

REMIGIUS AND THE ‘IMPORTANT NEWS’ OF CLOVIS REWRITTEN

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Remi et la ‘nouvelle importante’ de Clovis réécrits

Cet article est un nouvel examen de la Lettre austrasienne n° 2, adressée par Remi, évêque de Reims, à Clovis, roi des Francs. Nous proposons une nouvelle transcription du texte, accompagnée d’une traduction, et suivie d’une étude des interprétations proposées du Moyen Âge à nos jours, ainsi que d’un commentaire linéaire. La conclusion propose une révision radicale de la date et de la signification de la lettre. Nous démontrons que cette dernière ne doit pas être datée nécessairement du début du règne de Clovis, ni à la suite d’une campagne spécifique, et qu’elle ne peut être interprétée comme une preuve ni de la prise de contrôle par Clovis de l’administration de la province romaine de Belgique seconde, ni du fait qu’il aurait reçu de l’empereur une charge officielle. Nous affirmons que la lettre doit être datée de la fin du règne de Clovis, et qu’elle doit être lue comme une preuve de continuité dans le style – plutôt que dans la substance – du gouvernement du monde romain. [Auteurs]

The lyric glorification of a misunderstood text does not commend itself to a sober mind; and it often happens that those who sneer at the deadness of the mere grammarian mistake disdain of the interpreter of the beautiful for indifference to the beautiful itself.

Basil Gildersleeve¹

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** We employ the following abbreviations throughout:

BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

BECh *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes*

BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France

DI *Divinae Institutiones*

DLH *Decem Libri Historiarum*

EME *Early Medieval Europe*

EA *Epistulae Austrasicae*

Ep *Epistula*

MIÖG *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*

ML *Mémoires de littérature tirés des registres de l’Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*

NA *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*

OCV *Les œuvres complètes de Voltaire*

OLD P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., Oxford, 2012

Pan Lat R.A.B. Mynors (ed.), *XII Panegyrici Latini*, Oxford, 1964

RBPH *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*

SSRM *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*

TLL *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Leipzig, 1900-

*** Where not stated we have consulted the edition of reference used by the *Cross-Database Searchtool* (online at <http://clt.brepolis.net/cds/Default.aspx>).

¹ Quoted in *Gildersleeve’s Latin Grammar*, Wauconda, 1997, p. xi.

Introduction

What is to be done with *Epistula Austrasica 2*? This letter, from Remigius, bishop of Reims and apostle of the Franks, to Clovis (481-511), founder of the Merovingian kingdom, is that rarest of items: a contemporary source for his reign. The potential significance of it cannot be overstated, and in outline its contents are straightforward. Remigius has heard ‘important news’ of Clovis, which prompts the bishop to compare the king to his ancestors, and then to give him advice, mostly conventional, on how to rule. The letter promises to answer some of the most debated questions of that age. What position did Clovis occupy, and what was the nature of his authority? Did his ancestors exercise the same? When did Clovis become a Christian, and with what consequences? Yet on closer inspection, the meaning of the letter is difficult to retrieve: at points it is not clear what the text is or should be, and even absent such problems the precise import of the words remains elusive. Every reader has grappled with these challenges, some more successfully than others, but the present state of interpretation, when probed, is confused and contradictory: editions have circumvented the textual problems by emendation, and commentaries the historical ones by omission. These two approaches have enabled three interlinked positions to prevail: that the letter congratulates Clovis specifically on assuming the government of the former Roman province of Belgica Secunda; that it dates to early in his reign, no later than 486; and that he was then still pagan. None of them is secure. In their place, clarity and honesty are needed: clarity as to how the text has been and may be understood, honesty as to the provisional nature of any interpretation ventured. We offer a new transcription and translation of the letter, reviewing its reception to determine how its threefold signification has been determined. We then provide an interpretive commentary yielding a new critical text justified by our analysis, and conclude with what the letter, firmly grounded, can be made to mean. The results may surprise.

Transcription

We present the letter *as it now exists*, a composite. The primary scribe of the manuscript, represented by the sign c^i , copied it in the early 9th century. From that time onward, c^{ii} , a composite label for a number of correctors, revised it, adding punctuation; many annotations are too exiguous for secure identification of hand or date, but most are contemporary with or slightly later than the copying itself, and the balance belong to the 11th century. Finally, c^{iii} , a reader in the 14th century, annotated the letter.² Most editions claim to privilege the ‘raw text’ of c^i , yet also make emendations and additions in deference to c^{ii} , creating palimpsests which reflect no single source or consistent critical rationale. In contrast, we aim to present the extant data as clearly as possible, recognizing the need to simplify in the case of the corrector(s) by using a single sign and including all punctuation without assigning responsibility. In practice, *as it now exists* means transcribing the text as corrected by c^{ii} , while noting the base text of c^i . When a text survives in a unique and problematic manuscript diplomatic transcription is the safest approach: presenting all the layers together takes advantage of all the information which is available to us.³ The reader can thereby perceive the various strata of this single source for our letter insofar as they can be perceived.

Vatican, BAV, Pal. lat. 869, fol. 3v.⁴

c^i Copyist (early 9th century)

² W. Gundlach, *Epistolae Austrasicae*, in E. Dümmler (dir.), *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi I. MGH Epistolae III*, Berlin, 1892, pp. 110, 113, identified two correctors, *a* (9th century) and *b* (11th century). While he declared that *a* intervened in letters 1-4, his apparatus identifies only corrections by *b* in the text of *EA* 2; E. Malaspina, *Il Liber epistolarum della cancelleria austrasica (sec. V-VI)*, Rome, 2001, pp. 34-7, counters that most corrections look like the work of the earlier hand.

³ M.L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique Applicable to Greek and Latin Texts*, Stuttgart, 1973, pp. 94-5; R. Tarrant, *Texts, Editors, Readers: Methods and Problems in Latin Textual Criticism*, Cambridge, 2016, p. 143.

⁴ For the excellent online digital facsimile with which we have worked, see http://bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/bav/bav_pal_lat_869/0012.

- c*ⁱⁱ Corrector(s) (early 9th-11th centuries)
- c*ⁱⁱⁱ Commentator (14th century)
- F* M. Freher, *Epistolae Francicae*, in *Corpus Francicae Historiae Veteris et Sincerae*, Hanover, 1613, no. 2, p. 184.⁵
- S* J. Sirmond, *Remigii Episcopi Remorum Epistola II*, in *Concilia Antiqua Galliae*, 3 vols., Paris, 1629, 1, p. 175.⁶
- G*ⁱ W. Gundlach, *Epistolae Austrasicae*, in E. Dümmler (dir.), *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi I. MGH Epistolae III*, Berlin, 1892, no. 2, p. 113.⁷
- G*ⁱⁱ W. Gundlach, F. Rommel (rev.), *Epistulae Austrasicae*, in H.M. Rochais (dir.), *Defensoris Locogiacensis Monachi Liber Scintillarum. CCSL 117*, Turnhout, 1957, no. 2, pp. 408-9.
- M*ⁱ E. Malaspina, *Il Liber epistolarum della cancelleria austrasica (sec. V-VI)*, Rome, 2001, no. 2, pp. 62-5.
- M*ⁱⁱ R.W. Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity*, 2 vols., Ann Arbor, 2003, 2, no. 4.13, pp. 108-9.

1 II⁸ DOMINO INSIGNI ET MERITIS MAGNIFICO hlodoûeo⁹

2 RÉGI REMIGIUS¹⁰ EPISCOPUS

⁵ Repr. in A. du Chesne (ed.), *Historiae Francorum Scriptores Coetanei*, 5 vols., Paris, 1636-49, 1, p. 849; T. Ruinart (ed.), *S. Georgii Florentii Gregorii Turonensis Episcopi Opera Omnia*, Paris, 1699, cols. 1326-7; M. Bouquet (ed.), *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, 24 vols., Paris, 1738-1904, 4, pp. 51-2.

⁶ Repr. in P. Labbé, G. Cossart (ed.), *Sacrosancta Concilia ad Regiam Editionem Exacta*, 17 vols., Paris, 1671-2, 4, cols. 1401-2; G.D. Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, 31 vols., Florence, 1759-93, 8, cols. 345-6; J. Gesquier et al. (ed.), *AA.SS. Octobris I*, Antwerp, 1765, pp. 91-2; *Conciliorum Galliae, tam Editorum quam Ineditorum, Collectio*, Paris, 1789, cols. 827-8; J.-P. Migne (ed.), *PL*, 221 vols., Paris, 1844-64, 65, cols. 965-8.

⁷ Repr. in C. Silva-Tarouca (ed.), *Fontes Historiae Ecclesiasticae Medii Aevi*, Rome, 1930, pp. 43-4.

⁸ *om. S Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ. Utinam sic hodie esset mens regibus et sacerdotibus] add. cⁱⁱⁱ (superscript).*

⁹ Chlodoveo *F S*.

¹⁰ REMEGIUS *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ*.

3 Rumor ad nos magnum¹¹ peruenit · administrationem uos se-
 4 ř¹² cundum¹³ bellicè¹⁴ suscepisse ; non est nouum · ut coeperis esse sicut
 5 parentes tui semper fuerunt · Hoc imprimis¹⁵ agendum · ut *domini*
 6 iudicium a te // *non*¹⁶ uacillet¹⁷ · ubi¹⁸ tui meriti qui per industriam
 7 humilitatis tuae ad summum culminisque¹⁹ peruenit · quia
 8 quod · uulgu²⁰ dicitur · actus²¹ hominis probatur ; consiliarios
 9 tibi adhibere debes qui famam // tuam possint²² ornare · *et bene-*
 10 {²³ ficium tuum castum *et* honestum esse debet .’ *et* sacerdotibus
 11 { tuis honorem²⁴ debebis deferre .’ *et* ad eorum consilia semper // recurrere²⁵ ;
 12 { quod si²⁶ tibi bene cum illis conuenerit · prouincia tua melius
 13 { potest constare ; ciues²⁷ tuos erige .’ afflictos²⁸ releua .’ uiduas
 14 ř²⁹ foue .’ orfanos³⁰ nutri³¹ .’ si potius est qu.am erudies³² ut omnes te-
 15 ament *et* timeant · Iustitia ex ore uestro procedat ; nihil sit
 16 sperandum de pauperibus³³ uel peregrinis .’ ne magis dona aut

11 magnus *F S*.
 12 *require add. cⁱⁱ om. ω*.
 13 secundam *S Secundae Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 14 rei bellicae] *add. F S Belgice Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Belgicae Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 15 imprimis *F S*.
 16 no *cⁱ*.
 17 uacilletur *Gⁱⁱ*.
 18 ui *Gⁱⁱ*.
 19 culminis *F culmen S culmen usque Gⁱⁱ culminis usque Mⁱ*.
 20 vulgo *S*.
 21 ex fine actus] *add. F S Gⁱ*.
 22 possent *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 23 *add. cⁱⁱⁱ (down to l. 13)*.
 24 *add. cⁱⁱ (left margin) om. Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 25 recurre *cⁱ Gⁱ*.
 26 quodsi *Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 27 ciuos *cⁱ Gⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 28 afflictos *F S*.
 29 *require add. cⁱⁱ om. ω*.
 30 orphanos *F S*.
 31 nutre *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.
 32 irradies *Gⁱⁱ*.
 33 pauperes *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.

17 aliquid accipere uelis³⁴ ; praetorium tuum omnibus pateatur³⁵ .
 18 ut nullus exinde tristis abscedat ; paternas quascumque³⁶ opes pos
 19 sides · captiuos exinde liberabis · *et* a iugo seruitutis absolues³⁷ ;
 20 si quis in conspectu uestro uenerit · peregrinum se esse non
 21 sentiat ; cum iuuenibus ioca³⁸ · cum senibus tracta .’ si uis reg-
 22 nare .’ / nobilis iudicari³⁹ .

Translation

What follows is provided here as orientation for the historiographical overview which follows. The edited text on which it depends is justified in the critical commentary, and printed before the interpretive conclusion.

2. Bishop Remigius, to the lord, distinguished and by his merits magnificent, King Clovis.

[1] The important news has reached us that you have undertaken the waging of another war; it is not a novelty, for you have been just as your kin always were. This must be done first of all, so that the judgement of the Lord should not waver from you, when on account of your merit – in fact, through the industry of your humility – it has reached the height of the peak and the summit. As people say, the action of a man is what is judged.

[2] You should summon advisers to you who can embellish your reputation, and your favour should be moral and honest. You will defer to your bishops and always have recourse to their advice, for if you are on good terms with them your province can fare better. Rouse

³⁴ uellis *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.

³⁵ pateat *F S*.

³⁶ quascunque *F S Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.

³⁷ absoluas *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.

³⁸ iocare *S*.

³⁹ iudicare *cⁱ Gⁱ Gⁱⁱ Mⁱ Mⁱⁱ*.

your citizens, relieve the afflicted, support widows, look after orphans, if it is possible bring them up, in order that everyone love as well as fear you.

[3] Let justice issue forth from your mouth: nothing should be looked for from the poor or foreigners, any more than you should be willing to accept gifts or anything else. Let your headquarters stand open to everyone, so that no one should depart from there sorrowful. Whatever paternal wealth you possess, you will free captives with it and release them from the yoke of servitude. If anyone come before you, let him not feel that he is a stranger. Jest with the young, converse with the old, if you wish to be judged to reign nobly.

Historiography

In the early 9th century, three scribes copied a unique selection of letters into the first thirty folios of BAV, Pal. lat. 869, making careful efforts to preserve the text of their exemplars.⁴⁰ Subsequently labelled *Epistolae Austrasicae* (henceforth *EA*) by Wilhelm Gundlach, they are rich sources for 6th-century Gaul.⁴¹ Beneath the *finit* is a high medieval note assigning the codex to the Carolingian monastery of Lorsch – one of its librarians compiled these Austrasian letters from materials which he found at Trier.⁴² The compiler made no comment on the place of the four letters of Remigius in the collection, but he gathered them at the beginning, as if important. While the earliest title given to the assemblage (by a much later hand) is *Liber epistolarum*, it is interesting to note that a still later hand wrote *Epistolae Remigii et aliorum* at the head.⁴³ These letters may also be in chronological order: *EA* 1, dated by Gregory of Tours to 496 or so, *EA* 3, after the death of Clovis in 511, and *EA* 4, seemingly late

⁴⁰ See now G. Barrett, G. Woudhuysen, *Assembling the Austrasian Letters at Trier and Lorsch*, in *EME*, 24, 1, 2016, pp. 3-57, for what follows.

⁴¹ W. Gundlach, *Die Sammlung der Epistolae Austrasicae*, in *NA*, 13, 1, 1887, pp. 367-8.

⁴² BAV, Pal. lat. 869, fol. 30v; cf. B. Bischoff, *Die Abtei Lorsch im Spiegel ihrer Handschriften*, 2nd ed., Lorsch, 1989, pp. 126-7.

⁴³ BAV, Pal. lat. 869, fols. 1r, 3r.

in the episcopacy of Remigius (d. 533).⁴⁴ If so, this would suggest a date between 496 and 511 for *EA* 2.⁴⁵ At least two hands have intervened since *c*ⁱ copied our letter, and the first, *c*ⁱⁱ, found it baffling in part. Correcting its grammar and adding punctuation, he was twice at a loss: *administrationem uos secundum bellice suscepisse* (ll. 3-4) and *si potius est quam erudies* (l. 14). He wrote *r* (*require*, ‘check’) in the margin beside both, and dotted *secundum bellicè* and *erudies*, implying that these words were the problem. Medieval intervention ends with *c*ⁱⁱⁱ, who added a superscript plea, ‘would that the *mentalité* of kings and priests were so today’, referring to ll. 10-13: to him, the moral content of the letter was its most notable feature.

Early Modern Diversity

Marquard Freher produced the first edition of the *EA* in 1613 under the pedestrian title *Epistolae Francicae*, having discovered them in the Bibliotheca Palatina at Heidelberg.⁴⁶ He did not offer comment on each letter, but he did emend *EA* 2, adopting the corrections of *c*ⁱⁱ, clarifying the adage *actus hominis probatur* (l. 8) by supplying *ex fine* (‘by the outcome’), and adding *rei* before *bellice* – the resulting phrase is standard usage for military matters, and his addition, perhaps an expansion of *r*, far from radical. Freher seems to have related the letter to a campaign of Clovis, and one in particular, since he appended to it a letter from the Ostrogothic king Theoderic advising mercy toward the blasted survivors of the Alamannic war.⁴⁷ Until the 19th century he remained alone in having consulted the manuscript; after his edition, *EA* 2 set off on a lonely journey through the commentaries of disputatious scholars.

⁴⁴ Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, in B. Krusch, W. Levison (ed.), *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Libri Historiarum X. MGH SSRM I.1*, 2nd ed., Hanover, 1951, II.30-31.

⁴⁵ On the chronology of the *EA*, see Barrett, Woudhuysen, esp. pp. 44-5.

