficult to reconcile their contradictions or sort through the evidence to explore the historical reality of weeping in Carolingian political practice. However, in a study unrelated to weeping itself, Simon MacLean has provided a model for navigating such challenges. In his article ‘Ritual, Misunderstanding and the Contest for Meaning,’ MacLean demonstrated that Buc and Althoff’s seemingly opposite approaches to ritual can ‘be employed in a complementary fashion.’<sup>216</sup> That is, the apparent limitations of textual opacity and authorial bias about which Buc warned actually allow scholars to reconstruct rituals-in-action and their immediate social impact, for by comparing the overlaps between contrasting written accounts of the same event, we might tease out the actors’ original intentions.<sup>217</sup> MacLean applied this approach to Charles the Fat’s outburst in the royal assembly of 873, and gleaned from the discrepancies between differing contemporary reports that though Charles intended to perform a political submission to end his insurrection against his father Louis the German, he either disregarded or did not know the necessary ritual ‘conventions,’ first neglecting to pre-negotiate it and then garbling the usual gestures of supplication so badly that he disturbed his audience instead.<sup>218</sup> MacLean then tracked how Louis the German and medieval annalists responded in a political scramble to promote divergent textual interpretations of Charles’ actions, with detractors attributing his behaviour and motives to ‘satanic possession.’<sup>219</sup>

This textual debate over Charles’ outburst was so charged because his situation was uncertain and extremely dangerous.<sup>220</sup> Charles knew from Carolingian political precedent that he was vulnerable to punishment by mutilation or death, and so did contemporary

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<sup>216</sup> MacLean, 99.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 100, 110, 113. For another contribution to the debate about textuality and reconstruction of medieval ritual as inspired by MacLean, see Pössel, 111. Pössel also argues that historians should attempt study of both ritual-in-life and in textual debate, but cautiously and with different methodologies.

<sup>220</sup> MacLean, 111.

annalists. Similarly, two generations earlier, a far more destabilizing episode had rocked the reign of Louis the Pious, when in 833, Louis' eldest son and his followers used a ceremony of public penance to remove him from the throne. After this, Louis' opponents and supporters vied to promote different reports in a similar storm of contentious textual interpretation. And as with Charles, Louis' physical gestures during the ritual, but more specifically his weeping, were central to their efforts to shape public memory of the event.

The following chapter examines the maturation of royal weeping as a concept in the Carolingian ninth century. It first proposes a positive correlation between the heightened atmosphere of religious reform and moral anxiety during Louis' reign, as Mayke de Jong has elucidated, and the increased diversity of royal weeping in contemporary texts and the final fading of classical warnings against elite male tears. In this process, royal mourning not only represented the Christian virtues of familial respect, as seen already in Gregory's *Histories*, and the 'mildness' and compassion that Althoff noted as popular in Carolingian political rhetoric more generally, but also merged with Ambrose's narrative of royal penitence so completely that in one text, Louis' weeping crossed into an entirely new spiritual arena hitherto reserved for clerics or holy men. Secondly, this chapter then adapts MacLean's dual strategy to the crisis of 833, first comparing the contradictory textual reports that orbit Louis' penance in order to demonstrate how tears provide a benchmark for gauging the political biases of the writers, and how the rebels were able to transform royal weeping from a form of episcopal praise or exhortation into a tool of the opposition. Lastly, similarly to MacLean, this chapter then compares these differing accounts of the penance with information that historians have already gathered about rituals of political submission, in order to explore Louis' original intentions and the possibility that he might have shed actual tears. This final investigation then illuminates the practical, and not just ideological, purposes of tears in Frankish political struggles and Louis' agency as the weeper himself.

### 3.1. Louis the Pious' Reign: the Religious Atmosphere and Royal Tears

Before investigating Louis' tears, it is necessary to review recent historical scholarship on Carolingian attitudes towards weeping in general, and on their royal and episcopal concern with collective morality and all-encompassing Christian reform, which together would

create an environment in which royal weeping was not just highly valued, but also a factor in political strife. Karen Wagner's study of tears in Carolingian penitential *ordines* demonstrates that general concepts had not changed since Cassian linked compunction with tears and Gregory the Great wrote in the *Regula Pastoralis* that God required tearful penance. Discussing a relevant section of Alcuin's *Liber de virtutibus et vitiis*, Wagner showed how the Carolingians still defined compunction as a feeling of humility necessarily accompanied by tears.<sup>221</sup> Wagner also noted that penitentials in use at that time still prescribed tears, not only because the confessor would be otherwise unable to tell if the penitent's remorse was sincere, but also because weeping more effectively appeased God, who 'might mercifully acknowledge [the penitent's] tears and groans.'<sup>222</sup> Carolingian expectations had not changed; penitential tears were still understood as an external sign of internal sincerity, whoever shed them.

Nevertheless, Mayke de Jong has identified sweeping changes in the religious and political tenor of late eighth- and early ninth-century Francia that distinguished Carolingian 'political theory and practice' under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious from previous generations, mainly driven by a heightened and genuine fear in elite circles that 'divine retribution [was] the inevitable consequence of sin.'<sup>223</sup> As a result, the kings and their bishops cultivated a shared sense of 'accountability to God' as moral guardians of the kingdom responsible for its religious correction, and though Gregory of Tours had already 'envisaged a total penetration of the *ecclesia* in all domains of secular politics,' de Jong suggested that Charlemagne was the first Frankish king to transform this vision into determined secular policy.<sup>224</sup> For example, legislation from his reign outlines the official imposition of 'large-scale acts of collective expiation' whenever divine punishment (i.e. natural disaster or invasion) befell the people for their perceived sins.<sup>225</sup> Louis continued his father's efforts, and during his reign, ecclesiastical and secular leadership were both viewed as a 'divinely bestowed "ministry,"' with the king's personal morality deemed an especially crucial part of this equation for keeping the empire in God's good graces.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Wagner, 210.

<sup>222</sup> *The Gelasian Sacramentary: Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae*, ed. with introduction, critical notes and appendix H.A. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), bk. I, chap. XXXVIII, p. 65, quoted and translated in Wagner, 210. For Wagner's discussion of this source and others, see Wagner, 208-10.

<sup>223</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 3-4.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-5, 116.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 154-56.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5; and de Jong, *PH*, 49-50.

Secondly, de Jong suggested that this royal and episcopal concern with collective morality paralleled an effort to regularize religious practice according to supposedly purer early Christian precedent.<sup>227</sup> Patristic texts were becoming increasingly available, and in this process the ninth-century literati rediscovered writings on Theodosius' penance at Milan, and applied Ambrose's imperial (and ultimately Old Testament) model to their own idealization of rulership.<sup>228</sup> In the year of Louis' ascension, his bishops also advocated for a 'return to the so-called canonical penance of Late Antiquity' by conciliar decree, a public ritual that excluded penitents from full participation in secular life *forever* (albeit at odds with Theodosius' example).<sup>229</sup> A Carolingian brand of public penance already existed for crimes 'affecting the entire community,' but de Jong has noted that this version owed more to the inherited tradition of 'Merovingian monastic exile,' such as Sigismund undertook in Gregory's *Histories*, and was not always permanent.<sup>230</sup> Therefore, she argued that the bishops' supposed revival of 'canonical' penance was instead an 'invention of tradition,' the grafting of one Late Antique stricture on an otherwise Frankish idiom.<sup>231</sup> However, de Jong's scholarship also shows that their improvisation was nevertheless important, because at this time the bishops expressed new confidence in their moral ministry 'as a cohesive and corporate body,' and because of their role as official administrators of public penance, this collective sense of duty and their pseudo-Late Antique 'invention' would have grave repercussions for Louis in the rebellion of 833.<sup>232</sup> What de Jong and other historians have not analyzed, however, is how the ideal of royal tears evolved in tandem with this new Carolingian zeitgeist, both reflecting and reinforcing the broader changes in conceptions of kingship and episcopal authority that she identified.

This acutely pious and self-searching political environment fostered a textual tradition of royal tears that was more varied and lachrymose than the preceding Gallic and Frankish foundation upon which it built. As Cooper noted with the late Anglo-Saxons, Frankish royal tears were understood as a sign of the king's moral fibre, and for the first time, Frankish writers returned *directly* to Ambrose's paradigm in their depictions of Louis as a weeping Christian champion. This can be seen in accounts of his self-imposed penance of 822, an episode that scholars frequently visit, though not specifically for its tears. By 822, Louis had enemies, for his nephew Bernard of Italy had died after being blinded in

<sup>227</sup> de Jong, PH, 36; and de Jong, PS, 232.

<sup>228</sup> de Jong, PS, 6, 122, 180.

<sup>229</sup> de Jong, PH, 33.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.; and de Jong, PS, 232.

<sup>231</sup> de Jong, PS, 232.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.; and de Jong, PH, 32, 39-41.

punishment for rebellion, and Louis had also ruffled feathers by forcing his half-brothers in monastic confinement at the same time.<sup>233</sup> Around 840, the Astronomer, an anonymous (but probably clerical) biographer supportive of Louis, described how he ‘[imitated] the example of the emperor Theodosius...[and] accepted a penance of his own volition,’ taking responsibility for his mistreatment of Bernard and others in order to ease political resentments and placate God, for his crimes were also deemed spiritually offensive.<sup>234</sup> De Jong has outlined in more detail how Louis’ penance mimicked that of Theodosius: though public it was not permanent, and Louis diverted the threat of divine wrath from his kingdom by humbly repenting his mistakes, which likewise increased ‘his prestige as a Christian emperor.’<sup>235</sup> The Astronomer did not explicitly state whether Louis wept like Theodosius, but because Carolingian writers had access to Cassiodorus’ account of Theodosius’ penance in the *Tripartite History*, which also contained parts of Theodoret’s melodramatically weepy version, the Astronomer may have expected his readers to assume Louis’ tears.<sup>236</sup> Thegan, an auxiliary bishop of Trier, wrote an equally flattering biography, in which Louis did ‘[weep] with great sorrow’ when he heard of Bernard’s death, after which he sought public penance from his bishops.<sup>237</sup> It is natural, given the Carolingians’ interest in Late Antique precedent, that Thegan also carried forward Ambrose’s emphasis on the glorifying powers of royal penitential weeping in his description of Louis’ admirable fulfilment of his ‘divinely bestowed “ministry.”’

Sources from Louis’ reign also frequently depict both him and Charlemagne mourning effusively. Though the Carolingians were aware of the classical warning against tearful male grief, by Louis’ reign it echoed faintly in only two texts, and simply served to reiterate the original link between weeping and virtuous Christian rule that episcopal consolation authors had begun to formulate three centuries earlier, and by extension, to express the conceptual heir of this ideal, the royal ‘kindness and mildness’ that Althoff stated was often praised in contemporary texts and potentially displayed with tears.<sup>238</sup> The first reference to mourning appears in an epic praise poem that a cleric named Ermoldus

<sup>233</sup> For a summary of Louis’ dealings with his relatives, see de Jong, *PS*, 28-29.

<sup>234</sup> Astronomer, chap. 35, p. 262. For Louis’ dual purpose, see also de Jong, *PS*, 36, 124. For the Astronomer’s background and the date of composition, see Thomas F.X. Noble, in Astronomer, 219-20.

<sup>235</sup> de Jong, *PH*, 49; and de Jong, *PS*, 122. The idea that voluntary humiliation resulted in political exaltation goes back to Christian soteriology, as Koziol has explained (see above, p. 33).

<sup>236</sup> For Carolingian access to Cassiodorus’ account, see MacLean, 105. See also Courtney Booker, *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 142-43.

<sup>237</sup> Thegan, chap. 23, p. 206. For Thegan’s career, see de Jong, *PS*, 73.

<sup>238</sup> Althoff, ‘Ira Regis,’ 65, 74.

Nigellus wrote for Louis the Pious in the 820s, perhaps in a bid for release from political exile.<sup>239</sup> Ermoldus narrated that when news of Charlemagne's death reached Louis, 'the good king...wept and shed tears for his father.'<sup>240</sup> He was then interrupted by his minister Bigo, who 'urged him to dry his cheeks...' "You have other business to attend now," [Bigo] said...' "these things happen; this fate binds humans."' <sup>241</sup> Thomas Noble has outlined stylistic evidence indicating that Ermoldus modelled his writing after Ovid, and that he was also aware of classical authors such as Virgil and Suetonius, and of Venantius Fortunatus, all influences that bespeak the Carolingian literary absorption of 'ancient traditions of biography and panegyric.'<sup>242</sup> The Roman discourse of male mourning clearly hitched a ride in the process. However, Seneca's or the earlier Gallic bishops' genuine disapproval is absent from Bigo's consolatory dialogue. Though weeping did distract Louis from 'other business,' Ermoldus attributed it not to a detrimental lack of control, but to his goodness, as evidenced by his filial piety: 'the good king...wept...for his father.'