⁴⁶ M. Freher, *Epistolae Francicae*, in *Corpus Francicae Historiae Veteris et Sincerae*, Hanover, 1613, pp. 182-212.

⁴⁷ Freher, pp. 184-5; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, in Å.J. Fridh (ed.), *Variarum Libri XII*, in Å.J. Fridh and J.W. Halporn (eds.), *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori Senatoris Opera, Pars I. Variarum Libri XII. De Anima*. CCSL 96, Turnhout, 1973, II.41.

First port of call came in 1628, in an unusually full municipal history of Melun. Like Freher, the erudite juriconsult Sébastien Rouillard did not date the letter, but understood it to announce a ‘levée d’armes’, observing that with its counsel the pious Clovis terminated his life in glory and honour.⁴⁸ Jacques Sirmond was the earliest editor to comment explicitly on the context of *EA* 2, printing it between the Council of Agde (506) and the ‘letter of Clovis to the bishops’ (which he dated to 507), with a gloss: ‘Encouraging letter, when the king was readying himself for the Gothic war’.⁴⁹ He was perhaps fortified by its several points of similarity to the letter of Clovis, in which the king provides for the security of Church property and dependants and the release of captives in the aftermath of his campaign against the Visigoths in 506/7, and he made his case by way of emendation, modifying *secundum* to *secundam* in agreement with *administrationem*.⁵⁰ Remigius was exhorting Clovis to go to war once again, this time with the Visigoths, since Gregory of Tours records that his first was against the Burgundians.⁵¹ Adrien de Valois tacitly endorsed this implicit argument: Remigius seemed to mean that Clovis had been delegated supreme command of another campaign by the Franks in arms.⁵² Delegated, he said – Jean le Laboureur eagerly seized on the word choice, which revealed that kingship was hereditary but generalship elective amongst the Salian Franks.⁵³ This Clovis, for Guillaume Marlot, was a Christian crusader, urged by Remigius to sally forth once more against the Arian Visigoths.⁵⁴ And yet when Thierry Ruinart included the text of Freher in his edition of Gregory of Tours, as a call to respect ecclesiastical property during the Visigothic war, he did not adopt

⁴⁸ S. Rouillard, *Melun, ou Histoire de la ville de Melun*, Paris, 1628, pp. 165-7; repr. in *Épître de saint Rémy, au roy Clovis, premier chrestien, pour bien régner*, Paris, 1825.

⁴⁹ J. Sirmond, *Remigii Episcopi Remorum Epistola II*, in *Concilia Antiqua Galliae*, 3 vols., Paris, 1629, 1, p. 175; cf. J.-E. Taraut, *Annales de France*, Paris, 1635, p. 150; S. de Sainte-Marthe, L. de Sainte-Marthe, *Gallia Christiana*, 4 vols., Paris, 1656, 1, p. 478.

⁵⁰ Clovis, *Ep ad episcopos*, in A. Boretius (ed.), *Capitularia Regum Francorum I. MGH*, Hanover, 1883, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, II.32.

⁵² A. de Valois, *Rerum Francicarum Libri VIII*, 3 vols., Paris, 1646-58, 1, p. 316.

⁵³ J. le Laboureur, *Histoire de la Pairie de France et du Parlement de Paris*, London, 1740 [1664], p. 177.

⁵⁴ G. Marlot, *Metropolis Remensis Historia*, 2 vols., Reims, 1666-79, 1, p. 163.

secundam despite situating it before the letter of Clovis.⁵⁵ Sirmond, without his foundation: a phenomenon with a history almost as long as the interpretation of the text itself.

With the 18th century, early Frankish history became central to public debate about the position of the French monarchy *vis-à-vis* its aristocratic subjects, and discussion of *EA 2* began in earnest.⁵⁶ The main historical issue in political argument was the origin of Frankish power in Roman Gaul, and proposed dates for the letter started to drift earlier in the reign of Clovis, that defining epoch. René-Aubert Vertot read Sirmond, and he too identified a combination of the dignity of king with an appointment as general; Remigius was saluting Clovis on his taking charge of the army just like his ancestors.⁵⁷ Indeed, M. le comte de Boulainvilliers contended (posthumously) in 1727 that he had founded the Frankish monarchy, inheriting kingship of the Ripuarian Franks from his father Childeric and soon after being elected general of the Salian Franks. He cited the letter, in a reprint of Freher, as congratulations to Clovis on the election, and his argument led him to wonder whether it might in fact date to the first years of his reign, even if he would then have been pagan. The count was altogether more certain that the Franks (a free military class who under their elected ruler had conquered Gaul with its punitive Roman fiscal burdens) were entitled to tax exemption and other rights; so too were their descendants, the French nobility, of which he found himself, incidentally, to be a member.⁵⁸

In 1734 came the counterblast of the abbé Dubos, who struck out on his own with a distinctly loose translation of the same text of the letter. He deduced that Clovis had inherited the title of *magister militum* from Childeric, rendering the opening line: ‘We learn by common report that you are in charge of the administration of the affairs of war, and I am not surprised

⁵⁵ Ruinart (ed.), cols. 1326-7, with 92, 95.

⁵⁶ See I. Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2013, pp. 19-41; C. Cheminade, *Histoire et politique dans L’esprit des lois: Montesquieu, Dubos et Saint Rémi*, in M. Porret, C. Volpilhac-Augier (ed.), *Le temps de Montesquieu*, Geneva, 2002, pp. 345-61.

⁵⁷ R.-A. Vertot, *Dissertation dans laquelle on tâche de démesler la véritable origine des François par un parallèle de leurs mœurs avec celle des Germains*, in *ML*, 2, 1717, p. 628; cf. H.-P. Limiers, *Annales de la Monarchie Française depuis son Établissement jusques à présent*, 2 vols., Amsterdam, 1724, 1, p. 7.

⁵⁸ A.G.H.B. de Boulainvilliers, *Histoire de l’ancien gouvernement de la France*, 3 vols., The Hague, 1727, 1, pp. 17-8; cf. J. de Caulet, *Lettre II. De Honore et Cultu Dei*, Paris, 1751, pp. 164-6, 174-6.

to see you be what your forefathers have been'. With Boulainvilliers, he situated *EA 2* at the accession of Clovis in 481, when he was still pagan and before Remigius was his subject, but held in contrast that in the late 5th century northern Gaul remained under Roman administration, by subordinates of the praetorian prefect. Clovis was king only at Tournai, but wielded military authority throughout his *provincia* as *magister militum*, ingeniously explaining why the advice applied so widely and his *praetorium* should be open to all; *beneficium tuum* (ll. 9-10) was a polite nod to the conquests of Chlogio, putative ancestor of Clovis, which Remigius pretended were held in benefice from the emperor. This technical distinction between the *beneficium* and the *provincia* of Clovis explained how he could be told to maintain good relations with bishops – in the plural: evidently there was more than one in his province – yet also to consult with his ‘lords, *i.e.*, with the Franks’, loyal to him as king. Dubos detected no Christianity in the letter, only moral advice, in marked contrast to the explicitly religious *EA 1*. The Franks, it turned out, had not subjected the Gallo-Romans at all, but been absorbed into the absolutist framework of the Roman state, to which the French monarchy was grateful heir.⁵⁹

This is certainly original, and comparison with Sirmond shows the diversity of interpretation which can hinge on a slight difference in text allied to a broad divergence in interest. Dubos became a point of (substantially hostile) departure for intellectuals in the ensuing firestorm of controversy. Antoine Rivet de La Grange discreetly opposed him, defining *EA 2* as counsel on Christian rule marked by a ‘vigueur épiscopale’ and sent in 506 on the eve of war.⁶⁰ Étienne-Lauréault de Foncemagne, meanwhile, probed the inner torment of Boulainvilliers concerning an early date for the letter and the paganism of the king at that time.

⁵⁹ J.-B. Dubos, *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie françoise dans les Gaules*, 3 vols., Amsterdam, 1734, 2, pp. 269-79; cf. J. Liron, *Singularités historiques et littéraires*, 4 vols., Paris, 1738-40, 1, pp. 49-102; C.J.F. Hénault d'Armourézan, *Histoire critique de l'établissement des Français dans les Gaules*, 2 vols., Paris, IX/1801 [1738], 2, pp. 261-2.

⁶⁰ A. Rivet de La Grange, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, 3, Paris, 1735, pp. 158-63; cf. J. Longueval, *Histoire de l'Église Gallicane*, 8 vols., Paris, 1730-34, 2, pp. 286-7; *Gallia Christiana in Provinciis Ecclesiasticas Distributa*, 9, Paris, 1751, cols. 10-13.

He declared that it must postdate the baptism of Clovis, for Remigius would only have praised news of war with the Arian Visigoths as a *rumor magnus*, and that it could not describe his election as general (nor support an elective monarchy), since he had inherited that title from his *parentes*.⁶¹ René Biet aligned himself with the nay camp, shooting back that the system of Dubos did not ‘conform to History’, for *EA* 1 and 2 both addressed Clovis as king and cited his kingdom (*manet uobis regnum administrandum*, ‘there remains for you a kingdom to be administered’, paralleling *administrationem*). The key here was *secundum*, which situated the text after the conquest of Thuringia and indicated some sort of association of Clovis and family with the region.⁶² Gilbert-Charles Le Gendre, similarly, could scarcely persuade himself that ‘such bizarre sentiments’ had been ‘published seriously’ by Dubos; everyone knew that *EA* 2 referred to a second war. Sirmond was right: it patently postdated the conversion of Clovis and concerned the *prouincia* conquered by his Franks, over which he dispensed sovereign justice from his *praetorium*, and where the Empire had no business appointing officials of any kind.⁶³

Yet no one expected the intervention of Jacques Ribauld de La Chapelle, a savant who ‘does not appear to have been influenced by the innovative ideas of his times’.⁶⁴ He held that Remigius was applauding Clovis on becoming praetorian prefect of Gaul, including Burgundy, on top of his day job as *magister militum*, and translated Sirmond: ‘you hold the second rank in the Empire by administration of the affairs of war’. Childeric, Merovech, and perhaps others had held this position, Clovis had just converted as a youth, and Remigius was counselling him on how to maintain his commission; abusing all opposing arguments, he declined to specify a date of appointment.⁶⁵ Bedlam. When Martin Bouquet reprinted Freher, he elected just to delete

⁶¹ É.-L. de Foncemagne, *Examen critique d’une opinion de M. le Comte de Boulainvilliers, sur l’ancien gouvernement de la France*, in *ML*, 10, 1736, pp. 528-32; cf. A.-P.-D. de Gomicourt, *Dissertation Historique et Critique pour servir à l’Histoire des premiers tems de la Monarchie Française*, 2 vols., Colmar, 1754, 1, pp. 22-30.

⁶² R. Biet, *Dissertation sur la véritable époque de l’établissement fixe des Francs dans les Gaules*, Paris, 1736, pp. 33-6.

⁶³ G.-C. Le Gendre, *Des antiquités de la nation et de la monarchie française*, Paris, 1741, pp. 574-83.

⁶⁴ L. Virlogeux, *Si Gannat m’était conté. Profils et silhouettes*, Nonette, 2005, p. 28.

⁶⁵ J. Ribauld de La Chapelle, *Dissertations sur le règne de Clovis*, Paris, 1741, pp. 19-34.

magnus and insert the heading ‘Letter of St Remigius to Clovis before the Gothic war, by which he encourages him to consult the bishops’, again accepting the reading of Sirmond without his emendation, while gesturing to Dubos on Clovis and Childeric as *magistri militiae*.⁶⁶

Enter Montesquieu (‘Is he relevant?’⁶⁷). Charles-Louis de Secondat sternly rejected the Dubos line in 1748, reserving signal vehemence for the notion that Clovis had been invited to govern the Gallo-Romans, and in this connexion trained his fire on *EA 2*. The imperial dignities which the abbé imagined that Clovis had been awarded were his inventions; the letter merely congratulated the king on his accession to the throne. ‘When the object of a piece of writing is known,’ he asked, ‘why give it one which is not there?’⁶⁸ Whereupon Ribauld de La Chapelle recanted his earlier rash views, reaching the inevitable *reductio ad falsum* of source criticism down the ages: the text could not be made to fit any point in the reign of Clovis, its composition was beneath Remigius (master stylist of his day), its hectoring tone was absurd for a king, and so ‘this letter has been fabricated by some bad writer’.⁶⁹ He did not vouchsafe whom. Louis-Jules Mancini-Mazarini resourcefully opened a new front in the interpretive struggle by taking *secundam* as ‘fortunate’ instead of ‘second’, making *EA 2* a bit of cheerleading on the defeat of Syagrius in 486. Dubos was correct in his dating, but for the wrong reasons; Clovis was a conquering king, not an imperial quisling.⁷⁰ A critic for the *Mercure de France* could take no more, and waded into the debate to refute both systems of Ribauld de La Chapelle: the first availed itself of ‘pretend evidence’, and as for the second all late Latin was bad, the other prose and ‘pitiable’ poetry of Remigius included, while his manners were unimpeachable. Why could no one see that the ‘natural sense’ of *beneficium* was ‘baptism’? Remigius was praising Clovis

⁶⁶ Bouquet (ed.), 4, pp. 51-2.

⁶⁷ M. Vale, *Custom, Combat, and the Comparative Study of Laws: Montesquieu Revisited*, in P. Dresch, H. Skoda (ed.), *Legalism: Anthropology and History*, Oxford, 2012, p. 261.

⁶⁸ Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, 2 vols., Geneva, 1748, 2, p. 473; cf. A.M. Cohler, B.C. Miller, H.S. Stone (ed.-transl.), *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws*, Cambridge, 1989, p. 661.

⁶⁹ J. Ribauld de La Chapelle, *Dissertations sur l'origine des Francs*, Paris, 1748, pp. 155-74.

⁷⁰ M. le duc de Nivernois, *Mémoire sur l'indépendance de nos premiers Rois par rapport à l'Empire*, in *ML*, 20, 1753, pp. 167-70.

circa 496 for retaking (*secundum*) the reins of government after his post-baptismal vacation.⁷¹

Yet to Louis-Gabriel Du Buat-Nançay the contrary truth was equally plain: Clovis was king by heredity, hence *non est nouum*, as well as imperial *dux* by extraordinary nomination.⁷²

When the Bollandists produced the volume of *Acta Sanctorum* containing Remigius in 1765, they reprinted Sirmond but refined his arguments. Constantine Suysken flagged another point where the letter seemed corrupt – *ubi tui meriti* (l. 6) – and imaginatively proposed *a tuo exercitu* (‘by your army’), while emending *si potius est quam erudies* to *Sic potius illos erudies* (‘In this way, rather, you will teach them’). On the date, he supposed that it had been situated before the Visigothic war because of the ‘second administration’, numbering perhaps from the Alamannic campaign, and the congruity of theme with the letter of Clovis. Yet he maintained that *rumor* suggested report of victory as much as approaching war, and *secundam* could mean ‘successful’ just as well. Suysken interpreted the first sentence: ‘We have understood from a momentous report that you have succeeded in the administration of matters of war which you have undertaken’. His parents had done so too, and the Lord enabled his victories; the advice suited a prince taking over a new conquest.⁷³ Dubos, however, continued to provoke. Jean-Jacques Garnier felt that the letter, citing only the royalty to which Clovis succeeded by birth and election, was ‘equivocal’ evidence for such ‘temerity’, while Pierre Bouquet countered that it recorded the Germanic ‘confederates’ electing the Salian king as their general.⁷⁴

Comment tailed off in the later 18th century at an impasse, most conceivable positions on *EA* 2 essayed and all sides entrenched. With the French Revolution, the debate, centred on

⁷¹ *Dissertation sur une Lettre de Saint Remi à Clovis*, in *Mercure de France, dédié au Roi*, June 1756, pp. 137-55; *Suite de la dissertation sur une Lettre de Saint Remi à Clovis*, in *Mercure de France, dédié au Roi*, July 1756, 1, pp. 149-63.

⁷² L.-G. Du Buat-Nançay, *Les origines, ou l'ancien gouvernement, de la France, de l'Allemagne et de l'Italie*, 4 vols., The Hague, 1757, 1, pp. 15-6.

⁷³ Gesquier *et al.* (ed.), pp. 91-2.