Attrition of this classical trope is also found in Einhard's biography of Charlemagne, where he defended royal mourning. Around the same time that Ermoldus composed his epic, Einhard described Charlemagne's grief at the loss of his children and the death of the pope, whom he considered a friend: he was 'driven to tears by the deaths of his sons and daughter' and '[w]hen the death of the Roman pontiff Hadrian... was announced to him, he wept as if he had lost a brother or a deeply cherished son.'<sup>243</sup> Einhard seemed to preface this description with an apology, stating that Charlemagne wept '[d]espite the preeminent greatness of his spirit,' but then countered potential criticism by attributing to the emperor's tears the admirable virtues of faithful friendship and 'affection [which] was no less one of his distinguishing traits.'<sup>244</sup> Like Ermoldus, Einhard exhibited Roman literary influences; he modelled the *Vita* on Suetonius' imperial biographies in order to present Charlemagne as '[measuring] up to classical, and secular, standards of conduct and elegance.'<sup>245</sup> Nevertheless, Einhard was not just a courtier with wholly secular prejudices; he was also a lay abbot and a deeply religious man who wrote a treatise on prayer and translated relics from Italy.<sup>246</sup> In a related vein, Rachel Stone has observed that Carolingian moralists had abandoned the ancient derision of 'immoral or inadequate

<sup>239</sup> Noble, in Ermoldus, 119-21.

<sup>240</sup> Ermoldus, 144-45.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Noble, in Ermoldus, 120, 124.

<sup>243</sup> Einhard, chap. 19, pp. 38-39. For the time of composition of the *Vita*, see Noble, in Einhard, 11-12.

<sup>244</sup> Einhard, chap. 19, pp. 38-39.

<sup>245</sup> Noble, in Einhard, 15.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

behaviour' as effeminate.<sup>247</sup> Thus, as Cooper noted similarly for later Anglo-Saxon kings, Ermoldus and Einhard did not urge their rulers to act virile by swallowing their tears. Instead, they inverted the old classical injunction by highlighting their weeping kings' fulfilment of the same virtues of royal tender-heartedness that sixth-century Gallic bishops had pioneered, which Gregory of Tours then carried forward by portraying Guntram's mourning in order to advocate for the Christian ideal of familial respect and deference.

In fact, Ermoldus' epic and Einhard's *Vita Karoli* are best understood in comparison with another depiction of Louis' grief by the Astronomer, who intensified the positive connotation of mourning by blending it conceptually with the tradition of royal penitence that Ambrose had begun, two types of kingly weeping that had hitherto been separate in Frankish episcopal writing. One of Louis' most troubling challengers was his cousin Wala, who had been influential in Charlemagne's court and seems to have been a major player in rebellions against Louis in the early 830s.<sup>248</sup> But when Louis received news of Wala's death and that of other political rivals in a plague, the Astronomer reported that he did not 'dismiss the dead as enemies, but he struck his breast with his fist, his eyes filled with tears, and with deep groans he prayed to God to shed His grace upon them.'<sup>249</sup> Without discussing his weeping, de Jong attributed Louis' response to his 'divine *clementia* and *temperantia*,' and Althoff might likewise ascribe it to the Astronomer's effort to showcase Louis as a 'patient, mild, and ever forgiving sovereign.'<sup>250</sup> While they are both correct, Louis' dramatic mourning also had a deeper significance more specific to the Astronomer, which must be explicated in order to understand Louis' tears in this instance and their connection to Ermoldus and Einhard's more reserved tack.

Similarly to de Jong's thesis on the Carolingians' unique concern with collective morality, Noble suggested that both the Astronomer's and Thegan's biographies of Louis '[reflected] the views of the new Carolingian generation' that the Emperor, as the 'hypostatized guarantor of the universal Christian order,' must possess 'the moral qualities necessary to the achievement of the divinely constituted imperial mission.'<sup>251</sup> Noble's assessment also harmonizes with the Astronomer's own statement that Louis' pious service to Christendom

<sup>247</sup> Stone, *Morality and Masculinity*, 317.

<sup>248</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 20, 197, 209.

<sup>249</sup> Astronomer, chap. 56, p. 291.

<sup>250</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 87; and Althoff, 'Ira Regis,' 65. The italics are from de Jong's text.

<sup>251</sup> Noble, in Astronomer, 22-23; and Noble, in Thegan, 192-93.

‘proclaimed that he was not only a king but also a priest.’<sup>252</sup> De Jong did note that this comparison is not new; as already discussed above, Venantius compared the Merovingians to Melchisedech, the Old Testament priest-king, and Gregory of Tours praised Guntram for organizing official acts of atonement to combat an epidemic, as though he were a bishop.<sup>253</sup> Judith George also argued that Venantius was the first in Gaul to raise the moral bar for kingly behaviour from respectfully pious to downright Christlike.<sup>254</sup> Nevertheless, the Astronomer also took these concepts to a new extreme by pushing Louis so far along the clerical spectrum that in his tearful mourning of Wala, he actually exhibited a new royal behaviour previously reserved for holy men alone.

This type of clerical weeping conflated the seemingly separate concepts of compassionate mourning and tearful penitence. In her study of medieval emotion, Rosenwein suggested that the effusively tearful prayer of saints broadcasted their ‘overwhelming charity and devotion’ and their intercessory powers for the needy.<sup>255</sup> Though Late Roman in date and distinct in genre from the Astronomer’s biography, an early example is found in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris, in which he praised a cleric named Constantius for mourning the destruction of Clermont, exclaiming, ‘[w]hat tears you shed for the buildings, brought down by the flames...as if you had been the father of us all! What grief you showed at the sight of fields buried under the bones of the unburied dead.’<sup>256</sup> As Rosenwein summarized from the *Moralia in Job*, Gregory the Great later defined similar clerical sentiments as *condescencio*, in which the wiser holy man directed his sympathies ‘downward...to weaker brethren’ and grieved with them in order to pull them from their moral morass by means of empathetic spiritual counsel.<sup>257</sup> By the eighth century, these clerical tears of condescending intercession or sympathy had merged with those of penitence, as seen in a Carolingian penitential text recommending that ‘[b]ishops and priests, when they receive the confessions of the faithful, ought to humble themselves and pray with groans of sorrow and with tears, not only for their own offences but also for those of all Christians.’<sup>258</sup> While episcopal authors of royal tears only gradually worked to unite the concepts of grief and repentant weeping under a single moral umbrella, in seventh- and eighth-century clerical *condescencio* they already overlapped.

<sup>252</sup> Astronomer, chap. 19, pp. 242-43.

<sup>253</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 83.

<sup>254</sup> George, *LP*, 61.

<sup>255</sup> Rosenwein, *EM*, 178.

<sup>256</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris, ‘To his friend Constantius,’ in Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 239.

<sup>257</sup> For a summary, see Rosenwein, *EM*, 85.

<sup>258</sup> *Poenitentiale Pseudo-Beda*, in *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, ed. Hermann Wasserschleben (Halle: C. Graeger, 1851), 251, quoted and discussed in Wagner, 212.

The Astronomer was thus the first to adapt the virtue of *condescencio*, hitherto the purview of priests and saints, to better portray Louis as the priest-like guardian of Frankish Christendom, and in doing so, completed the conceptual imbrication of royal weeping in mourning and penitence. This reading of the Astronomer is corroborated by Peter Brown's independent exploration of a similar fifth-century Eastern Roman concept of imperial *sunkatabasis*, the 'condescension' or 'bending down of compassion' through which an ideal Christian emperor succoured his people, just 'as the rich stooped to hear the cry of the poor and as God himself had once stooped' through Christ's suffering to grant mankind immortality.<sup>259</sup> In the West, though classical authors first warned elite Romans that mourning distracted them from their real work, Louis' moment of *condescencio* demonstrated that such tears had now *become* the king's work: as a great Christian leader responsible for his realm's salvation, Louis' not only showed Christian familial pietas in mourning his cousin Wala, but like a priest also condescended in a last bid of intercession that 'God to shed His grace upon [these enemies]' who had died in their sin.

Returning to Ermoldus' and Einhard's more classical presentation of royal tears, historians rightly remark on Einhard's and the Astronomer's different narrative purposes (Einhard's Charlemagne was a secular warlord writ large, while the Astronomer made Louis almost saintly), but their writings were all products of the same Carolingian zeitgeist of religious fervor and reform.<sup>260</sup> In the glare of Louis' glorious tears, both in the 822 penance and his demonstration of *condescencio*, it is clear that both Ermoldus and Einhard wrote in continuity with preceding developments in episcopal rhetoric on royal weeping, and were not attempting to resurrect masculine romanitas in their own depictions of imperial mourning. All the Carolingian weeping episodes discussed above embody the sum total of centuries of episcopal ideals for royal tears, from the first emphases on Christian compassion in Gallic consolation literature, to Theodosius' obedient acceptance of episcopal judgement and Guntram's lack of hard-heartedness toward hostile relatives. By Louis' reign, the stoic strain of Frankish clerical exhortation was sputtering out, replaced as the Christian topos of royal tears came to its full and diverse conceptual maturity in the Astronomer and Thegan's lionization of Louis as the ultimate ecclesiastical dream-king.

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<sup>259</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 154-55.

<sup>260</sup> For the differences between Einhard's versus Thegan and the Astronomer's biographies, see Airlie, 'The history of emotions,' 239; and Noble, in Einhard, 17.

## 3.2. The Rebellion of 833: Tears in Carolingian Textual Debate

However, these idyllic tears also reveal the biographers' nagging unease, and were part of a flurry of textual debate similar to that which MacLean identified after Charles the Fat's botched submission ritual. Therefore, historians can also scrutinize Louis' tears not just as a product of admittedly partisan episcopal praise, but for the clues they betray about each writer's stance on the broader political disputes that eventually led to Louis' public penance and 'deposition' (for lack of a better word) in 833. These Frankish authorial habits presaged Cooper's observations that writers of the late Anglo-Saxon period used royal weeping to flag extraordinary situations or sanitize political tensions, and in the Carolingian case, tears were symbols of political goodwill and legitimacy that Louis' supporters used to whitewash controversies that tarnished his reputation as the faultless Christian guardian of the realm. For example, Thegan anticipated the *Encomiast's* idealization of Cnut's reunion with Harald by describing that when Louis left for Aquitaine after his coronation in 813, Charlemagne showered his son with gifts and 'they embraced and kissed and began to weep on account of the joy of their love.'<sup>261</sup> But as de Jong explained, Thegan wrote this heart-warming tale of 'seamless continuity between father and son' in order to downplay unflattering truths about the succession: Louis was never Charlemagne's first choice, and had driven his father's 'inner circle,' including Wala, from their positions when he took power.<sup>262</sup> By emphasizing Charlemagne and Louis' tearful goodwill, Thegan also skirted the fact that in blinding Bernard, Louis ignored Charlemagne's parting admonition against harming royal relatives, which became a primary complaint against Louis in the 833 rebellion.<sup>263</sup> From this angle, Louis' penitential tears in 822 and his later mourning for Wala also served the same purpose: to apply de Jong's assessment of the 822 penance itself more specifically to weeping, Louis' biographers inserted his tears as '[a] magnificent gesture' also intended to 'silence any criticism of Louis's heavy-handed treatment of his kinsmen.'<sup>264</sup> Royal weeping thus provides the historian with a roadmap through Carolingian sources, for by punctuating areas of political controversy, tears betray the writers' efforts to promulgate their own partisan viewpoints, usually in defence of the king's image.

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<sup>261</sup> Thegan, chap. 6, p. 197.

<sup>262</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 19-21.

<sup>263</sup> Thegan, chap. 6, p. 197. I owe these insights about Bernard and Charlemagne's exhortation to Dr. Stuart Airlie. For the rebels' complaints about Louis' abuses, see *Relatio*, 275-77.

<sup>264</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 124.

Because weeping inhabited the flashpoints of political debate, tears therefore played their most pivotal and most unusual role yet in the textual battle that followed Louis' public penance and removal from power by his eldest son Lothar and a group of rebellious bishops in 833. The unprecedented nature and tensions of this crisis led the rebel bishops to break with centuries of episcopal tradition by using tears not to exalt or even exhort Louis, but as a weapon against him. Stuart Airlie reminds us that while the main complaints against Louis stemmed from cumulative dissatisfaction with his policies and mistreatment of lesser magnates (including Lothar), contemporaries also sincerely feared that the emperor had offended God, and to quote de Jong, these anxieties caused 'the machinery of the penitential state' to '[overheat]' and '[spin] out of control.'<sup>265</sup> Louis' policy of cooperation with the episcopacy as joint spiritual helmsmen, and the subsequent elite fixations on sin, royal morality, and collective atonement combined in a potent ideological cocktail that backfired on him 'when he fell short of these ideals.'<sup>266</sup> And for the first time, the disappointed bishops no longer had to rely on verbal threats of divine wrath in attempts to discipline their ruler, as their Gallic and Frankish predecessors had done, for as de Jong further observed, the episcopal 'experiment' of permanent public penance, 'recently infused with the authority of the ancient church,' could now be 'turned against the ruler himself.'<sup>267</sup> What remains to be studied is how this combination of moral panic and episcopal experimentation with penance caused the concept of royal tears to spin out of control too. In using tears to undermine a king, the rebel bishops unwittingly turned weeping into a political football in the textual debate that raged after Louis' dethronement.