⁷⁴ J.-J. Garnier, *Traité de l'origine du gouvernement françois*, Paris, 1765, pp. 15-6; P. Bouquet, *Lettres provinciales, ou examen impartial de l'origine, de la constitution, et des révolutions de la monarchie françoise*, The Hague, 1772, pp. 58-9.

the import of the letter for royal authority and noble privilege, lost its urgency.⁷⁵ Dubos gained an illustrious champion in François-Marie Arouet, *dit* Voltaire, who charged Montesquieu with ‘grand tort’ and self-assuredly translated *administrationem rei bellice suscepisse* as *magister militum* or ‘colonel général’.⁷⁶ Edward Gibbon, meanwhile, regarding the Barbarian West from his Olympian heights, disapproved the epistolary efforts of Remigius, but made no use of the second of them despite his intimate acquaintance with French erudition.⁷⁷ Jean-Marie Viallon, in the last year of the Ancien Régime, drew out what Montesquieu had left implicit: the letter was written to Clovis not in 486 but 481, on his appointment not as *magister militum* but *dux*, reflecting not relations with the Romans but the Franks as a free people.⁷⁸ Since there was no longer need for the aid which EA 2, dated early, could bring the arguments of the 18th century, Sirmond – qualified – regained supremacy, at least for a moment. The letter as witness to a 6th-century warrior Clovis was by now a venerable strand of interpretation, but it had received no systematic exposition so long as a text from the 480s was more useful: paradoxically, this less vigorously held position became the point of departure for 19th-century scholars. In that same fateful year of 1789, when the Maurists commenced work on an abortive edition of Sirmond, they saw only a need to allow for a multiplicity of possible motivations for Clovis at war.⁷⁹ This began a trend which culminated in Thomas-Marie-Joseph Gousset, archbishop of Reims, printing the letter in his history of the province with a date of *circa* 507, headed ‘On how to rule’ and glossed: ‘On the war which Clovis began against the Goths, who still occupied part

⁷⁵ See in general I. Wood, *The Panthéon in Paris: lieu d’oubli*, in H. Reimitz, B. Zeller (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Vergegenwärtigung. Frühes Mittelalter und europäische Erinnerungskultur*, Vienna, 2009, pp. 93-102; H. Williams, *Saint Geneviève’s Miracles: Art and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, in *French History*, forthcoming.

⁷⁶ Voltaire, *Loi; Esprit des lois*, in N. Cronk, C. Mervaud (ed.), *OCV 42B. Questions sur l’Encyclopédie, par des amateurs*, 7, Oxford, 2012, pp. 116-7; Voltaire, *Commentaire sur L’esprit des lois*, in R. Grandroute, S. Mason (ed.), *OCV 80B. Writings of 1777-1778*, 1, Oxford, 2009, p. 427.

⁷⁷ E. Gibbon, D. Womersley (ed.) *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 3 vols., London, 1994 [1776-88], 2, p. 458, n. 27.

⁷⁸ J.-M. Viallon, *Clovis-le-grand, premier roi chrétienne, fondateur de la monarchie française*, Paris, 1788, pp. 193-202.

⁷⁹ *Conciliorum Galliae*, cols. 827-8.

of the Gauls'.⁸⁰ When 'God's plagiarist' Jacques-Paul Migne moved to include *EA 2* in his *Patrologia Latina*, he duly combined these notes with the text of Sirmond.⁸¹

Jules de Pétigny checked the incipient consensus in 1844, remarking of his predecessors that, 'applying to the barbarian kingdoms of the 5th century the monarchical ideas of the 17th, they have been unable to grasp the simultaneous existence of the power of the Frankish kings and the sovereignty of the Empire'.⁸² Reviving the Dubos gambit, he concluded that Ricimer, late imperial *generalissimo*, had made Childeric *magister militum*, and Clovis had inherited the title. Childeric and Remigius acceded around the same time and must have been allies; naturally Remigius wrote to Clovis when he succeeded. Pétigny, translating, conjectured that *secundum* was an error for the adverb 'happily', discreetly dropped *si potius est quam erudies* altogether, and altered *nobilis* (l. 22) to *a nobilibus* ('by nobles'), noting that almost every word merited a commentary. He believed that the tone was one of not a subject but 'a father talking to his son, a master instructing his pupil'; no word of kingship, just felicitations to an officer of the Empire on his promotion, so the *ciues* (l. 13) were his Roman citizens, and the *sacerdotibus* (l. 10) his bishops, not pagan priests as some had scandalously supposed. The trump? The term *prouincia*, of course: 'always employed by Latin authors for the territory over which a Roman magistrate exercised his jurisdiction'. This was a letter about land and land management; in accordance with Dubos (uncited), *beneficium* must stand for 'military benefice'.⁸³

⁸⁰ T.-M.-J. Gousset, *Les actes de la province ecclésiastique de Reims*, 4 vols., Reims, 1842-4, 1, p. 2; cf. C.C. Fauriel, *Histoire de la Gaule Méridionale sous la domination des Conquérants Germains*, 4 vols., Paris, 1836, 2, p. 55; J.-F. Grégoire, F.-Z. Collombet, *Œuvres de C. Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius*, 3 vols., Paris, 1836, 2, pp. 476-8; J. Guadet, N.-R. Taranne, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Francs, par Georges Florent Grégoire, évêque de Tours, en dix livres*, 4 vols., Paris, 1836-8, 1, p. 247, n. 3; J.-M. Pardessus, *Diplomata, Chartae, Epistolae, Leges, Aliaque Instrumenta ad Res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia*, 2 vols., Paris, 1843, 1, no. 76, p. 53; T. Armand, *Histoire de Saint Rémi*, Paris, 1846, pp. 129-32; A.-F. Ozanam, *La civilisation chrétienne chez les Francs*, Paris, 1849, pp. 339-40; H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, 17 vols., Paris, 1855-60, 1, p. 410; J.-E. Bimbenet, *Des conciles d'Orléans*, in *Revue Critique de Législation et de Jurisprudence*, 23, 13, 1863, pp. 298-302.

⁸¹ Migne (ed.), *PL*, 65, cols. 965-8; and see R.H. Bloch, *God's Plagiarist: Being an Account of the Fabulous Industry and Irregular Commerce of the Abbé Migne*, Chicago, 1994.

⁸² J. de Pétigny, *Études sur l'histoire, les lois, et les institutions de l'époque mérovingienne*, 3 vols., Paris, 1843-51, 2, pp. 355.

⁸³ De Pétigny, 2, pp. 362-3, 367-8; cf. A. Digot, *Histoire du royaume d'Austrasie*, 4 vols., Nancy, 1863, 1, pp. 164-5.

The wind of change was blowing, in spite of some obstruction. Georg Waitz dismissed Pétigny out of hand: *sacerdotibus* were bishops and would not be *tuis* if the king were a pagan, and if Clovis were a ‘military official’ his *praetorium* could hardly be ‘open to everyone’, could it, since his jurisdiction would be confined to the soldiery.⁸⁴ The identity of these *sacerdotibus* had emerged as another point of contention, addressed shortly thereafter in a courageous new reading of the letter. Wilhelm Junghans scorned all talk of *magister militum*, for although the text was corrupt in places, had Remigius wanted to say some such he would have done so. In a broad endorsement of Pétigny, he homed in on *sacerdotibus tuis*: their presence demonstrated that the letter had been written after the baptism Clovis in 496, and yet he was then far from an inexperienced king. To the discerning student there could be only one solution. The addressee was not Clovis at all, but one of his sons who came to the throne when Remigius was still alive, the likely culprit for this embarrassing substitution a copying error in the heading.⁸⁵

When *EA 2* landed on the desk of Albert Lecoy de La Marche in 1866, it occupied a position of critical contradiction. Freher, alone in having studied the manuscript, had foresworn to opine on its meaning, while not all who supported Sirmond accepted his emendation, and the fullest commentary had come from those, like Dubos, most remote from the mainstream. Everybody emended, often via translation – so much more forgiving than the original – or else by positing some appalling blunder. Lecoy de La Marche, however, proposed to approach the letter in and of itself. Believing the original lost, he worked from Freher and his serial reprintings, which seemed spontaneously to adopt and defend a dating of 507; he knew that Sirmond had advanced the idea but could not see why. How could this be the date of the letter if Remigius, whose *vita* recorded an intimate association with Clovis, heard of the expedition by rumour? The vexatious *administrationem rei bellice* was neither good Classical nor

⁸⁴ G. Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, 8 vols., Kiel, 1847-88, 2, pp. 42-4.

⁸⁵ W. Junghans, *Die Geschichte der fränkischen Könige Childerich und Chlodovech*, Göttingen, 1857, pp. 141-2; W. Junghans, G. Monod (transl.), *Histoire critique des règnes de Childerich et de Chlodovech*, Paris, 1879, pp. 143-4.

acceptable late Latin for ‘military campaign’, and even if it were taken with *secundum* as a second expedition by Clovis, it would not be the Visigothic war, his fourth or fifth. As for the rest: ‘are these instructions for war or peace?’ Childeric had plundered Christians, and Remigius would surely not invoke him (one of the *parentes*) as an example for his convert son, while parallels with the letter of Clovis were unsound, since that treated Church privileges, conspicuously absent here. Both missives spoke of ransoming prisoners, but this implied only that *EA 2* should pre-date 507.⁸⁶

Sirmond so dismissed, Lecoy de La Marche was equally ill at ease in the company of Dubos and his ilk. There was quite simply no evidence that Childeric or any of the ancestors of Clovis had been *magistri militum*. Dubos had warped words to his system, reducing Clovis to a mere functionary of the Empire: this he was manifestly not amidst its decaying remnants. Pétigny was more plausible, but the *sacerdotibus tuis* were a grave objection, since these were certainly not pagan priests and Clovis had no bishops in 481. Refusing to retire from the field, Lecoy de La Marche argued that *secundum* did mean ‘happily’, but adjectivally. Remigius was congratulating Clovis, ‘you have conducted a successful war’; the letter must have been written in its aftermath, instructions on how to treat subjects acquired on campaign. The paternal tone ruled out Vouillé in 507, and other wars had not gained him new *ciues* or a new *prouincia*, nor need the letter postdate the conversion of Clovis, as it lacked Christian allusion. His early years seemed most likely – not 481 but 486, after the battle of Soissons, when he had made himself master of northern Gaul.⁸⁷ All the problems seemed to fall away.

Lecoy de La Marche, by his careful review of the options, put discussion of *EA 2* on a new footing, clearing the ground for further study. Alas imperfectly: no positive reference in the letter proved his date, and how could *domini iudicium* (ll. 5-6) not be Christian? Aid was

⁸⁶ A. Lecoy de La Marche, *De l'interprétation d'une lettre de S. Rémi à Clovis*, in *BECh*, 27, 1866, pp. 60-66.

⁸⁷ Lecoy de La Marche, pp. 70-73.

at hand (albeit not acknowledging his work). Jean-Louis-Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles, noted diplomatist, delivered himself of a case for an early date through reading *administrationem uos secundae, Rex, Belgicae suscepisse* ('you have undertaken the administration, king, of Belgica Secunda'), a change with a long future, though without credit to its author. He also dealt with 'the judgement of the Lord' in a less happy solution, this astonishing chimera:

Above all you must act such that the Emperor (*Dominus*) does not go back on the decision (*judicium*) which he has made about you, now that the rights of your services (*tui meriti jus* for *tui meriti qui*), thanks to your actions and ability (*utilitatis tuae* for *humilitatis tuae*), have attained access to his supreme authority (*ad summum culminis pervenit*).

This is pretty desperate stuff, but it supported an early date, here 488, buttressing theories as to how the Franks had, or rather had not, conquered Gaul and its peoples.⁸⁸

Dubos was back. Polynomious antiquary C.A. Moët de La Forte-Maison ('membre de plusieurs sociétés savantes') invoked him to the effect that the letter concerned some imperial appointment made before Clovis went to war against Syagrius, providing another translation which might charitably be called approximate.⁸⁹ When Auguste Vitu, man of letters, treated the early Franks, he too dated EA 2 to just after 481, feeling no special imperative to prove his proposition that it recorded the military rank which Clovis and his ancestors held from the Empire.⁹⁰ The new edition of the Maurist history of France consequently qualified Rivet de La Grange, cautiously relating the letter to the demise of Childeric and the 'military acclamation' of his son.⁹¹ At this point the narrative takes on an element of the grotesque: amongst the 27,000 forgeries produced by Denis Vrain-Lucas before his celebrated trial in 1869 is a bogus note from François Rabelais to Julius Caesar Scaliger. The great satirist reports his discovery of a codex at Saint-Florentin de Bonneval – once Carolingian abbey, now psychiatric hospital – and

⁸⁸ J.-L.-A. Huillard-Bréholles, *Essai de restitution de l'une des lettres adressées par saint Remi à Clovis*, in *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 14, 1870, pp. 283-7.

⁸⁹ C.A. Moët de La Forte-Maison, *Les Francs, leur origine et leur histoire*, 2 vols., Paris, 1868, 2, pp. 122-5.

⁹⁰ A. Vitu, *Histoire civile de l'armée*, Paris, 1868, p. 31, n. 2.

⁹¹ P. Paris (ed.), *Histoire littéraire de la France*, 3, rev. ed., Paris, 1866, p. 729.

encloses *EA 2*, asking the great humanist for elucidatory comment. A genuine letter within a fake, it turns out on close inspection to be the text of Freher, bastardized, a curiosity not only attesting the progress of the ‘prince of forgers’ through the famous figures of French history, but also reflecting the stubborn resistance of the correspondence of Remigius and Clovis to comprehension.⁹²

Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges wrote a few more sober pages of his own on the letter, dating it to *circa* 481. He thought that *administrationem* and *parentes* described Clovis coming into the military offices held by his ancestors, and the tone seemed to suit a young prince best; the lack of Christian content (unlike *EA 1*) and mention of military victory was striking, while the troublesome *sacerdotes* were simply Christian priests serving in a Frankish federate army. Fustel de Coulanges believed that Remigius understood Clovis as a military man, subordinate to the emperor, hence *beneficium* – ‘a commission, a precarial and revocable possession’ – and *prouincia*, although he later effected a partial retreat from this position, allowing that the king could have awarded himself a Roman title.⁹³ When the judicious Waitz revisited the scene in 1887, however, he conceded only that ‘it remains difficult to determine the time and occasion of writing’. Junghans had been reckless to suggest that the letter was to a son of Clovis, and Lecoy de La Marche merited no response; the identification of Childeric or Clovis as *magister militum* continued to bemuse him.⁹⁴ As the *fin de siècle* drew nigh, an innocent bystander could be forgiven for thinking that there were two, nay three distinct versions of *EA 2*, so diverse had the accounts of it become. Would historians never be able to agree on its meaning?⁹⁵

⁹² BnF, NAF 709, fols. 158r-v; H. Clouzot, *Les lettres de Rabelais écrites par Vrain-Lucas*, in *Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes*, 10, 1912, no. 12, pp. 223-4; cf. J. Rosenblum (transl.), *Prince of Forgers*, New Castle, 1998.

⁹³ N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, 6 vols., Paris, 1875-92, 1, pp. 381-2, n. 1, 2, pp. 481-8; cf. A.-L.-U. Gasquet, *L'empire byzantin et la monarchie franque*, Paris, 1888, pp. 124-6.

⁹⁴ G. Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, 3rd ed., 6 vols., Kiel, 1880-96, 2, p. 38, n. 2.

⁹⁵ E. Lavis (dir.), *Histoire de France illustrée depuis les origines jusqu'à la Révolution*, 9 vols., Paris, 1900-11, 2, 1, pp. 96-7; A. Lombard, *L'abbé Du Bos. Un initiateur de la pensée moderne*, Paris, 1913, pp. 447-8.

Modern Conformity

Into this interpretive ferment strode the man from *Monumenta*. Wilhelm Gundlach has exerted a powerful, though not wholly benign, influence over the text and interpretation of *EA* 2 through his study of the collection as a whole in 1887 and his edition in 1892.⁹⁶ He rejected *administrationem uos secundum bellice suscepisse* as written, because *secundum*, construed as ‘a second time’, was self-evidently contradicted by *coeperis esse*, ‘you have begun to be’. His inspection – by proxy – of the manuscript revealed no warrant for supplying *rei*, but an(other) obvious solution presented itself: *secundum bellice* must be *Secundae Belgicae*, a breakthrough which he attributed to his collator Ludwig Bethmann.⁹⁷ Gundlach alleged in support that this was not the sole misspelling of *Belgicae* in the collection (it is), and that case endings were no obstacle because they were often confused in the letters; he also observed that *cⁱⁱ* had written *require* in the margin, so something was amiss. With this slight but significant alteration, the letter clearly dated to 486, when Clovis defeated Syagrius and acquired the province of Belgica Secunda, big news indeed for Remigius, its metropolitan bishop. Gundlach granted but a single difficulty: ‘the judgement of the Lord’ implied that Clovis was Christian, yet we all know from Gregory of Tours that he was converted and baptized late in his reign, after his defeat of the Alamanni. No matter: Clovis and the Franks were already Christian when they conquered Gaul – so much for Gregory and his ‘legendary account’.⁹⁸ Untroubled by the irony of jettisoning a narrative while retaining its chronology, Gundlach printed the meaningless *Secundum Belgice* in the main text as one of few modifications, and relegated *Secundae Belgicae* (grammatical, at least) to the apparatus, referring the interested reader to his own work and assigning a date of ‘486?’ to the letter. Master of the field, he marched onward to greater victories.

⁹⁶ Gundlach, *Die Sammlung*, pp. 365-87; Gundlach, *Epistolae Austrasicae*, pp. 110-53.

⁹⁷ Gundlach, *Epistolae Austrasicae*, p. 110.

⁹⁸ Gundlach, *Die Sammlung*, pp. 380-82.

Gundlach converted a maddening passage into a datable reference point, fixing EA 2 in the late 5th century. This was a time of transition in Gaul from Roman to Germanic (or was it?), deeply contested and politically momentous in an age of competing nationalisms, a struggle in which the *Monumenta* were far from neutral: *SANCTUS AMOR PATRIAE DAT ANIMUM*, and all that.⁹⁹ Even more, insertion in an *MGH* text exalted the emendation, occluding the fact that all the changes made had been canvassed before, and turning what had been a perceptible drift in argument toward a date in the 480s into a superficially scientific certainty. Fame beckoned. Paul Viollet promptly cited Gundlach as support for his belief that the letter dated to 481 and Clovis retained the Roman honour with which Childeric had been invested.¹⁰⁰ He was rather less confident as to the identity of this dignity, and derided the notion that the letter proved the king to have been Christian, but the text as endowed with a real Roman province – in alignment with *beneficium*, *prouincia*, and *praetorium* – was already beginning to restrict lines of enquiry. Godefroid Kurth, in his mammoth tome on Clovis, knew that both 486 and 507 had partisans, but supposed that Bethmann had actually read *Secundum Belgice* in the manuscript, ruling out 507. Christianity aside, he plumped for 481: the letter suited a young king better than a veteran who had just overcome a rival.¹⁰¹ Albert Hauck was even moved to abjure former acceptance of the Junghans ‘evasion’, with the proviso that Clovis already ruled much of *Belgica Secunda* prior to victory over Syagrius and the advice better suited his accession.¹⁰² Wilhelm Levison was more cautious: accepting 486, he favoured a gradual, internal process of conversion, at any

⁹⁹ See Wood, *Modern Origins*, pp. 156-7; D. Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises*, London, 1962, p. 71.

¹⁰⁰ P. Viollet, *Histoire des institutions politiques et administratives de la France*, 3 vols., Paris, 1890-1903, 1, p. 185, n. 5; cf. Fustel de Coulanges, 2, pp. 483, n. 3, 485, n. 2.

¹⁰¹ G. Kurth, *Clovis*, 1st ed., Tours, 1896, pp. 240-43, 612.

¹⁰² A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, 1, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1898, p. 580 (cf. 1st ed., Leipzig, 1887, pp. 110, n. 4, 212, n. 1).

time during which it would have been acceptable for Remigius to post this letter.¹⁰³ Even so, the problematic proposals of Gundlach were soon canonized in works of reference.¹⁰⁴

J.B. Bury authored one of the last substantive treatments of *EA 2* in 1924, confronting and confuting the choices on offer. Offering the text *secundum † belgice*, he stated with curt certainty: ‘That the word *secundum* is corrupt is evident, and equally evident that Bethmann’s restoration *Secunde Belgice* is right. This is universally acknowledged and I will waste no words on it’.¹⁰⁵ Gundlach had dated the letter to 486 and held it to describe a Christian king, but while Bury countenanced the second proposition he repudiated the first, pointing out that ‘ecclesiastical tradition’ (Gregory of Tours) was unlikely to recast Clovis as a later and looser Catholic. He called out Pétigny and Kurth on their failure to deal with the Christianity of the letter and affirmed that a date of 481 was ‘built on a void’: Clovis had gained *Belgica Secunda* in war, not by inheritance. Bury stoutly concluded that the letter postdates 496 and ‘teaches us a new and illuminating fact’. Clovis gained power over Roman Gaul in 486:

But he did not at that time make any change in the routine of government and administration. He did not remove the Imperial officials, who were running the province of *Belgica Secunda*, but told them to ‘carry on.’ The taxes would naturally go to the king’s coffers, so far as they exceeded the expenses of administration, but otherwise the machine was allowed to run, as before, without interference for at least ten years.¹⁰⁶

Precise administrative continuity begins to emerge here as the dominant theme.

Critical comment on the refashioned *EA 2* was increasingly confined to footnotes, and the range of interpretations constricted along with it. Herman Fischer dated the letter to ‘the

¹⁰³ W. Levison, *Zur Geschichte des Frankenkönigs Chlodowech* [1898], repr. in *Aus rheinischer und fränkischer Frühzeit: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Düsseldorf, 1948, pp. 226-7; cf. F. Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*, 7, 3, *Die Franken unter der Merovingen*, Leipzig, 1895, p. 190.

¹⁰⁴ A. Molinier, *Les sources de l’histoire de France des origines aux guerres d’Italie (1494)*, 6 vols., Paris, 1901-6, 1, p. 77; W. Wattenbach, E. Dümmler, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter bis zur Mitte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 1904, pp. 121-2; L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l’ancienne Gaule*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., Paris, 1907-15, 3, pp. 81-2; F. Kauffmann, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, 2 vols., Munich, 1913-23, 2, pp. 118-9.

¹⁰⁵ J.B. Bury, *The End of Roman Rule in North Gaul*, in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1, 2, 1924, p. 198.

¹⁰⁶ Bury, *The End*, pp. 198-200; cf. J.B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols., London, 1923, 1, pp. 346-7; J.B. Bury, *The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians*, London, 1928, pp. 243-7.

beginnings of the reign of Clovis’, proof that he had inherited the office of *magister militum*, while Marc Bloch discerned no Christianity (unlike in *EA* 1), rather a resolve to avoid such; flagging the original text while endorsing its emendation, he joined Kurth in dating it to 481, a record of the early subjection of Belgica Secunda.¹⁰⁷ Bruno Krusch contributed his coveted endorsement by way of a footnote in the *Monumenta* house journal of 1928, providing the only explicit reasoning for the emendation: regrettably misled by the inscrutable layout of another *MGH* edition, he believed *Bellica Secunda* to be the majority reading for the name of this province in the manuscripts of the *Notitia Galliarum* (it is not). This Clovis was embarking on a career in the Roman civil service, but need not have been Christian.¹⁰⁸ When Carlo Silva-Tarouca reprinted Gundlach two years later, he added only an obscure note that the province suggested a date of 483.¹⁰⁹

Dissent was muted. D.A. Stracke keenly reviewed the evidence for 481 and 486, settling without palpable enthusiasm on the earlier while warning that *rumor* implied a victory farther from Reims than Soissons.¹¹⁰ Wolfram von den Steinen was alone in finding little to praise in the editorial output of Gundlach, but nonetheless accepted the Bethmann emendation as ‘non-conjecture’.¹¹¹ In the rearguard trailed the doughty Ludwig Schmidt, who at length opted for 482/3: assailing Gundlach, Bury, and Bloch alike, he observed that Clovis was counselled *cum iuuenibus ioca* (‘joke with the young’) and must perforce himself be young. The next clause, advising him to ‘converse with the old’, did not participate in this same logic. As for the Roman language of the text, it was just that, without any specific administrative force; Remigius had

¹⁰⁷ H. Fischer, *The Belief in the Continuity of the Roman Empire among the Franks of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, in *Catholic Historical Review*, 10, 4, 1925, pp. 545-7; M. Bloch, *Observations sur la conquête de la Gaule romaine par les rois francs*, in *Revue Historique*, 154, 2, 1927, pp. 165-6, n. 5; cf. A. van de Vyver, *La victoire contre les Alamans et la conversion du Clovis*, in *RBPB*, 15, 3-4, 1936, p. 863, n. 1.

¹⁰⁸ B. Krusch, *Der Bayernname. Der Kosmograph von Ravenna und die fränkische Völkertafel*, in *NA*, 47, 1928, pp. 66-7, n. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Silva-Tarouca (ed.), pp. 43-4.

¹¹⁰ D.A. Stracke, *Over bekeering en doopsel van Chlodovech*, in *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 5, 1931, pp. 37-40, n. 127.

¹¹¹ W. von den Steinen, *Chlodwigs Übergang zum Christentum. Eine quellenkritische Studie*, in *MIÖG. Ergänzungsbände*, 12, 1932-33, p. 432, nn. 2-3.

learned of the conquest of Belgica Secunda by rumour, so Clovis only ruled part of it, around Tournai, amidst other Salian kings and Syagrius.¹¹² To a thoughtful Joseph Fischer, the paternal role of Remigius and the position of the Gallic episcopate in the Frankish kingdom were both apparent, making the Christianity of Clovis self-evident, and yet the ‘real reason’ for the letter remained debatable.¹¹³ When Floribert Rommel curated a new text of the collection for *Corpus Christianorum*, however, he contented himself with Gundlach, lightly revised.¹¹⁴

As an audacious emendation became the new orthodoxy, the satisfying soup of theories and dates boiled down to a desiccated stock cube of debate over the tenor of *EA* 2 and in which of two years it belonged. The age and religion of Clovis were central: Kurt Aland puzzled over how an obviously Christian letter could have been mailed to a sixteen-year-old who had yet to convert, and reasoned that the king, just like his father, merely sympathized with Christianity in deference to his environs.¹¹⁵ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill favoured 481 for this ‘patronizing’ letter: ‘the pagan barbarian will wish to reflect on the advantages of having the Gallo-Roman church on his side’.¹¹⁶ A.H.M. Jones took it for granted that Clovis kept the provincial administration intact, while Georges Tessier, in his notable volume on Clovis (and more), could spare no more than a page: “‘Great news has reached us”, writes the prelate nonchalantly, “you have taken in hand government of Belgica Secunda””. Whether this could be addressed to a pagan remained unclear, but he cited Bloch approvingly for a date of 486 or so, characteristically wary of undue

¹¹² L. Schmidt, *Aus den Anfängen des salfränkischen Königtums*, in *Klio*, 34, 1942, pp. 312-3; cf. L. Schmidt, *Das Ende der Römerherrschaft in Gallien (Chlodowech und Syagrius)*, in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 48, 1928, pp. 611-8; F. Vercauteren, *Étude sur les civitates de la Belgique seconde. Contribution à l’histoire urbaine du Nord de la France de la fin du III^e à la fin du XI^e siècle*, Brussels, 1934, pp. 44-5; K.F. Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien*, Tübingen, 1948, p. 207.

¹¹³ J. Fischer, *Die Völkerwanderung im Urteil der zeitgenössischen kirchlichen Schriftsteller Galliens unter Einbeziehung des heiligen Augustinus*, Heidelberg, 1947, pp. 265-6.

¹¹⁴ W. Gundlach, F. Rommel (rev.), *Epistulae Austrasicae*, in H.M. Rochais (dir.), *Defensoris Locogiacensis Monachi Liber Scintillarum*. CCSL 117, Turnhout, 1957, pp. 408-9.

¹¹⁵ K. Aland, *Kirchengeschichtliche Entwürfe: alte Kirche, Reformation und Luthertum, Pietismus und Erweckungsbewegung*, Gütersloh, 1960, pp. 29-30.

¹¹⁶ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings*, London, 1962, p. 166.

precision.¹¹⁷ For Karl Hauck, as the Maurists had implied, the letter presaged the acclamation of Clovis at Tours in 508: a ‘mighty, thunderous applause’ welcomed his earlier *adventus* as provincial in *EA* 2, an interpretation of *rumor magnus* suggested by the use of *rumor populi* in the general vicinity of an episcopal acclamation described by a much later text.¹¹⁸ Erich Zöllner was amongst the last even to register *secundum bellice*, only to pronounce its identification as a province ‘unanimously accepted’ and put the letter in 481 due to its ‘didactic tone’.¹¹⁹

No defenders remain for a date after 486; there are few discussions of the real textual problems, only glosses on a single interpretation. The letter has been solved, proof – oblique perhaps – that Clovis took over the Roman province of Belgica Secunda, as a Roman province, early in his reign, a rare stable axis on which to fix the confused history of the late 5th century in Gaul.¹²⁰ For Eugen Ewig, indeed, it is the key to the otherwise mysterious rise of the kings of Tournai: at first subordinate to the legitimate representatives of Roman authority in northern Gaul – Aegidius, Syagrius, and the *comes* Paul – their acquisition of administrative office in Reims gave both Childeric and Clovis a legitimacy of their own to develop under favourable circumstances.¹²¹ This period of transition, in other words, remains as crucial to the late antique

¹¹⁷ A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602. A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols., Oxford, 1964, 1, p. 261; G. Tessier, *Le baptême de Clovis*, Paris, 1964, pp. 82-4.

¹¹⁸ K. Hauck, *Von einer spätantiken Randkultur zum karolingischen Europa*, in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 1, 1967, pp. 32-3, n. 77; cf. *Vita Sollempnis Episcopi Carnoteni*, in B. Krusch, W. Levison (ed.), *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici VII. MGH SSRM VII*, Hanover, 1920, c. 5.

¹¹⁹ E. Zöllner, *Geschichte der Franken bis zur Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1970, pp. 45-6; cf. E.M. Wightman, *Gallia Belgica*, London, 1985, pp. 304-5.

¹²⁰ See A. Lippold, *Chlodovechus*, in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Supplementband XIII*, Stuttgart, 1973, col. 142; R.W. Mathisen, *The Ecclesiastical Aristocracy of Fifth-Century Gaul: a Regional Analysis of Family Structure*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979, pp. 533-4, n. 1502; H.H. Anton, *Franken, III. Historisches*, in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 9, Berlin, 1995, col. 423; R. Kaiser, *Die Franken: Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas?*, Idstein, 1997, no. 9, pp. 83-4; U. Nonn, *Zur Verwaltungsorganisation in der nördlichen Galloromania*, in D. Geuenich (ed.), *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur „Schlacht bei Zülpich“ (496/97). Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 19, Berlin, 1998, p. 82.

¹²¹ E. Ewig, *Die fränkische Reichsbildung*, in T. Schieffer (ed.), *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte*, 1, *Europa im Wandel von der Antike zum Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, 1976, pp. 254-5; E. Ewig, *Die Rheinlande in fränkischer Zeit*, in F. Petri, G. Droege (ed.), *Rheinische Geschichte*, 1, *Altertum und Mittelalter*, 2, *Frühes Mittelalter*, Düsseldorf, 1980, p. 13; cf. E. Ewig, *Clovis I (Chlodovechus)*, in *Lexicon des Mittelalters*, 2, Munich, 1983, col. 1863; K. Schäferdiek, *Remigius von Reims. Kirchenmann einer Umbruchszeit*, in K. Schäferdiek, W.A. Löhr, H.C. Brennecke (ed.), *Schwellexzeit. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Christentums in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, Berlin, 1996, p. 311.

project as it was to pre-war nationalisms, albeit for different reasons; administrative continuity looms large still, but so does what the letter may say as to religious accommodations. Prolonged examination is confined to what it means for relations between the king and the bishops who, one way or another, bent him to their will. B.S. Bachrach deploys the ‘veiled threat’ of EA 2 to illustrate the power of the episcopate, while Edward James deems it ‘an astonishing letter to write to a pagan teenager, portraying him as if he was a Roman official and referring to his bishops’, even as Patrick Geary contends that ‘the young Frank was recognized by the Gallo-Roman leadership as the administrator of *Belgica Secunda* and that although a pagan, he was expected to serve the Christian Roman community’.¹²² Ian Wood, meanwhile, is struck by how Remigius could manage to attribute the military success of Clovis to divine judgement despite his king being a pagan.¹²³ For Brygida Kürbis, the letter is straightforwardly the archetype of all pastoral missives to sovereigns spelling out their Christian responsibilities.¹²⁴

¹²² B.S. Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization, 481-751*, Minneapolis, 1972, p. 7; E. James, *The Origins of France: from Clovis to the Capetians, 500-1000*, London, 1982, p. 29; P. Geary, *Before France and Germany: the Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World*, Oxford, 1988, p. 82; cf. É. Demougeot, *La formation de l’Europe et les invasions barbares*, 2 vols., Paris, 1969-79, 2, pp. 685-8; J.N. Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: the Conversion of Europe*, rev. ed., Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 74, 76; R.W. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition*, Austin, 1993, pp. 121, 125; M. Sot, *Le baptême de Clovis et l’entrée des Francs en romanité*, in *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé*, 1, 1996, pp. 66-7; J. Heuclin, *Hommes de Dieu et fonctionnaires du roi en Gaule du Nord du V^e au IX^e siècle*, Villeneuve-d’Ascq, 1998, pp. 38-9; L. Pietri, *La chrétienté gauloise de la division à l’unité retrouvée*, in J.-M. Mayeur et al. (dir.), *Histoire du Christianisme des origines à nos jours*, 3, Paris, 1998, pp. 332, 342-4; B. Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule. Les premiers temps. D’Hilaire de Poitiers à la fin du VI^e siècle*, Paris, 2000, pp. 122-5; P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: the Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton, 2002, pp. 116-7; G.I. Halfond, *Vouillé, Orléans (511), and the Origins of the Frankish Conciliar Tradition*, in R.W. Mathisen, D. Shanzer (ed.), *The Battle of Vouillé, 507 CE. Where France Began*, Berlin, 2012, pp. 161-2; S. Valente, *Chlodoueci Aduentus: foi et politique en Gaule*, M.A. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2012, pp. 18-52, 102; B. Jussen, *Chlodwig der Gallier. Zur Strukturgeschichte einer historischen Figur*, in M. Meier, S. Patzold (ed.), *Chlodwigs Welt: Organisation von Herrschaft um 500*, Stuttgart, 2014, pp. 32-3.