Records of the penance divide into two groups: those in favour of the deposition, and those against it. Shortly after the event, the bishops who presided over the penance produced a report confirming the legitimacy of their act, now known as the *Relatio* of 833.<sup>268</sup> In it they described their initial visit to Louis in captivity, in which they righteously 'admonished' him for having 'offended God, scandalised the holy church, and thoroughly disordered the people entrusted to him,' a criticism which they claimed Louis 'took...to heart,' willingly promising that 'he would acquiesce' and 'accept an episcopal judgement

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<sup>265</sup> Stuart Airlie, 'Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II,' *Past & Present* 161, no. 1 (November 1998): 6; and de Jong, *PS*, 249.

<sup>266</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 249. See also Booker, *Past Convictions*, 180-81. Booker wrote similarly that the politico-religious atmosphere of reform and joint ministry that Louis helped create backfired on him in 833.

<sup>267</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 234.

<sup>268</sup> *Relatio*, 271n1.

in the manner of a penitent.<sup>269</sup> He was moreover ‘joyful for so salubrious an admonition.’<sup>270</sup> The bishops then recorded that Louis *came* to the church (i.e. by his own volition), prostrating himself before the altar on a hair shirt and weeping as he confessed his crimes in front of the assembly, after which he removed his *cingulum militiae* and royal clothing in exchange for penitential garb.<sup>271</sup> The bishops finished with a declaration that Louis’ penance would have permanent effect and forever bar him from kingship.<sup>272</sup>

Agobard of Lyons’ *Cartula*, significantly the sole individual testament of these bishops to survive, echoed the *Relatio*.<sup>273</sup> Agobard described Louis’ self-humiliation and remorse in even more emotive terms. Louis was apparently ‘reawakened by the contrition of a humble heart’ and while prostrated, ‘asked for forgiveness...requested penance, and promised to fulfil most willingly the humiliation imposed on him...which he did not reject, but accepted in all respects.’<sup>274</sup> He removed his sword belt himself and confessed his crimes four times ‘in a clear voice, in floods of tears...with a remorseful mind.’<sup>275</sup> These two reports clearly cast Louis as a willing participant in his own removal from power, both in mind and outward behaviour.

Once Louis regained power, however, other authors emphasized his duress in the penance of 833, and at the same time, they omitted weeping altogether—but this time their silence was meant to help rather than excoriate the king, quite unlike Venantius’ omission of Chilperic from his verse lament for Galswinth some 250 years before.<sup>276</sup> Bishop Thegan, writing his *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris* sometime between 835 and 838, was supportive of the emperor and made short work of the penance, stating only that Lothar’s faction captured Louis after a showdown on the battlefield.<sup>277</sup> While Louis was in captivity, Lothar and the assembled bishops ‘goaded’ him ‘harshly’ and ‘ordered him to go to a monastery and to spend the rest of his days there.’<sup>278</sup> Louis however ‘refused and did not consent to their wish.’<sup>279</sup> The Astronomer fleshed out Thegan’s account further. Before

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 273-74.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 274, 277.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>273</sup> *Cartula*, 277n27.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> For de Jong’s general summary that Louis’ supporters’ emphasized his duress, see de Jong, PH, 30.

<sup>277</sup> Noble, in Thegan, 190; and Thegan, chap. 42, p. 211.

<sup>278</sup> Thegan, chap. 43, p. 211.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

the penance, the Astronomer reported that Lothar kept Louis imprisoned in the monastery of St.-Médard in Soissons.<sup>280</sup> He made no mention of the bishops' initial admonitory visit to Louis, and instead related that the assembly at nearby Compiègne condemned Louis to 'irrevocable' public penance 'although [he was] absent, unheard, unconfessed, and untried.'<sup>281</sup> Lothar and his followers then 'compelled [Louis] to remove his arms before the body of St. Médard' and 'dressed him in penitential garb and took him away under heavy guard to a certain house.'<sup>282</sup> At no point in Thegan or the Astronomer's narratives did Louis weep as Agobard and his fellow bishops claimed.

The *Annals of St-Bertin* were equally supportive of Louis, and likewise emphasized his duress in an entry probably written sometime shortly after the event.<sup>283</sup> Lothar and his supporters 'harassed [Louis] for so long that they forced him to lay aside his weapons and change his garb to that of a penitent, driving him into the gates of the Holy Church,' after which Louis remained imprisoned 'against his will' under Lothar's watch.<sup>284</sup> Still in captivity in 834, Louis was continuously pressured to 'voluntarily' undergo monastic conversion, which he repeatedly refused on the grounds that 'he had no real power over his own actions.'<sup>285</sup> Finally, Nithard, who wrote his *Histories* in the early 840s for Charles the Bald, avoided outright mention of penance altogether and stated only that 'malcontents' drove Lothar to rebel against Louis, but that the Frankish people and Louis' other sons became so ashamed afterwards that they agreed to restore the emperor to his imperium.<sup>286</sup> Once again, tears remain unmentioned.

In all these texts, weeping was either emphasized or conspicuously absent. It thus provides a yardstick by which to measure the narrator's political stance on the penance. In passing mention, de Jong has already identified how the rebel bishops used weeping in this interpretative tug-of-war. They knew that the supposed permanence of Louis' penance was just 'a novelty dressed up as ancient canonical tradition' and thus a risky political move

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<sup>280</sup> Astronomer, chap. 48, pp. 281-82.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 49, p. 282.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> Janet L. Nelson, in *AB*, 6.