¹²³ I. Wood, *Gregory of Tours and Clovis*, in *RBPH*, 63, 2, 1985, pp. 259, 261-2, 264, 271; cf. I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, London, 1994, pp. 40-41; D. Shanzer, *Dating the Baptism of Clovis: the Bishop of Vienne vs the Bishop of Tours*, in *EME*, 7, 1, 1998, p. 47; D. König, *Bekehrungsmotiv. Untersuchungen zum Christianisierungsprozess im römischen Westreich und seinen romanisch-germanischen Nachfolgern (4.-8. Jahrhundert)*, Husum, 2008, pp. 88, 472.

¹²⁴ B. Kürbis, *Studia nad Kodeksem Matyldy III. List księżnej Matyldy do Mieszka II*, in *Studia Źródloznawcze*, 30, 1987, pp. 140, 148; cf. V.A. Tyrell, *Merovingian Letters and Letter Writers*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 2012, pp. 132, 310.

This rewritten text can serve opposing ends. Gundlach avowed that it made Clovis a Christian before 486, but Wood has it illuminate the policies of a king not baptized until 508. P.S. Barnwell falls in line here, highlighting the ‘precise terminology Remigius employed’ to portray ‘both Clovis and his ancestors as administering a Roman province – Belgica II’, while Yitzhak Hen dates the letter to when Clovis took power there, an offer of ‘close alliance with the Gallo-Romans and their most significant institution, the Church’.¹²⁵ Hauck and his brand of philology have triggered a habit of hearing fanfare (*rumor magnus*) accompany the solemn entry of King Clovis into Reims as provincial governor, in a Romanizing riposte to the former image of his military acclamation; this refashioned portrait of Clovis is neither positive nor negative in its tone, but conscious of the Roman ‘institutional realities’, however fragmented, which frame his authority.¹²⁶ In the same line, Michel Ruche reduces Clovis to a third-rate imperial bureaucrat, handed a Christian programme on how to be the perfect *rector provinciae*, prioritizing the human problem and the need to eschew bribes; he pauses only to remark that Remigius acts as if the Empire had not fallen.¹²⁷ This consensus is embedded too in the articles prefacing a fine re-examination of the burial of Childeric, where Karl Ferdinand Werner and Edward James deploy *EA 2* to characterize the father of Clovis as a thoroughly Roman soldier-administrator of Belgica Secunda.¹²⁸ Grave danger: when faulty interpretation of a text enters

¹²⁵ P.S. Barnwell, *Emperors, Prefects and Kings: the Roman West, 395-565*, London, 1992, pp. 93-4; Y. Hen, *Clovis, Gregory of Tours, and Pro-Merovingian Propaganda*, in *RBPB*, 71, 2, 1993, p. 275; cf. W.M. Daly, *Clovis: How Barbaric, How Pagan?*, in *Speculum*, 69, 3, 1994, pp. 631-3.

¹²⁶ O. Guillot, *Les origines de la France (de la fin du V^e siècle à la fin du X^e)*, in O. Guillot, Y. Sassier, *Poivoirs et institutions dans la France médiévale*, 2 vols., Paris, 1994, 1, pp. 54-5; A. Chauvot, *Images positives, images négatives des Barbares dans les sources latines à la fin du V^e siècle et au début du VI^e siècle après J.-C.*, in M. Ruche (dir.), *Clovis: histoire et mémoire*, 2 vols., Paris, 1997, 1, *Le baptême de Clovis, l'événement*, p. 12; O. Guillot, *Clovis «Auguste», vecteur des conceptions romano-chrétiennes*, in Ruche (dir.), *Clovis*, 1, pp. 708-9; cf. J. Barbey, *Être roi. Le roi et son gouvernement en France de Clovis à Louis XVI*, Paris, 1992, pp. 18-9; L. Theis, *Clovis de l'histoire au mythe*, Brussels, 1996, pp. 54-5, n. 16; B. Dumézil, *Les racines chrétiennes de l'Europe. Conversion et liberté dans les royaumes barbares, V^e-VIII^e siècle*, Paris, 2005, pp. 145, 152, 218.

¹²⁷ M. Ruche, *Clovis*, Paris, 1996, pp. 202-4, 387-92.

¹²⁸ K.F. Werner, *De Childéric à Clovis: antécédents et conséquences de la bataille de Soissons*, in *Revue Archéologique de Picardie*, 3-4, 1988, p. 4; E. James, *Childéric, Syagrius et la disparition du royaume de Soissons*, in *Revue Archéologique de Picardie*, 3-4, 1988, p. 9; cf. K.F. Werner, *Les origines (avant l'an mil)*, in J. Favier (dir.), *Histoire de France*, 1, Paris, 1984, pp. 286-7, 297-9; K.F. Werner, *La 'conquête franque' de la Gaule: itinéraires historiographiques d'une erreur*, in *BECh*, 154, 1, 1996, pp. 24-5; A. Dierkens, P.

archaeological discussion with its faults concealed, it can end up furnishing a false framework for understanding finds later handled as if they were independent evidence.

Even the most radical treatments of the letter leave its emendation unquestioned. Guy Halsall queries many of the accepted facts about Gaul in the late 5th century, pointing out how little we really know of the chronology, our reliance on Gregory of Tours, and his unreliability. He suggests that the Merovingians originated in a Roman army detachment which assumed a Frankish identity, and repeats what Remigius purportedly wrote: ‘Clovis’ *parentes* had ruled *Belgica Secunda*.¹²⁹ Halsall reads early Frankish history such that he need not argue whether *EA 2* dates from before or after the war with Syagrius, yet the possibility that it might not be from the 480s at all never enters his calculus. Penny MacGeorge, in her own reassessment of the kingdom of Soissons, summarizes the situation of the letter as either 481, on the accession of Clovis, or soon after 486, once he had consolidated his authority over *Belgica Secunda*, the only question its precise meaning for the administrative continuity of northern Gaul.¹³⁰ Bruno Dumézil even states that Clovis received this ‘missive of felicitations’ on mounting the throne in 481/2, its counsel on ruling for the common good – in the Christian tradition of Ambrose, Augustine, and Eustache Deschamps – ‘all the more piquant’ since he was a pagan.¹³¹ Elena Malaspina therefore prints the emendation in the main text of her new edition of the collection, but dissents from Gundlach in dating the letter to 481/2 and rejecting its Christian content: ‘it seems to me too general to constitute a reference to the Christianity of the addressee’.¹³²

Emendation is now fact. The message of *EA 2* is the ‘marked propensity’ of barbarian kingdoms, in the words of Andrew Gillett, ‘to replicate the former administrative borders of

Périn, *The 5th-Century Advance of the Franks in Belgica II: History and Archaeology*, in E. Taayke *et al.* (ed.), *Essays on the Early Franks*, Groningen, 2003, pp. 165-93.

¹²⁹ G. Halsall, *Childeric’s Grave, Clovis’ Succession, and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom* [2001], in G. Halsall (rev.), *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, Leiden, 2010, pp. 170-73, 182-92.

¹³⁰ P. MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 125-30.

¹³¹ B. Dumézil, *Écrire pour le bien de tous. Définition et éloge du bien commun dans les correspondances de l’époque mérovingienne*, in *Revue Française d’Histoire des Idées Politiques*, 32, 2, 2010, pp. 232-3; cf. G. Gandino, *Il mondo franco e l’ideologia dell’espansione*, in *Carlo Magno e le Alpi*, Spoleto, 2007, pp. 27-8.

¹³² Malaspina, pp. 62-5, 114, n. 27.

the Roman provincial administration’’; the Fall of Rome will not take place.¹³³ This conformity as to date and meaning is uniformly reflected in current sourcebooks and handbooks on the period. Stéphane Lebecq can speak for them all with these aperçus on ‘the famous letter of Bishop Remigius to the young Clovis’:

But Childeric was not only a military ally of Rome, he was an agent of Roman power. Although he was the king of a people and not the king of a territory, it is clear that he received an official delegation of territory authority in Northern Gaul; bishop Remigius of Rheims even congratulated the young king Clovis because, when he succeeded his father, he took over (I quote the letter) *administrationem Belgicae Secundae*, just like his parents (*parentes tui*) before him. We can be sure that Childeric controlled the civil administration of the Roman province of Reims.¹³⁴

As with the early modern pursuit of the *magister militum*, this fictive administration of Belgica Secunda has been steadily projected into the past: from Clovis to his father Childeric via our letter, and from him to Count Paul, about whom we know only that his death led to Childeric seizing power; all three are now holders of a non-existent office in a province supposed to have been the nucleus of the Merovingian kingdom.¹³⁵ For Matthias Becker the letter, a response to the ‘loud rumour’ of the defeat of Syagrius, shows Remigius naturally still thinking in the terms of Roman administration, and using its language to veil the usurpation of Belgica Secunda by Clovis.¹³⁶ As the latest contribution to the field puts it, the letter is evidence that the provinces

¹³³ A. Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 28; cf. C. Wickham, *The Fall of Rome Will Not Take Place*, in B.H. Rosenwein, L.K. Little (ed.), *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 45-57.

¹³⁴ S. Lebecq, *The Two Faces of King Childeric: History, Archaeology, Historiography*, in T.F.X. Noble (ed.), *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, London, 2006, p. 274; cf. R.W. Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity*, 2 vols., Ann Arbor, 2003, 1, pp. 135-6, 2, pp. 108-9; R. Kaiser, *Das römische Erbe und das Merowingerreich*, 3rd ed., Munich, 2004, p. 18; L. Pietri et al., *Province ecclésiastique de Reims (Belgica Secunda). Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle* XIV, Paris, 2006, p. 17; A.C. Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: a Reader*, Toronto, 2008, p. 260; L. Pietri, M. Heijmans, *La Gaule Chrétienne (314-614)* (Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire IV), 2 vols., Paris, 2013, ‘Remigius 2’, 2, p. 1601; J. Moorhead, *The Roman Empire Divided, 400-700*, 2nd ed., New York, 2013, p. 80.

¹³⁵ E. Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 5th ed., Stuttgart, 2006, pp. 16-7; E. Ewig, *Die Franken und Rom (3.-5. Jahrhundert). Versuch einer Übersicht*, in *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, 71, 2007, p. 36; cf. R. Kaiser, S. Scholz, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Franken und der Merowinger, Vom 3. Jahrhundert bis 751*, Stuttgart, 2012, pp. 100-101.

¹³⁶ M. Becker, *Chlodwig I.: Der Aufstieg der Merowinger und das Ende der antiken Welt*, Munich, 2011, pp. 153-5.

remained the framework of meaning for both the new and old elites, Frankish and Gallo-Roman alike.¹³⁷ The letter may divide historians, but only between 481 and 486 – both still have their cadres. The earlier date fits *rumor* better, since it implies that the event was far from Reims, and Tournai (where Childeric was buried) is farther away than Soissons (where Syagrius was presumably defeated). Yet why, asks one scholar, take this advice seriously, when its ‘recipient was a pagan teenager’?¹³⁸ Because, another counters, the young king in Belgica Secunda was ‘l’homme de Rome *contre* Syagrius’, sympathetic to Christianity, collaborating with the Gallic Church, and legitimized by it in the most Roman terms.¹³⁹

This far and no farther. Since Gundlach, *Secundum Belgice* has made the journey from history in square brackets to empirical truth.¹⁴⁰ Such unanimity rests on slender support: a bold emendation offered without justification. The problem is not unique to this text, for editions in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* have a seldom appreciated tendency to interpret sources implicitly, by editorial presentation, rather than explicitly, by commentary. The result appears to be evidence when it is actually argument, lending specious textual authority to their historical judgements. These editions are provisional and polemical, and must be handled with care; often, as here, they create for themselves a splendid isolation, citing none of the rich scholarship with which they silently engaged. Once this conceit is dispelled, the Gundlach consensus is not so very different from the less outwardly disciplined theories of earlier scholars in the invigorating intellectual turbulence of previous centuries – a hypothesis; nothing more.

¹³⁷ S. Dick, *Childerich und Chlodwig: fränkische Herrschafts- und Gesellschaftsorganisation um 500*, in Meier, Patzold (ed.), pp. 376-7.

¹³⁸ J. Vanderspoel, *From Empires to Kingdoms in the Late Antique West*, in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, Chichester, 2009, pp. 430-32.

¹³⁹ M.-C. Isaïa, *Remi de Reims. Mémoire d’un saint, histoire d’une Église*, Paris, 2010, pp. 106-10, 777; cf. M.-C. Isaïa, *Rumor ad nos magnum pervenit. Information et circulation des nouvelles aux origines du royaume franc*, in M. Billoré, M. Soria (dir.), *La Rumeur au Moyen Âge. Du mépris à la manipulation (V^e-XV^e siècle)*, Rennes, 2011, pp. 116-7; M. Becher, *Chlodwig: zwischen Biographie und Quellenkritik*, in Meier, Patzold (ed.), p. 58.

¹⁴⁰ See E. Badian, *History from ‘Square Brackets’*, in *ZPE*, 79, 1989, pp. 59-70.

Since *EA 2* was copied in the 9th century, no reader has been able to understand what it means *as written*. Everyone has fallen back on emendation, addition, or distortion to take some meaning out of it. Interpretation of the letter is marked by an excess of contradictory certainties: clearly dating to 481, or 486, plainly post-496, or else 507, early or late; manifestly Christian, consigning the chronology of Gregory of Tours to the reject pile, or patently sent to a pagan king, rescuing his reliability; its opening proves that Clovis, and his forefathers Childeric and Merovech, were *magistri militum*, that Clovis had recently campaigned against an enemy, was readying to do so, or else had undertaken government of Belgica Secunda; it is patronizing, a bizarre missive to dispatch to a young pagan king, or the tender advice of a fatherly bishop; it shakes the iron fist of the Gallo-Roman episcopate at this ruler, or is a delicate despatch in the aftermath of the rout of Syagrius; it may not be addressed to Clovis at all (we have yet to hear that it was not written by Remigius). While modern comment aligns itself behind Gundlach in his edition and mostly in his date, these are not intrinsically better solutions to the problems of the text than those proposed by Sirmond or even *cⁱⁱ*. A cynic might expect that the outstanding questions of date and tone will only serve to attract future bold, indeed improbable conjectures, certain to be framed as the self-evident resolution to a seeming paradox.

The importance of *EA 2* has never been in doubt and, amidst a scarcity of sources, to try to make use of it is only proper. But how? The letter is intractable: whereas *EA 1* gives the historian quite a lot of material, and Gregory provides it with fair context, the next item in the collection drifts unmoored. Gundlach anchored the letter, offering a means to date it, a setting in which to get sense out of it, a text supporting his interpretation. Historians have accepted his work with gratitude, but at no point since he published has there been discussion as to whether his changes were correct – or plausible. A new orthodoxy, without argument or interrogation, maintained stubbornly in the face of the real difficulties of the text; it has become stale through lack of challenge, and bracing scepticism is badly needed. The protracted interpretive history

of *EA 2* has seen a perceptible flotation of the various positions on its meaning away from their moorings. The phenomenon dates back to when early modern scholars agreed with Sirmond without his textual basis, just as a dating first hazarded by Dubos now garners assent from those who would shy away from his individual project. The emended text of Gundlach, which he necessarily tied to a Christian Clovis, has likewise been adopted by both those who retain the date of his baptism in 496 or so and those who delay it until 508. The views set out above can be found in almost any combination, often compartmentalized into discrete historiographical strands, but there is no strong case for that amalgam of opinions now so entrenched – indeed there are considerable problems with it. Study of one of the few contemporary witnesses to the reign of Clovis is becalmed because we believe that its most insurmountable obstacles have long since been overcome. They have not.

Commentary

Our own approach is conservative: to intervene minimally and emend the received text as lightly as possible, explaining ourselves at every step. This can in fact be done, makes the text easier (not harder) to understand, and has never to date been attempted. We are also the first editors to take into account the fact that, like many late antique authors, Remigius writes prose with an accentual rhythm, one which yields certain predictable patterns at the end of clauses.¹⁴¹ The key point to note is that, in general, this confirms that the text as corrected by *cⁱⁱ* is not corrupt: most *clausulae* have one of the three accepted rhythmical patterns.

1-2 DOMINO INSIGNI ET MERITIS MAGNIFICO hlodoûeo RĒGI REMIGIUS
EPISCOPUS

¹⁴¹ For a brief introduction, see J.G.F. Powell, *Prose-Rhythm, Latin*, in S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth (ed.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed., Oxford, 2012, pp. 1224-5.