<sup>284</sup> *AB*, a. 833, pp. 27-28.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Bernhard Walter Scholz, introduction to *Histories*, by Nithard, in *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories*, trans. Bernhard Walter Scholz with Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), 21, 23, 25; and Nithard, *Histories*, in Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 133-34.

should the king rally.<sup>287</sup> Therefore in the *Relatio*, they ‘aimed to establish one interpretation of what happened...as the authoritative and irrefutable reading of events’ and to avoid ‘technical mistakes that would render Louis’s conversion invalid.’<sup>288</sup> One such technicality de Jong identified was Louis’ free will, because forced penance would be void.<sup>289</sup> In order to counter potential claims of duress after the fact, the *Relatio* and *Cartula* therefore emphasized that Louis *wanted* the punishment; for example, Louis ‘requested penance’ or was ‘joyful for so salubrious an admonition.’ And also because the Carolingian Church still required penitents to prove their sincerity and obedience by weeping, de Jong briefly stated that ‘it was crucial to supporters and opponents alike that the emperor’s tears and gestures of contrition were genuine.’<sup>290</sup> This is certainly true of the rebels, but de Jong mistook a crucial change in the intentions of Louis’ supporters. For a single moment, no matter how tempting it was to make Louis more saintly, the Astronomer, Thegan, and other loyal writers abandoned their usual habits and militantly omitted the king’s tears in order to stress his coercion and therefore the illegitimacy of the entire situation. In overlooking this detail on tears, de Jong also elided the fact that by using the concept of weeping to dethrone rather than exalt or simply admonish Louis, the rebel bishops had taken the ideological edifice of royal tears that the Frankish episcopacy had cultivated for centuries to its extreme.

### 3.3. Tears Outside the Text?: An Exploration of Possibilities

So far this analysis of Carolingian royal weeping has proceeded within the texts, in an examination of how Louis’ tears served as a symbol in the agendas of the episcopacy and other clerically-minded biographers and annalists, after the penance itself was performed. However, the fact that Louis’ tears were so controversial to these writers indicates that royal weeping had some basis in social reality. This prompts the historian to ask the question: what if Louis did weep during his penance of 833? Why would he have done so, especially if he were not so swept away by penitential fervour as his opponents claimed? What did he intend to communicate with his tears, regardless of how others misread them? Though this endeavour remains necessarily tentative, possible answers may be found in the similarities that other historians have identified between rituals of public penance and

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<sup>287</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 49, 235.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> de Jong, *PH*, 41-42.

<sup>290</sup> de Jong, *PS*, 245.

political submission. Utilizing MacLean's strategy again, one can then compare conflicting details from different accounts of 833 with modern historical knowledge of medieval ritual in order to make an educated statement about Louis' possible intentions.

Crucial to this investigation is Koziol's observation that the parameters of medieval political rituals were not fixed, and that this flexibility was 'essential' to the changing, momentary needs of the participants.<sup>291</sup> Likewise, Pössel stressed that 'ritual never [did] anything' on its own, but reflected the agency of those involved.<sup>292</sup> Because the 'machinery of the penitential state' had itself gone haywire, causing tears to evolve from an episcopal means of exhortation into a rebel justification for dethronement, Louis could also capitalize on the fluidity of ritual in order to exercise what little agency he possessed in a situation where his options were limited, the stakes were high, and the consequences of mistakes could have been mortal. Courtney Booker and de Jong both suggested that Louis may have mistaken the proceedings for a re-run of his voluntary 822 penance, which had not removed his power but enhanced it, or tried to strategically steer the event in this direction.<sup>293</sup> This is one plausible explanation for his tears. However, Louis may have wept for more immediate, less ideological reasons: to communicate his desire for political reconciliation, but also to prevent an even more permanent removal, such as that of his eyes or even his head, the latter which did indeed happen to another weeping, vanquished Frankish king who had faced forced conversion in the Merovingian era.

By weeping, Louis may have banked upon the conceptual overlap not with his 822 penance, but on the similarities between public penance and liturgicized political submission that Koziol and other scholars of ritual gesture have outlined. The ritual parallels are three-fold: 1) in basic format and appearance, 2) the requirement of pre-negotiation, and 3) the expectation that the angered, dominant lord would respond mercifully to his suppliant's tears, just as a penitent's tears appeased God. According to Koziol, the first crossover began when Louis the Pious demanded that vanquished rebels prostrate themselves in a penitential format for his forgiveness in public assemblies.<sup>294</sup> By the eleventh century, performers of military submission or surrender—known then as

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<sup>291</sup> Koziol, 7-8.

<sup>292</sup> Pössel, 116.

<sup>293</sup> Booker, *Past Convictions*, 159, 181; and de Jong, *PS*, 231.

<sup>294</sup> Koziol, 177-78.

*deditio*—also went barefoot and dressed themselves in sackcloth like public penitents.<sup>295</sup>

In the *Relatio* and Agobard's *Cartula*, Louis the Pious' comportment followed these shared formulae.

In his own analysis of a well-known eleventh-century royal penance, Timothy Reuter has shown that these structural similarities between the rituals of *deditio* and public penance were in fact deliberate, and lent such encounters a useful flexibility that allowed participants to claim from the ritual whichever meaning suited them best politically.<sup>296</sup> Here Reuter discussed Pope Gregory VII's account of Henry IV's 'symbolic self-humiliation' of 1077, in which this ruler stood dressed in sackcloth and barefoot in the snow outside the fortress of Canossa to persuade pope to lift his excommunication.<sup>297</sup> Pope Gregory stated that Henry did penance 'of his own accord and without any show of hostility or defiance,' and 'did not cease with many tears to beseech apostolic health and comfort.'<sup>298</sup> Reuter argued that what the pope chose to portray as a public penance was nevertheless not technically so, for Henry IV regained his throne afterwards, and contemporary documents indicate concerns that such a penance would permanently bar him from secular office, as we saw similarly in the Carolingian period.<sup>299</sup> Instead, Reuter suggested Henry might have performed *deditio*, though this time to an ecclesiastical rather than a secular lord.<sup>300</sup> Echoing Koziol, Reuter further argued that historians' efforts to distinguish *deditio* and public penance may be 'meaningless,' for 'nobles were, in a sense, penitents...who had offended politically' against the divine order.<sup>301</sup> This overlap allowed Henry and Pope Gregory to interpret the event according to their separate needs; Henry was released from anathema and returned to rule, while Gregory eased the danger posed by his angry 'penitent's' army.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Timothy Reuter, 'Contextualising Canossa: excommunication, penance, surrender, reconciliation,' in *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160, 160n61, drawing on Althoff, *Spielregeln*.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-64.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>298</sup> Gregory VII, 'To the German Princes, Giving an Account of Canossa,' in *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: Selected Letters from the Registrum*, trans. E. Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 111-12, quoted in Reuter, 'Contextualising Canossa,' 157.

<sup>299</sup> Reuter, 'Contextualising Canossa,' 157-59.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 161-62.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 162, 165.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-64.

A second overlap between penance and political submission was the requirement for pre-negotiation or advance planning, which as MacLean suggested, Charles the Fat magnificently failed to do. Althoff has explained that before political submissions were ritually staged in public, the terms of surrender were first agreed upon privately, in freer language.<sup>303</sup> Trusted intermediaries were a necessary component of pre-negotiation because they both appeased and ensured the dominant party's approval of the terms, without which the surrendering party was left vulnerable to capital punishment.<sup>304</sup> Intriguingly, pre-negotiation may also have characterized Theodosius' public penance, as Theodoret's account suggests. Theodoret's version was admittedly embellished, but he included a character named Rufin, 'the controller of the palace,' who facilitated Theodosius' penance by trotting back and forth from emperor to bishop and assuaging Ambrose's initial wrath.<sup>305</sup> Rufin's role as intermediary may be imaginary or simply unique to Theodosius' situation, but public penitential spectacles would have still required careful coordination in advance.

Thirdly, Koziol has discussed how just as a public penitent hoped to appease God by humiliating himself, a surrendering power-holder also communicated his sincerity and lack of obduracy to the offended secular lord with 'humble words and the adoption of a liturgical tone,' and physical gestures of self-abasement, like kneeling or prostrating.<sup>306</sup> This act then pressured secular lords to respond with mercy, because if a lord rejected such a proper, conciliatory submission, he risked appearing despotic and 'unchristian.'<sup>307</sup> In such dangerous encounters, weeping may thus have had real-life utility as well as textual significance, for along with other gestures of submission, a cornered power holder could weep in order to ritually communicate his 'mildness'—not from the graceful position of authority that Althoff assumed—but in sincere compliance and willingness to reconcile on his opponent's terms.

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<sup>303</sup> Reuter, review of *Spielregeln*, 43. See also Koziol, 2-4. Koziol discussed an example of pre-negotiation in the 991 trial of Archbishop Arnulf of Reims for treason, in which the presiding bishops engineered a meeting away from the public where they took Arnulf's confession privately and were thus able to steer later proceedings away from royal or other external interference.

<sup>304</sup> Reuter, 'Contextualising Canossa,' 161.

<sup>305</sup> Theodoret, bk. V, chap. XVIII, pp. 220-21. See also McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 326. McLynn suggests that Ambrose's initial letter to Theodosius broaching the topic of penance would have preceded official negotiations to plan the ritual, though the latter 'remain completely obscure.'

<sup>306</sup> Koziol, 60-63.

<sup>307</sup> MacLean, 107.

Returning to 833, what hints are hidden in the contradictory textual accounts of the penance that allow the historian to see how Louis may have walked a tightrope in this ritual gray area? His hopes of favourably affecting the outcome or even his misunderstanding of the proceedings may have hinged upon the first two overlaps between public penance and political submission: their similarities in appearance and pre-negotiation. In the *Relatio*, the rebel bishops claimed that while in captivity, Louis not only agreed to accept ‘episcopal judgement in the manner of a penitent,’ but also requested a meeting with Lothar so that they could reconcile before the ceremony.<sup>308</sup> Booker observed that such ‘mutual reconciliation’ could be a component of penitential ritual, and that this was card that the rebel bishops then played in the *Relatio* to argue that Louis knowingly consented to the process.<sup>309</sup> However, as discussed above, Thegan, the Astronomer, and the Annals of St-Bertin omitted any mention of such pre-negotiations and emphasized coercion instead. If any initial meetings did happen, Louis’ supporters’ adamantness that he was bodily dragged to the altar makes the historian wonder whether he fully understood Lothar’s reconciliation as preparation for ‘canonical’ public penance, or if Louis had assumed, until it was too late, that this was a private pre-negotiation of less binding political submission instead. If the latter, Louis may have mistakenly believed that a tearful display of contrite surrender would morally pressure Lothar into allowing him an honourable return to power, for as Maclean has summarized, such political submissions, though performed ‘in the penitential register,’ ‘communicated the end of disputes, restored hierarchy, saved face and permitted a negotiated compromise.’<sup>310</sup>

In contrast, if he felt the situation were more desperate, Louis might have wept simply in hopes of saving his skin by advertising his good will and lack of obduracy toward the rebels. His penitential dethronement was unprecedented and he cannot have known for sure what Lothar’s faction intended to do. Bernard’s fate could have befallen him if he made a false move. Pössel has observed that in early medieval accounts, what was said during the ritual was deemed most significant, but that individual gestures and actions then ‘reinforced’ the words.<sup>311</sup> A single phrase in Paschasius Radbertus’ biography of Wala pinpoints what weeping was meant to reinforce: Paschasius complained that Louis’ penance in 833 was ultimately unsuccessful and dishonest because he disregarded its injunctions and returned to secular power, having ‘refused voluntarily *to soften and*

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 273-74.

<sup>309</sup> Booker, *Past Convictions*, 160-61.

<sup>310</sup> Maclean, 108-109.

<sup>311</sup> Pössel, 120-21.

*acquiesce*' (emphasis added).<sup>312</sup> As cited above, Pope Gregory VII similarly commented that Henry IV tearfully submitted 'without any show of hostility or defiance.' It may be methodologically unsound to compare a Carolingian public penance with an episode from Gregory of Tours' tales of Merovingian Gaul, but the following warrants consideration. In the early sixth century, Clovis attacked Chararic, king of the Salian Franks, and captured him and his son. Clovis ordered them to be shaved and made into a priest and deacon, at which point Gregory wrote that Chararic began to weep with humiliation. His son, on the other hand, hotly announced that their hair would grow back and that he wished Clovis to die. In response, Clovis had them both beheaded.<sup>313</sup> Gregory might have meant nothing more than that Chararic wept in terrified shame, and though both Chararic and Louis had both been taken into custody on the battlefield and faced forced conversion to religious life, the similarity may end there. However, it is also possible that by weeping, Chararic tried to demonstrate to Clovis his willing submission and lack of hostility, a performance that was then fatally undercut by his son. Louis may have wept for largely the same reason, and had his performance upstaged not by a beheading but by the connivance of earnest bishops who extended the meaning of royal weeping, as a sign of deference to Church authority and Christian moral law, to its furthest logical conclusion.

Carolingian texts thus occupy the high point on the developmental arc of Late Antique and early medieval Gallic and Frankish thought on royal tears, as bishops further established the rules and expectations for this ideal. There are many more written accounts of Carolingian royal weeping than discussed in this study, but Louis the Pious' penance of 833 is so richly documented that it provides a powerful example of how analyses of royal tears can contribute to the ongoing scholarly debates about depictions of early medieval rituals in text and their possible application in life.