The headings of the *EA* are original to the letters.¹⁴² Clovis is highlighted in lower case, and perhaps by the dotting of *hlodoûeo* and *ĀREGI*. The spelling of his name in *EA* 1-2, lacking an initial *c-*, has no contemporary Gallic parallel, although many forms are attested; by the 9th century, *chl-* tended to be simplified to *hl-*.¹⁴³ *DOMINUS* is a standard honorific, but *INSIGNI ET MERITIS MAGNIFICO* is unique in this collection, indeed unique altogether.¹⁴⁴ Remigius combines elements familiar from Roman titlature, but mentions no imperial honour as such, whereas he does explicitly call Clovis king.¹⁴⁵

3 Rumor ad nos magnum peruenit ·

The force of *rumor* is opposite to first-hand information: ‘news’, be it good or bad.¹⁴⁶ Correspondents from Ruricius of Limoges to Peter the Venerable found *rumor peruenit* to be an apposite announcement to open their missives.¹⁴⁷ The simplest solution for *magnum* is a gender error by author or scribe, thinking *rumor* to be neuter: it could be a case error for *magnus*, or else act adverbially, but the translation would be the same.¹⁴⁸ Remigius has received ‘important news’, public knowledge not private to the bishop and king. Augustine, saluting Olympius on his recent (and bloody) elevation as chief minister of Honorius, wrote that *fama*

¹⁴² Barrett, Woudhuysen, pp. 43-4.

¹⁴³ Avitus of Vienne, *Ep* 46, in R. Peiper (ed.), *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis Episcopi Opera quae Supersunt*. MGH AA VI.2, Berlin, 1883; Clovis, *Ep ad episcopos*; Orléans (511), *Ep ad Regem*, in C. de Clercq (ed.), *Concilia Galliae, A. 511–A. 695*. CCSL 148A, Turnhout, 1963; cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae*, II.41, III.3-4.

¹⁴⁴ M.B. O’Brien, *Titles of Address in Christian Latin Epistolography to 543 A.D.*, Ph.D. Thesis, Catholic University of America, Washington, 1930, p. 149.

¹⁴⁵ See H. Wolfram, *Intitulatio I. Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts*. *MIÖG Ergänzungsbände*, 21, 1967, pp. 44, 111-2.

¹⁴⁶ Isaïa, *Rumor*, p. 112; M. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History*, Manchester, 2011, pp. 292-4. All other uses of *rumor* in Dümmler (dir.) bear this sense: *Epp Arelatenses*, 6, 15, 56; *S. Bonifatii et Lulli Epp*, 1, 6, 8, 10; *Epp Aevi Merowingici*, 5-6; *Epp Wisigoticae*, 18.

¹⁴⁷ Ruricius of Limoges, *Epistulae*, in R. Demeulenaere, J. Mulders (ed.), *Scriptores Minores Galliae*. CCSL 64, Turnhout, 1985, II.22; Peter the Venerable, *Epistulae*, in G. Constable (ed.), *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*. *Harvard Historical Studies* 78, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1967, no. 64.

¹⁴⁸ See C.T. Lewis, C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1879, s.v. ‘magnus’, II.B.3; *OLD*, s.v. ‘rumor’.

had brought word; he was uncertain whether the rumour was true, but the point was to get in touch as soon as possible and urge him to a prudent (that is to say, anti-Donatist) use of his new power.¹⁴⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris began one letter by saying, ‘rumour is that the Goths have moved their camps onto Roman soil: we wretched inhabitants of Clermont are always the entrance for this attack’, a vivid evocation of the spread of news and fear in wartime.¹⁵⁰ Clovis himself, after invading the Visigothic kingdom, addressed his bishops by letter with the words *Enuntiante fama* (‘Rumour reporting’).¹⁵¹ According to Gregory of Tours, the crowd at his trial in Berny-Rivière raised a *rumor magnus* questioning the charges levelled against him, whereas the Saxon *dux* Bertoald, counselling the campaigning Chlothar II to back away slowly, let it be known that his promised death would be a *rumor magnus* heard by all peoples.¹⁵² These words are dependent on context: they are flexible and have no inherent tone.

3-4 administrationem uos secundum bellicè suscepisse ;

The question is the meaning of *secundum bellicè*. Both words are dotted over their final letters, which has encouraged emendation. In other cases of error *cⁱⁱ* supplies a correction, but here has written *r* in the margin, for *require*, signalling that he simply does not understand.¹⁵³ What *cⁱ* wrote is clear enough, however, and there is good reason to accept it. Gundlach prints nonsense (*Secundum Belgice* has no meaning), and nonsense not present in the manuscript. At least Bethmann makes grammatical sense with his *Secundae Belgicae*, but the emendation as

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, *Epistulae*, in A. Goldbacher (ed.), *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponiensis Episcopi Epistulae, Pars II. Ep. XXXI-CXXXIII. CSEL 34*, Vienna, 1898, XCVI.1.

¹⁵⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, in A. Loyen (ed.), *Sidoine Apollinaire*, 3 vols., Paris, 1960-70, VII.1.1.

¹⁵¹ Clovis, *Ep ad episcopos*.

¹⁵² Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, V.49; *Liber Historiae Francorum*, in B. Krusch (ed.), *Fredegarii et Aliorum Chronica. Vitae Sanctorum. MGH SSRM II*, Hanover, 1888, c. 41.

¹⁵³ BAV, Pal. lat. 869, fols. 19r, 27r (cf. 9v, 21v; ‘r’, 3r, 5r, 18v, 21v; long ‘r’, 15v, 17v, 24v; ‘R’, 7r, 9r, 11r, 29v); E.A. Lowe, *The Oldest Omission Signs in Latin Manuscripts: their Origin and Significance*, in E.A. Lowe, L. Bieler (ed.), *Palaeographical Papers, 1907-1965*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1972, 2, pp. 379-80; A. Cappelli, *Lexicon Abbreviaturarum. Dizionario di Abbreviature latine ed italiane*, 7th ed., Milan, 2011, p. 495.

it stands is gibberish – a vitiation of the text. Emending it to *Secundum Belgice* (for *Secundae Belgicae*) calls for both case and gender error, as well as a spelling mistake, which remains true even if one points to the form *Bellica* elsewhere. Regardless of one 6th-century manuscript of the *Notitia Galliarum* reporting this reading, the crucial objection is that *c*ⁱ himself does not confuse *l* and *g*, as one may perceive from *uulgus* just four lines below *bellicè*.¹⁵⁴ The formula *administratio* with a provincial name in the genitive is extremely rare, moreover, without any contemporary instances.¹⁵⁵ The province, besides, was *Belgica Secunda*, all but never *Secunda Belgica* (*r* for *reverte*, ‘reverse’, is also unattested).¹⁵⁶ The sole 6th-century Gallic usage reflects this, and did not impel scribes to a riot of error: Gregory of Tours (for it is he) equates *Belgica Secunda*, the suburb of Reims, and its territory.¹⁵⁷ In such confines, Remigius could scarcely pretend to have heard of a takeover by rumour, nor is it certain that the flashpoints of the early career of Clovis (Cambrai, Soissons, Tournai) were still thought to be in said region. Outside lists of provinces or offices, *Belgica Secunda* is non-existent; the one other 6th-century usage is by noted North African bishop Facundus of Hermiane, who ascribes it to Hilary of Poitiers two centuries earlier.¹⁵⁸ Ewig was onto something when he cited *EA* 2 as the last gasp of this provincial name before three centuries of ensuing oblivion – he was only out by one.¹⁵⁹ In sum, the ‘emendation’ is the wrong phrase in the wrong place.

These crucial words have sustained punishing critical bombardment, but what do they mean as written? For *bellice*, the logical implied complement of the feminine gender (*bellicae*)

¹⁵⁴ BnF, lat. 12097, fol. 142r; *Notitia Galliarum*, in T. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora I. MGH AA IX*, Berlin, 1902, VI; cf. *EA* 1, ‘gloriosae’, ‘gloriam’, ‘neglecto’.

¹⁵⁵ Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos Libri VIII*, in W. Kroll, F. Skutsch (ed.), *Julii Firmici Materni Matheseos Libri VIII. Bibliotheca Teubneriana*, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1897-1913, II.29.10; Tacitus, *Historiae*, 2.58.1.

¹⁵⁶ *ND*, in O. Seeck (ed.), *ND*, Berlin, 1876, *Occ.*, I.46, I.74, III.20, V.140, XI.56, 57, XXII.8/27, XXXVIII.1, 6, XLII.39-42, 67; *Laterculus Polemii Silvii*, in Seeck (ed.), III.10; *Verona List*, in T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 203; cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII.3.6.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Passione et Virtutibus Sancti Iuliani Martyris*, in B. Krusch (ed.), *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Miracula et Opera Minora. MGH SSRM I.2*, 2nd ed., Hanover, 1969, c. 32.

¹⁵⁸ Facundus of Hermiane, *Pro Defensione Trium Capitulum Libri XII (ad Iustinianum)*, in J.M. Clément, R. Vander Plaetse (ed.), *Facundus Hermianensis. Opera Omnia. CCSL 90A*, Turnhout, 1974, X.6.

¹⁵⁹ E. Ewig, *Kaiserliche und apostolische Tradition im mittelalterlichen Trier*, in E. Ewig, H. Atsma (ed.), *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien. Gessamelte Schriften (1952-73)*, 2 vols., Munich, 1976-9, 2, p. 76.

is *rei*, regularly omitted; ellipsis is a feature of epistolary *brevitas*, and *res bellica* is absolutely standard Classical and late Latin usage for ‘conduct of war’ or ‘military matters’, so we should take this word to be understood.¹⁶⁰ The formula *administrare rem bellicam* is rare (compared with *administrare bellum*, well attested in contemporary literature), but it is used by Cicero and Sulpicius Severus in the same sense, ‘to conduct a campaign, wage war’, a bellicose counterpart to the far more common *administrare rem publicam*.¹⁶¹ By definition, as Charisius points out, the verb as a part of speech signifies *administrationem rei* (doing stuff).¹⁶² As for *suscipio* with *administrationem*, both cover a range of contexts – military, civil, managerial; the point is that their conjunction (not itself overly frequent) is a periphrasis for *administrare*, ‘to administer, manage’, without positive or negative force.¹⁶³ One 6th-century follower of Cassiodorus, considering the qualifications required by St Paul for the episcopate, warned the prospective bishop to guard against the sin of pride and not to believe that he *administrationem saeculi suscepisse*, while Isidore of Seville recorded for the year 369 that Athanaric, becoming the first king of the Goths, *administrationem suscepit*.¹⁶⁴ Clovis, in other words, is waging war.

What of *secundum*? Not the common preposition (no accusative object), it could be an adverb, ‘for a second time’, but this is exceedingly rare. More likely is the standard adjective,

¹⁶⁰ *TLL*, s.v. ‘bellicus’; e.g. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, IV.41, V.26, IX.17, IX.38, XXII.25, XXXVI.10, XLIV.1; Lactantius, *DI*, in E. Heck, A. Wlosok (ed.), *Divinarum Institutionum Libri Septem*, 4 vols., Munich, 2005–11, I.22.4; Ambrose, *De Officiis*, in M. Testard (ed.), *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis de Officiis*. *CCSL* 15, Turnhout, 2000, I.35; *Pan Lat* 2 (XII), 8.1 (see also 11 (III), 5.1; 12 (IX), 1.4); Eucherius of Lyon, *Passio Acaunensium Martyrum*, in B. Krusch (ed.), *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici et Antiquiorum Aliquot I*. *MGH SSRM III*, Hanover, 1896, c. 3; Eugippius, *Commemoratorium de Vita Sancti Severini*, in P. Régerat (ed.-transl.), *Vie de Saint Séverin*. *SC* 374, Paris, 1991, c. 19; H. Halla-aho, *Epistolary Latin*, in J. Clackson (ed.), *A Companion to the Latin Language*, Chichester, 2011, pp. 430–34.

¹⁶¹ Cicero, *De Divinatione*, II.36 (76); Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, in G. Senneville-Grave (ed.), *Chroniques*. *SC* 441, Paris, 1999, I.50.4 (see also I.34.7); cf. II Samuel 11:7; *Pan Lat* 2 (XII), 32.1; Orosius, *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, in M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet (ed.-transl.), *Histoires contre les païens*, 2 vols., Paris, 1990–91, VII.15.7.

¹⁶² Charisius, *Ars Grammatica*, in K. Barwick, F. Kühnert (ed.), *Flavii Sospatri Charisii Artis Grammaticae Libri V*, rev. ed., Leipzig, 1964, II.8.

¹⁶³ *OLD*, s.v. ‘suscipio’, 8.a, 9.a; *TLL*, s.v. ‘administratio’, II, III.1.a–b; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVI.7.4; *CTh* III.6.1 int., VI.22.8, 35.9; *Dig.* XXVI.7.39.8, XXVII.1.30.1, XLIV.7.5 pr., XLVII.2.54.3.

¹⁶⁴ Disciple of Cassiodorus, *Commentaria in Epistulas Sancti Pauli, ad Timotheum I*, c. 3, in Migne (ed.), *PL*, 68, col. 665; Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum*, in C. Rodríguez Alonso, *Las historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos de Isidoro de Sevilla. Estudio, edición crítica y traducción*, León, 1975, c. 6.

‘another’, which agrees with the sense of continuity at l. 4. What this requires is emendation to *secundam* in order to qualify *administrationem*, a simple gender error perhaps made with the preposition in mind (in our English translation we render ‘another’ with ‘war’, by hypallage or transferred epithet, solely for the sake of style).¹⁶⁵ The easiest interpretation of the marginal *r̄* is that it flags the need for this correction. One could also take *secundam* to mean ‘successful’, as proper to ‘affairs or activities, especially military’, which would account for the subsequent martial themes of the letter, but the bulk of it does not demand a great victory.¹⁶⁶ Remigius has heard that his king has undertaken another war, or a successful one; this is a matter for historical judgement. *Belgica Secunda* vanishes, and with it the continuity of Roman provincial administration in Francia.

4-5 non est nouum · ut coeperis esse sicut parentes tui semper fuerunt ·

Whatever has happened has happened before, and *non est nouum ut* is another formula with ‘official’ resonance, here in the *Digest*.¹⁶⁷ And *coeperis*? This verb normally has inceptive force, but in late Latin, as in the Vulgate, it can act pleonastically with an infinitive to duplicate the perfect: ‘you have been’.¹⁶⁸ Clovis has done something – and *coeperis* cannot fix it at the start of his reign – which his *parentes* have already done. Remigius does not say *pater*, and this would be a jolly offhand way to mention Childeric if the letter dated to 481 when he had just

¹⁶⁵ A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, Turnhout, 1962, s.v. ‘secundum’, 3.

¹⁶⁶ *OLD*, s.v. ‘secundus¹’, 4, b.

¹⁶⁷ *Dig.* I.3.26, XIX.1.10, XXXVII.4.8.14, XLI.1.46, L.17.85.1.

¹⁶⁸ J.N. Adams, *Social Variation and the Latin Language*, Cambridge, 2013, pp. 825-7, 836; P. Burton, *Christian Latin*, in Clackson (ed.), pp. 498-9; V. Väänänen, *Introduction au Latin vulgaire*, 3rd ed., Paris, 1981, pp. 210, 214; cf. A. Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, Leiden, 2013, pp. 263-4; H. Petersmann, *Petrone urbane Prosa: Untersuchungen zu Sprache und Text (Syntax)*, Vienna, 1977, pp. 191-2; Julius Firmicus Maternus, C.A. Forbes (transl.), *The Error of the Pagan Religions*, New York, 1970, p. 191, n. 325; J.B. Hofmann, A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, Munich, 1965, p. 796; B.H. Skahill, *The Syntax of the Variae of Cassiodorus*, Ph.D. Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1934, pp. 200-203; E. Löfstedt, *Philologischer Kommentar zur Peregrinatio Aetheriae: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der lateinischen Sprache*, Uppsala, 1911, pp. 209-10.

dropped dead. It is more probably an allusion to the ancestors of Clovis: *EA* 34 glosses *parentes nostri* ('our kin') as *Francorum reges* ('the kings of the Franks').¹⁶⁹ Remigius has heard that Clovis, once again, has done something warlike, in the manner of his predecessors. Such is the context – be it general (the belligerent Frankish kings) or particular (a specific conflict) – for the instructions which make up the balance of the letter.

5 Hoc inprimis agendum ·

With *est* understood, this clause marks a shift from descriptive opening to imperative body. The *hoc* to come is a list of boilerplate sentiments with a long Classical pedigree in the standard rhetorical education, which Remigius could also have absorbed via the panegyrics of Sidonius Apollinaris, an obvious contemporary source.¹⁷⁰ The stereotyped advice cannot prove that a campaign is in the planning, or ongoing, at the time of writing, for it suits peace as well as war; resist the temptation to argue for any date from the wholly conventional nature of the content or tone. When a later bishop contacted the newly enthroned Theudebert I, he adopted a polite and flowery voice in deference to their lack of acquaintance, whereas Remigius here is direct, which need not connote disrespect but familiarity; the first sentence aside, he does after all employ *tu* throughout (albeit *uestro* twice).¹⁷¹ He is equally anodyne in *EA* 1, written when he and Clovis were close: 'your soul duly composed, govern the kingdom the more shrewdly, taking sounder counsel in your zeal for serenity', superfluous for a king so experienced, by any chronology, at this point, and Clovis can scarcely have required a memo that 'you are the head

¹⁶⁹ *OLD*, s.v. 'parens²', 2; cf. *CTh* X.5.1.