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<sup>312</sup> Paschasius Radbertus, 'Defense of Wala,' in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, ed. Paul Edward Dutton, 1st ed. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1993), 281.

<sup>313</sup> For the entire episode, see *Hist.*, II.41, p. 156.

## Conclusion:

This investigation of the role that tears played in the development of Gallic and Frankish discourses on power, ideal Christian kingship, and episcopal authority still leaves much unexplored in the vast conceptual territory of royal weeping in the Early Middle Ages. Though considerations of space require this dissertation to conclude with Louis the Pious, he was by no means the last Frankish king to cry. In just one example, Carolingian writers mobilized tears again in their reports of another deposition over 50 years after Louis' forced public penance. In 887, the ailing Charles the Fat lacked a legitimate heir, and his equally illegitimate nephew, Arnulf of Carinthia, seized control.<sup>314</sup> As MacLean argued for Charles the Fat's botched outburst in 873, and as with Louis' penance of 833 as well, Arnulf's takeover was major political disturbance that triggered divisive struggles amongst contemporaries to promote a dominant version of events in written record. According to one version of the *Annals of Fulda*, whose author became notably sympathetic to Charles towards the end of his reign, the deposed Charles sent Arnulf a piece of the Holy Cross upon which Arnulf had previously sworn his loyalty 'so that he might be reminded of his oaths and not behave so cruelly and barbarously to him.'<sup>315</sup> Arnulf 'is said to have shed tears at the sight' but was otherwise unmoved and left Charles with nothing but 'the vilest of persons to serve him.'<sup>316</sup> The phrase 'is said' hints at the annalist's knowledge of other reports that a genuinely softened Arnulf respected their previous bond by treating his uncle with actual Christian compassion. However, in disparaging Arnulf's weeping, the Fulda scribe chose to deny him legitimizing credit, just as Gregory of Tours highlighted Chilperic's perverse remorselessness by depicting his crocodile tears. Arnulf's tears should therefore immediately alert the historian to the annalist's partisanship, while providing a fresh means of grasping the political subtleties in the conflicts that underpinned contemporary textual accounts.

In addition, research on tears should by no means stop with Frankish kings, and there are many more answers to seek, such as why their queens almost never wept in similar textual descriptions of ritual performances or political disputes. One such queen was Judith,

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<sup>314</sup> Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 424-25.

<sup>315</sup> *AF*, a. 887, p. 103. For a summary on the different versions and continuations of the *Annals of Fulda*, the political sympathies of their content, and the events or historical persons behind the attitudes communicated in the texts, see Timothy Reuter, in *AF*, 2-9.

<sup>316</sup> *AF*, a. 887, p. 103.

Louis' wife, who suffered with him in the upheavals during his reign and fielded accusations of adultery.<sup>317</sup> At one point the Astronomer recounted that to clear herself of such moral charges, she was forced to give purgative oaths, but he only briefly discussed her experience and omitted mention of any tears.<sup>318</sup> Better understanding of the differences in discourses of queenly power and weeping, or lack thereof, would place the tears of kings in sharper contrast.

Insights into Frankish royal weeping also raise questions about similar textual and ritual practices elsewhere in Western Europe through Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Already Tracey-Anne Cooper has demonstrated the importance of royal weeping in late Anglo-Saxon politics. But as we have seen, patterns in the writings of Ambrose and of Gallic and Frankish bishops anticipated the episodes she discussed. The historian's next step is to identify whether royal Anglo-Saxon weeping developed independently or if their elites drew inspiration from Frankish precedent. Wickham's observations that Carolingian political practice influenced King Alfred, or that Asser's *Life of Alfred* was modelled on Einhard's *Vita Karoli* are promising leads for further study of Anglo-Saxon royal tears.<sup>319</sup> The same questions about influence, similarity, and difference in royal weeping can also be applied to other kingdoms in close contact with the Franks, such as that of the Visigoths and Lombards, to determine whether this relationship between Frankish kings and their episcopacy was unique or mirrored elsewhere.

Before concluding, there remains one potential challenge that readers might level at the methodology of this study of Frankish royal tears, which must be aired and overcome. In an interview, Rosenwein addressed other historians' criticism that in her lexicographic pursuit of emotional communities, she wrongly collapsed sources from different genres, such as saint's lives, letters, orations or chronicles, which had distinct rules of expression and style that cannot be compared.<sup>320</sup> Though this dissertation examines a specific gesture and not a wide range of emotion words, it is vulnerable to the same critique.

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<sup>317</sup> Astronomer, chap. 44, pp. 275-76.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., chap. 46, p. 277.

<sup>319</sup> Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 460-61.

<sup>320</sup> Plamper, 'History of Emotions,' 258.

There is indeed variance in the treatment of royal tears depending on the source in question, the time it was written, and the personal views or idiosyncrasies of the author (Gregory of Tours being the prime culprit in the latter regard). However, bishops or clerics with shared ideals and interests wrote almost every text that informed this dissertation, whatever the genre. Therefore the treatment of tears and their symbolic weight in the political nexus between Frankish bishops and kings, once developed, was remarkably enduring and universal across histories, annals, saint's lives, biographies, letters, and orations.

Perhaps most medievalists have overlooked royal weeping because it seems an ancillary or obvious by-product of much broader themes of penance or liturgicized politics, as Pössel may have implied in her statement that “‘meaning” did not reside in the symbolic acts,’ and that these acts were secondary and served to ‘[reinforce]’ ‘the words that were spoken during the performance, or written down afterwards.’<sup>321</sup> Nevertheless, modern readers ought not take royal weeping for granted, for it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the sources, the official operations of kingship, and the bishops’ development of their own spiritual authority and promotion of Christian ideals of rulership in Gaul and Francia. Most importantly, historians sensitized to medieval royal ‘temper tantrums...frequent weeping and boisterous joy’ are well placed to further debunk incorrect popular and even scholarly views of early medieval backwardness and emotional immaturity born from modern wilful misunderstanding and chauvinism. As Piroska Nagy has stated, it is the historian’s job to showcase the dignity and ‘understand the cultural importance and meaning of these notions and signs,’ no matter how foreign they are to modern sensibilities.<sup>322</sup> This dissertation is ultimately a tribute to the political complexities and sophistication of early medieval weeping kings and the bishops who praised, counselled, and harangued them.

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<sup>321</sup> Pössel, 120.

<sup>322</sup> Nagy, ‘Historians and Emotions.’

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