¹⁷⁰ L.K. Born, *The Perfect Prince According to the Latin Panegyrists*, in *American Journal of Philology*, 55, 1, 1934, pp. 20-35; cf. D.A. Russell, N.G. Wilson (ed.-transl.), *Menander Rhetor: a Commentary*, Oxford, 1981, II.1-2, 10, 12.

¹⁷¹ *EA* 10; cf. Malaspina, n. 295.

of the peoples, and you sustain the government'. The quality of the admonitions could simply reflect the constraints of writing to a king – sound advice does not suffer for repetition.

5-6 ut domini iudicium a te // non uacillet .

In this final clause (expressed with *ne* in Classical Latin), *non* gave *cⁱ* some trouble; he wrote *no-*, which *cⁱⁱ* changed to *n-*, a standard abbreviation.¹⁷² There is no dodging the Christian sentiment of the clause, and the conclusion that the addressee was Christian: the king must not alienate the Lord. All who date letter before conversion must explain this – Gundlach at least faced the consequences of his early dating squarely. Protesting that it is ‘not as Christian as it could be’ is no way out, unprovable deduction from hypothesized tone used to contradict the plain meaning of words. The letter presumes that Clovis was Christian, even if it does not then tell us what kind, Arian or Catholic, nor if or when he had been baptized.¹⁷³

6-7 ubi tui meriti qui per industriam humilitatis tuae ad summum culminisque peruenit .

While *cⁱⁱ* has made no comment, this clause must be corrupt: the genitive *tui meriti* does not depend on anything, the relative pronoun *qui* lacks a masculine antecedent, and the following text through to *peruenit* is not subordinated to any main clause. The root of the problem is *qui*, which deprives us of this last and interrupts the chiasmus of *tui meriti* and *humilitatis tuae*, obviously related in some way. The source of the confusion may have been the following *per*: the original perhaps read *quippe* (‘that is to say, indeed’), rather than *qui*, in

¹⁷² Cappelli, p. 228; W.M. Lindsay, *Notae Latinae. An Account of Abbreviation in Latin MSS. of the Early Minuscule Period (c. 700-850)*, Cambridge, 1915, pp. 143-5; D. Bains, *A Supplement to Notae Latinae*, Cambridge, 1936, p. 25.

¹⁷³ cf. Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 266-7; I. Wood, *Arians, Catholics, and Vouillé*, in Mathisen, Shanzer (ed.), *Battle*, pp. 139-41.

some form which has been misunderstood. Standard abbreviations of *quippe* include *qp* and *qpp*, with or without an *-e*; standing before *per*, itself shortened to *p*, it is easy to imagine a scribe confronting a string of *ps* and thinking the *-p* or *-pp* of *quippe* duplicated, particularly since the *q-* could also be written *qⁱ*, identical to the typical abbreviation of *qui*.¹⁷⁴ This proposal makes *per industriam humilitatis tuae* an explanation of or gloss on what precedes *quippe*, and gives us back our main clause. When then of *tui meriti*? These words are the context for what has happened, and, as the subsequent gloss shows, explain how it happened (by means of ‘your merit’). There are two basic options: to emend to *tuo merito*, though it is hard to see why such a mistake would have been made, or to suppose that some word like *causa* or *gratia* has been lost. Since both were commonly abbreviated, *causa* to as little as the letter *c*, it is easy to see how either might have dropped out.¹⁷⁵ We therefore suggest the diagnostic conjecture of *causa* before *tui meriti*. The striking phrase *industriam humilitatis tuae* cements the Christianity of the letter, and is a coinage of its author; both Avitus of Vienne and Nicetius of Trier similarly dwell on humility in their letters concerning the baptism of Clovis.¹⁷⁶

Next is *ad summum culminisque*, where *-que* is apparently redundant; however, the prose rhythm (*cursus planus*) confirms it is authentic to the text, suggesting that something has dropped out, the other half of some pair of genitives, between the two words. Comparison with roughly contemporary texts indicates that *fastigium* was a natural complement to *culmen*, and offers a plausible restoration.¹⁷⁷ We propose to read *ad summum <fastigii> culminisque*: ‘to the height of the peak and the summit’. Finally, *peruenit*, which is typically read in error of person for *pervenisti*, or *perueneris* in the subjunctive with *ubi*. Yet *ad summum <fastigii>*

¹⁷⁴ Cappelli, p. 312; Lindsay, pp. 251-2; Bains, p. 39.

¹⁷⁵ Lindsay, pp. 92-6, 421-2.

¹⁷⁶ Avitus of Vienne, *Ep* 46; *EA* 8; cf. G. Reverdy, *Note sur l'interprétation d'un passage d'Avitus*, in *Le Moyen Âge*, 26, 1913, p. 277, n. 2; von den Steinen, p. 483, n. 21.

¹⁷⁷ e.g. Eusebius Gallicanus, *De Revelatione Corporis Beati Stephani*, in F. Glorie (ed.), *Collectio Homiliarum*, 3 vols., Turnhout, 1970-71, 3; Eusebius of Vercelli, *De Trinitate Libelli Septem*, in V. Bulhart (ed.), *Eusebius Vercellensis Episcopi quae Supersunt*, Turnhout, 1957, V.27.

culminisque peruenit is not only a correct *cursus planus*, but also parallels a line of Ausonius, *ad summum columen peruenit* ('he has reached the highest peak'). The most recent subject of a main verb (at ll. 5-6) is *domini iudicium*, and so Remigius may mean to say here that Clovis must take care that the judgement of God not waver from him when *it* has reached such a high pitch through the qualities of the king – his merit and his humility.

The precise significance of the *summum <fastigii> culminisque* to which divine judgement has attained is unclear: perhaps just the peak of success, but the language is rich with official and honorary significance. Ausonius pairs *summum columen* with *honorum* for the praetorian prefecture; not the literal meaning here (*cf.* 476 AD), but if a precise dignity it is clearly great.¹⁷⁸ Gregory of Tours relates that the emperor Anastasius granted Clovis honours too: after defeating the Visigoths he was made consul or *patricius*.¹⁷⁹ But this was an honorary dignity, 'a name, a shadow, an empty pageant', which added nothing to 'the actual, or legal authority of Clovis'; the 'antique title' suffused him in a Roman glow, tacitly recognising 'the usurpation of Gaul'.¹⁸⁰ The bishops gathered at Clermont in 535 called the throne occupied by Theudebert I the *culmen*, and so in our letter a more elevated kingship than that of some Salian Franks *circa* 481 must be meant.¹⁸¹ The *summum* should be the preeminent kingship: Venantius Fortunatus labels Chlothar I, next king after Clovis to be sole ruler of Gaul, *sublimi vertice rector* ('ruler on the highest peak').¹⁸² The conquest of Soissons in 486 just will not cut it. The *populorum caput* ('head of the peoples') in *EA* 1, here Clovis is a, or the, senior king.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Ausonius, *Epicedion in patrem*, in R.P.H. Green (ed.), *Decimi Magni Ausonii Opera*, Oxford, 1999, ll. 41-2; *cf.* Symmachus, *Ep* IV.68, in O. Seeck (ed.), *Q. Aurelii Symmachi quae Supersunt. MGH AA VI.1*, Berlin, 1883; Ausonius, *Lectori salutem*, in Green (ed.), ll. 35-6; *TLL*, s.v. 'culmen', II.b.1-2.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, II.38 (with its 'Capitulatio'); *cf.* R.W. Mathisen, *Clovis, Anastasius, and Political Status in 508 C.E.: the Frankish Aftermath of the Battle of Vouillé*, in Mathisen, Shanzer (ed.), *Battle*, pp. 79-110.

¹⁸⁰ Gibbon, 2, p. 470.

¹⁸¹ Clermont (535), in de Clercq (ed.).

¹⁸² Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, in M. Reydellet (ed.), *Poèmes*, 3 vols., Paris, 1994-2004, VI.2, l. 49 (see also V.3, l. 16).

¹⁸³ *cf.* H.H. Anton, *Troia-Herkunft, origo gentis und frühe Verfaßtheit der Franken in der gallisch-fränkischen Tradition des 5. bis 8. Jahrhunderts*, in *MIÖG*, 108, 1-4, 2000, p. 28, n. 83.

Remigius represented this in the most Roman terms, perhaps drawing from an epistolary poem meditating on family attainment to link back subtly to Clovis equalling his kin.

7-8 quia quod · uulgus dicitur · actus hominis probatur ;

This is a problematic passage: the adage as written does not conform to the norms of accentual prose rhythm, yielding a *trispondaicus*, and since authors strove to avoid such, the text seems to be corrupt, something which the opaque sense tells the reader anyway. The origin of the saying is not certain, however, and so it cannot simply be restored. We leave the text in daggers, but the simplest solution is to read *actus homines probant*, for a *planus* (a *clausula* ending favoured by Remigius): this supposes that an abbreviation stroke above *probat* has been misread to stand for a passive, perhaps because of the ambiguous number of *actus*, and accepts a phonetic equivalence of *e* and *i* in *hominis*. As for the source, the closest usage is by Minucius Felix: ‘but the mind is free, and so the action of a man (*actus hominis*), not the status, is judged (*iudicatur*)’.¹⁸⁴ This must be the general idea, though perhaps not a citation, seeing that the text survives in only one copy, transmitted as book eight of the 4th-century anti-pagan tract *Adversus Nationes* by Arnobius Afer, teacher of Lactantius.¹⁸⁵ Remigius more likely drinks of a common Classical well, but the parallel does clarify that the sense of *probatur* is not ‘proven’ but ‘tested, judged’. The outstanding problem is *uulgus*, evidently a case error for *uulgo*.¹⁸⁶

8-10 consiliarios tibi adhibere debes qui famam // tuam possint ornare · et beneficium tuum castum et honestum esse debet .’

¹⁸⁴ Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, in B. Kytzler (ed.), *M. Minuci Felicis Octavius*, Leipzig, 1982, 36.1; for the idea in general, see also Proverbs 27:21.

¹⁸⁵ See BnF, lat. 1661, fol. 162r.

¹⁸⁶ cf. C. Du Fresne, sieur Du Cange, L. Favre (rev.), *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 10 vols., Niort, 1884-7, s.v. ‘vulgus’.

The *possent* of *cⁱ* has been corrected to *possint* by *cⁱⁱ* for sequence of tenses. These royal *consiliarios* are distinct from the *sacerdotibus* and could be laymen, even magnates. Academic effort aside, *beneficium* is not a technical usage: such a meaning would in no way fit the general admonitory content of the letter, and the word came only slowly, from the late 7th century, to designate a legal grant of land or a form of landholding.¹⁸⁷ Read Lactantius and learn: ‘nothing must be done by the just man except what is *beneficium*’.¹⁸⁸

10-11 *et sacerdotibus tuis honorem debebis deferre .’ et ad eorum consilia semper // recurrere*
;

The *honorem* is a marginal addition of *cⁱⁱ*, and unnecessary: the verb *deferre* can govern the dative *sacerdotibus*. The imperative *recurre* has also been altered to the infinitive *recurrere* by *cⁱⁱ*, the object of *debebis*. These *sacerdotibus* provide *consilia*, recalling the *consiliarios*, but who are they? Although the term could cover bishops and priests, in his other letters Remigius uses *presbyter* for ‘priest’ while calling himself *sacerdos* in his poesy; the bishops at Orléans (511) are likewise *sacerdotes*.¹⁸⁹ Clovis ruled a large area if he had several bishops, and their qualification as *tuis* indicates close relations highly improbable if he were a pagan.

12-13 *quod si tibi bene cum illis conuenerit · prouincia tua melius potest constare ;*

¹⁸⁷ Orléans (511), cc. 5, 7; J. Gaudemet, B. Basdevant-Gaudemet (transl.), *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens (VI^e-VII^e siècles)*, 2 vols., Paris, 1989, 1, pp. 76-7; J.F. Niermeyer, C. van den Kieft, J.W.J. Burgers (rev.), *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, 2 vols., Leiden, 2002, s.v. ‘beneficium’, 10; O. Gradenwitz, *Heidelberger Index zum Theodosianus*, Berlin, 1925, s.v. ‘beneficium’; cf. P. Fouracre, *The Use of the Term beneficium in Frankish Sources: a Society Based on Favours?*, in W. Davies, P. Fouracre (ed.), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 62-8.

¹⁸⁸ Lactantius, *DI*, V.20.5.

¹⁸⁹ *EA* 1, 3-4; Hincmar of Reims, *Vita Remigii Episcopi Remensis*, in Krusch (ed.), *Passiones I*, c. 2; Orléans (511), pr.; Niermeyer, s.v. ‘sacerdos’, 1-3.

This periphrastic condition speaks to the need for harmony with bishops, a sentiment emphatically shared by *cⁱⁱⁱ*, our 14th-century reader. Difficulty comes with *prouincia*, which has been taken to support the case for *Belgica Secunda*. Yet the word bears a rampant diversity of meanings, from the offices of the Republic to the administrative divisions of the Roman state to the subdivisions of the successor kingdoms, and as the Church borrowed its governmental armature from the Empire it retained *prouincia* for its own units.¹⁹⁰ In looser usage, just as in English, the term covers a range of public, private, and personal things, without any necessary geographical or administrative force.¹⁹¹ By ‘province’, Sidonius Apollinaris sometimes means Gaul, or perhaps only the Burgundian kingdom, at other times episcopal sees, moving between meanings within a few lines; for each reference to a *Lugdunensis Secunda*, he makes another to something as abstractly ‘provincial’ as historiography.¹⁹² Avitus of Vienne can employ it for his own diocese, while Church councils in the generation after Clovis use it for a metropolitan jurisdiction.¹⁹³ The ambiguity is underlined by Caesarius of Arles: writing to Pope Symmachus in 513, he designated both Gaul and its subdivisions as *prouinciae*, also reportedly using it for regions whence paupers came to him and whither he sent his sermons (unsolicited).¹⁹⁴

Precisely what Remigius and indeed Clovis understood by *prouincia* is unknowable – the word is fundamentally elastic. Remigius describes some region, with bishops, which Clovis controls, as small as a province or as large as Gaul. The word choice could be studiously vague, to avoid the more concrete *regnum* because Clovis, conquering in southern Gaul, negotiating

¹⁹⁰ *TLL*, s.v. ‘provincia’, I.A.1.a-b, I.A.2.a.α, esp. II.1, B.1.a, B.2.a-b; *Pactus pro tenore pacis*, in Boretius (ed.), c. 16; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, III.1, 3; cf. R.L. Benson, *Provincia = Regnum*, in G. Makdisi, D. Sourdel, J. Sourdel-Thomine (ed.), *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Âge. Islam, Byzance, Occident*, Paris, 1983, pp. 41-69.

¹⁹¹ *TLL*, C.1.a.α-β.

¹⁹² Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epp* I.7.4, II.13.6, IV.18.2, 22.6, V.7, VII.5.3, IX.6; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, in Loyer (ed.), II, ll. 224, 232, V, ll. 40-53.

¹⁹³ Avitus of Vienne, *Epp* 34, 40; Épaone (517), letter of Bishop Viventolus; Clermont (535), c. 2; Orléans (538), c. 1; Orléans (541), c. 37; all in de Clercq (ed.).

¹⁹⁴ *Ep Arelatensis* 27; *Vita Caesarii*, in G. Morin, M.-J. Delage, M. Heijmans (ed.-transl.), *Vie de Césaire d’Arles*. SC 536, Paris, 2010, I.20, I.55; cf. *Vita Genovefae*, in Krusch (ed.), *Passiones I*, cc. 12, 17; *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, in F. Martine (ed.), *Vie des pères du Jura*. SC 142, Paris, 1968, I.4.

with the emperor, held a constitutionally equivocal position.¹⁹⁵ When Remigius wrote *EA* 1, he spoke of a *regnum*, but whenever he penned *EA* 2 he did not, for whatever reason. His words, when pushed, lose specificity, and in place of categorical references we find only language of Roman resonance reused to describe the world after Rome.

13-14 *ciues tuos erige .’ adflictos releua .’ uiduas foue .’ orfanos nutri .’*

Here *cⁱⁱ* has been busy, changing *ciuos* to *ciues*, *adflictos* to *afflictos* (seemingly), and *nutre* to *nutri*. The *ciues* are notable, but not out of place: Clovis has *sacerdotes*, a *prouincia*, and so too *ciuitates* with *ciues* – the lexical world, still, of Roman political institutions.¹⁹⁶ The various categories of people are linked by tetracolon; the *ciues* are *tuos*, as are the afflicted, the widows, and the orphans, sensible perhaps for a king who had just overrun some region. Yet listen to the prophet Isaiah: ‘Learn to do right, seek justice, defend the oppressed, take up the cause of the orphan, plead the case of the widow’.¹⁹⁷ The advice is conventional, typical of what bishops expected and instructed Christian rulers from Constantine onward to do.¹⁹⁸ So, Lactantius: ‘A work of justice no less important is that of guarding and defending children and widows who are destitute and in need of aid. This is a universal prescription of divine law’.¹⁹⁹ When Clovis himself wrote to his bishops, he accordingly made sure to express his concern for the welfare of widows and children, or at least those with connections to the Church.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Avitus of Vienne, *Ep* 46.

¹⁹⁶ Épaone (517), c. 35, Orléans (549), in de Clercq (ed.), c. 11; *Vita Genovefae*, cc. 12-3; *Vita Caesarii*, cc. 10, 13, 17.

¹⁹⁷ Isaiah 1:17; see also Psalm 68:3-6.

¹⁹⁸ See Eusebius of Caesarea, F. Winkelmann (ed.), *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1991, I.43; A. Cameron, S.G. Hall (transl.), *Life of Constantine*, Oxford, 1999, p. 87.

¹⁹⁹ Lactantius, *DI*, VI.12.21; cf. Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, VII.4, ll. 25-32; *Vita Desiderii Cadurcae Urbis Episcopi*, in B. Krusch (ed.), *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici II. MGH SSRM IV*, Hanover, 1902, c. 37.

²⁰⁰ Clovis, *Ep ad episcopos*.

14 si potius est qu.am erudies

This is a challenging clause, which has struck many a reader, and not without reason, as corrupt. The first four words seem to present no problem, ‘if it is better than’, but then we run smack into *erudies*. The two problems here are that *si potius est* is an otherwise unattested formulation, and to continue the preceding sequence of imperatives calls for *erudi* (‘educate, raise, bring up’). For *si potius est*, we therefore suggest the rare but attested *si potis est*, meaning ‘if it is possible’.²⁰¹ The scribe misread this as *si potius est* and went on to supply *quam* for a comparative construction. (Note also that the dot in *qu.am* is an imperfection of the parchment; it appears in *sag.acius* on the recto of this folio.) He was unable, however, to get any further, leaving *erudies*, which *cⁱⁱ* later came to dot in his own puzzlement, writing *require* in the left margin. If we take *erudi* to be the correct reading, we are left with *es*, and it is a short step from here to suppose *eos*, a suspension mark perhaps having been omitted. We thus reconstruct this passage as *si poti{u}s est {quam} erudi e<o>s*: ‘if it is possible bring them up’.

14-15 ut omnes te ament et timeant ·

Remigius rhetorically complements *te ament* and *timeant*. Presumably it is taken as read that kings are feared – which a military undertaking will have encouraged – and he counsels a supplementary course of action to make him loved as well. An early medieval squaring of the Machiavellian circle, this is a Christian riposte to the famous tragic line put in the mouth of

²⁰¹ e.g. Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, in M.P. Cunningham (ed.), *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, Turnhout, 1966, I, Praefatio, l. 84, *Liber Peristephanon*, in Cunningham (ed.), III, l. 102; Boethius *In Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermeneias Commentarii (editio secunda)*, in K. Meiser (ed.), *Anicii Manlii Severini Boetii Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermēnias*, Leipzig, 1880, VI.14; cf. Ausonius, *De Herediolo*, in Green (ed.), l. 18.

Caligula by Suetonius: *oderint dum metuant* ('let them hate me so long as they fear me').²⁰² Hilary of Arles in his *Vita Honorati* was of the considered view that love led to the fear of sin, and fear to the love of discipline, while Augustine often spoke of the two together, memorably typifying the difference between the Old and New Testaments as fear versus love.²⁰³ The collocation came naturally to any student of the Psalmist.²⁰⁴

15 Iustitia ex ore uestro procedat ;

The advice is generic, omnipresent in the Bible, but the image striking. The assumption that the king was responsible for justice to his subjects merits attention, even if it cannot resolve the contentious debate as to whether Clovis issued any surviving legislation.²⁰⁵

15-17 nihil sit sperandum de pauperibus uel peregrinis . ? ne magis dona aut aliquid accipere uelis ;

The *pauperes* written by *cⁱ* has been corrected by *cⁱⁱ* to *pauperibus*, and *uellis* to *uelis*, a rather awkward comparative subjunctive. In 6th-century Gaul, *peregrinis* meant 'foreigners, travellers', but with a distinctly Roman legal hinterland: 'If any judge wishes to associate to himself as a counsellor (*consiliarium*) either citizens of the province (*prouinciae*) which he

²⁰² Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum. C. Caligula*, 30.1; cf. Seneca, *De Clementia*, I.12.4, II.2.2; Ovid, *Heroides*, XII.55; Valente, pp. 157-8.

²⁰³ Hilary of Arles, *Vita Honorati*, in S. Cavallin (ed.), P.-A. Jacob (transl.), *La vie d'Hilaire d'Arles. SC 404*, Paris, 1995, c. 17; Augustine, *Contra Adimantum*, in J. Zycha (ed.), *Sancti Aureli Augustini Opera. CSEL 25*, Vienna, 1891, c. 17; cf. Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, in E. Dekkers, J. Fraipont (ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Enarrationes in Psalmos. CCSL 38-40*, 3 vols., Turnhout, 1956, XXXIX.20, LXX.1.1, LXXIX.13; Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, in Zycha (ed.), XXI.14; Augustine, *Sermones*, 272B; Fredegar, in J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (ed-transl.), *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar: with its Continuations*, London, 1960, IV.61; Patrick, *Confessio*, in L. Bieler (ed.), *Liber epistolarum sancti Patricii episcopi*, 2 vols., Dublin, 1952, 1, pp. 65, 83; Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, in B. Krusch (ed.), *Ionae Vitae Sanctorum Columbani, Vedastis, Iohannis. MGH Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in Usus Scholarum 37*, Hanover, 1905, II.4.

²⁰⁴ e.g. Psalm 103:11, 13, 17.

²⁰⁵ cf. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 208-13.

rules or indeed foreigners (*peregrinos*) [...]'.²⁰⁶ Lactantius again reveals the boilerplate quality: '[The just man] is to accept no gift from a poor man, so that anything he himself gives will be good because it was free. He is to answer a curse with a blessing, but he should never curse, so that no evil word may proceed out of the mouth of one who reveres the good word'.²⁰⁷

17-18 praetorium tuum omnibus pateatur · ut nullus exinde tristis abscedat ;

The *praetorium* could also be thought to support a specific force for *administrationem* and *secundum bellice*. The term first designated where the *praetor* discharged his function, and by extension the residence – permanent or temporary – of any civil or military official; in late Roman legislation it is ubiquitous, and Pontius Pilate occupies a *praetorium* in the Vulgate.²⁰⁸ At times it could be the home of a foreign monarch; normally a government building, it could even be a grand private house.²⁰⁹ While the word may be taken variously, here the reasonable options are the palace or the campaign headquarters of Clovis. This could indicate that the letter was written to a king in the field, or just as well align with its theme of justice: the one certainty remains the linguistic framework of Roman rule.

18-19 paternas quascumque opes possides · captiuos exinde liberabis · et a iugo seruitutis absolues ;

²⁰⁶ *CTh* I.34.1 (with IV.6.3, VI.37.1, VIII.1.9, IX.1.10, 16.5, XII.1.161, XIII.11.13, XIV.2.4, XVI.2.37, 5.36); cf. *Vita Caesarii*, I.10, II.23-4; *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, II.14; Orléans (541), c. 7; F. Cardot, *L'espace et le pouvoir. Étude sur l'Austrasie mérovingienne*, Paris, 1987, p. 69; R.W. Mathisen, *Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire*, in *American Historical Review*, 111, 4, 2006, pp. 1011-40.

²⁰⁷ Lactantius, *DI*, VI.18.10 (see also VI.12.25).

²⁰⁸ *TLL*, s.v. 'praetorius', I.A; Gradenwitz, s.v. 'praetorium' (esp. *CTh* XV.1.35); Matthew 27:27; Mark 15:16; John 18:28, 33, 19:9; cf. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epp* I.5.10, IV.20, V.7.5; Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Miraculis Beati Andreae Apostoli*, in Krusch (ed.), *Miracula*, c. 18.

²⁰⁹ *TLL*, I.A.2.b (citing this bit of *EA* 2), II.A.1-2; cf. Ausonius, *Mosella*, in Green (ed.), l. 286; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, VII.5, XI.8, XII.22, XIV.3.

Like *debebis* (l. 11), the future active indicative *liberabis* is unexpected, but the change from the subjunctive may be simple rhetorical variety; in order to agree, the *absoluas* of *cⁱ* has been corrected by *cⁱⁱ* to *absolues*. The sense of *paternas quascumque opes*, recalling Clovis as emulator of his *parentes*, must be ancestral rather than parental wealth: if Childeric had just checked out, it would be one cold bishop who leapt in with stipulations on blowing his cash. There is, however, a connection with the letter of Clovis to the bishops, in which the king shows conspicuous regard for captives, although he does not himself moot paying for their release.²¹⁰ Funding redemption was a royal duty, and indeed Alaric II gave Caesarius of Arles moneys to this end.²¹¹ There were many captives in southern Gaul after the turmoil of 507-8, but not only then, so their presence here is merely suggestive.²¹²

20-21 si quis in conspectu uestro uenerit · peregrinum se esse non sentiat ;

The choice of *conspectu* is characteristically ambiguous. In Roman law it has the sense of judicial purview, from which developed a specifically Christian connotation of the oversight of God (to whom Remigius may not here be comparing Clovis).²¹³ The use of *peregrinum* is a pointer back to the *peregrinis* treated above.

21 cum iuuenibus ioca · cum senibus tracta . ?

Remigius produces a final flourish here, but if his take on *Le roi s'amuse* has a specific origin, it is unknown. Later Merovingian writers approved of politicians who were *iucundus* or

²¹⁰ Clovis, *Ep ad episcopos*.

²¹¹ *Vita Caesarii*, I.20.

²¹² *Vita Caesarii*, I.32, 38; cf. W.F. Klingshirn, *Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the Ransoming of Captives in sub-Roman Gaul*, in *JRS*, 75, 1985, pp. 183-203.

²¹³ *CTh* I.16.10, II.10.4, IV.7.1, 9.1, VI.35.8, 36.1, VII.20.2, 22.5, XII.17.1, XVI.5.7; Blaise, s.v. 'conspectus'.

congenial, and Sidonius Apollinaris (in speaking of a close friend) described sharing both *seria* and *ioca* with him, a Classical collocation popular in Late Antiquity.²¹⁴ Clovis need not, any more than is true of Sidonius, be a particular age to interact with the parties here. Despite the grave judgement of many a serious historian, it is no more necessary that he be young to banter with youths than aged to hold conversations with the elderly.

21-22 si uis regnare .’ / nobilis iudicari .

The *iudicare* written by *cⁱ* has been corrected by *cⁱⁱ* to *iudicari*. This is a double infinitive construction with a nominative adjective acting adverbially: ‘if you wish to be judged to reign nobly’; awkward in English, natural in Latin. Some hand distinct from the early 9th-century *cⁱⁱ* has unhelpfully added punctuation between *regnare* and *nobilis* (not an obvious abbreviation, say for *et*). The use of *regnare* picks up *rex* in the heading and is clear in force, while throwing the choice of *prouincia* instead of *regnum* into starker relief. The obvious sense of *nobilis* is the late Roman one, *nobilitas* with its official as well as social and moral connotations.²¹⁵ Read together with the rest of the legal and administrative terminology of *EA* 2, the word indicates that Remigius, through his behavioural guidance, aimed to fit not only Clovis the ruler but also Clovis the man into the familiar categories of the late Roman world.

Edition

We offer the following text of *EA* 2 to consolidate and summarize the points made in the commentary, and we consider its implications in the conclusion. We have italicized minor

²¹⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, IV.4.1 (see also e.g. Sallust, *De bello Iugurthino*, 96.2; *Pan Lat* 11 (III), 12.3; Ausonius, *Parentalia*, in Green (ed.), VII, 1. 11); cf. I. Wood, *Iocundus in fabulis: the Value of Friendly Advice*, in L. Jégou et al. (ed.), *Splendor reginae: passions, genre et famille. Mélanges en l’honneur de Régine Le Jan*, Turnhout, 2015, p. 332.

²¹⁵ See T.D. Barnes, *Who Were the Nobility of the Roman Empire?*, in *Phoenix*, 28, 4, 1974, pp. 444-9.

corrections to the manuscript text, put all our diagnostic conjectures between angled brackets (<>), and marked deletions with braces ({ }).

II. Domino insigni et meritis magnifico Chlodoveo regi, Remigius episcopus.

[1] Rumor ad nos magnus pervenit administrationem vos secundam *rei bellicae* suscepisse; non est novum ut coeperis esse sicut parentes tui semper fuerunt. Hoc imprimis agendum, ut Domini iudicium a te non vacillet, ubi <causa> tui meriti quippe per industriam humilitatis tuae ad summum <fastigii> culminisque pervenit;²¹⁶ quia quod vulgo{s} dicitur † actus hominis probatur †.²¹⁷

[2] Consiliarios tibi adhibere debes qui famam tuam possint ornare, et beneficium tuum castum et honestum esse debet. Et sacerdotibus tuis {honorem} debebis deferre et ad eorum consilia semper recurrere, quod si tibi bene cum illis convenerit provincia tua melius potest constare. Cives tuos erige, adflitos releva, viduas fove, orfanos nutri, si poti{u}s est {quam} erudi eos, ut omnes te ament et timeant.

[3] Iustitia ex ore vestro procedat: nihil sit sperandum de pauperibus vel peregrinis, ne magis dona aut aliquid accipere velis. Praetorium tuum omnibus pateatur, ut nullus exinde tristis abscedat. Paternas quascumque opes possides, captivos exinde liberabis et a iugo servitutis absolves. Si quis in conspectu vestro venerit, peregrinum se esse non sentiat. Cum iuvenibus ioca, cum senibus tracta, si vis regnare nobilis iudicari.

Conclusion

So what is to be done with *EA 2*? There is no *Secundum Belgice* here, nor anything like it. The emendation on which so much scholarship rests is overdue for jettisoning, and without

²¹⁶ ad summum culminis pervenit] *cf.* Ausonius, *Epicedion in patrem*, ll. 41-2, ‘maximus ad summum columnen pervenit honorum, praefectus Gallis et Libyae et Latio’.

²¹⁷ actus hominis probatur] *cf.* Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 36.1, ‘mens tamen libera est et ideo actus hominis non dignitas iudicatur’.

it no good reason remains to date the letter to 481 or 486. There are sound grounds, indeed, to conclude that it cannot come from those years: it assumes that Clovis was Christian, the three other letters of Remigius date to the late 490s or later, no mention beyond *parentes* is made of Childeric (recently deceased) amidst talk of spending his money, and the king, an established ruler, has been brought to the *summum* through his Christian virtue. At the least it is incumbent on any who would retain an early date to deal with these facts, but none of them has been addressed or – since the early 20th century – even acknowledged. There is no ready way to contextualize *EA 2* unemended, but the plausible interpretations can be demarcated. The letter refers to war, but its prelude or its aftermath? Bishops wrote to kings before campaigns, even unprompted as *rumor* implies, and a letter of Avitus of Vienne shows that they felt it quite proper to offer advice at this moment.²¹⁸ Yet Avitus gives *military* advice, keen to emphasize the (very Lactantian) connection between piety and victory, and while none of the counsel here is inappropriate to this context, it avoids most basic issues of war (*inter alia*, fighting, death). If the first lines mean instead that Clovis is recently victorious, could the letter be congratulatory? Given the link between sound Christian behaviour and military success, Remigius is more on topic than he may seem. But for which war? Procopius records that the Thuringians and Visigoths were troubled by the rising power of the Franks as early as 493, and in that period Clovis could well have suppressed one of his northern rivals, but such a contretemps would not have moved Remigius to write as he did.²¹⁹ Mounting the *summum* meant more than victory over Ragnachar, king at Cambrai, or Syagrius of Soissons, whether or not either lay within his metropolitan province. The triumph must have been great: no wars of Clovis between *circa* 496 and 500 are documented, and his storied victories belong to the early 6th century. The greatness could also be why its mention is so oblique, obvious to king

²¹⁸ Avitus of Vienne, *Ep* 45.

²¹⁹ Procopius, *De Bellis*, in J. Haury (ed.), G. Wirth (rev.), *Procopii Caesariensis Opera Omnia*, 4 vols., Leipzig, 1962-4, V.12.21.

and bishop. Like the correspondence of Avitus and Sigismund on campaign, there may have been a series of letters, and only this most significant one was preserved for posterity (and study); the bishop of Vienne had also heard *rumor* of his king at war.²²⁰

The vocabulary of *EA 2* assumes that, wherever Clovis abides, the environment is very Roman. Remigius had been educated in a Classical cultural idiom, and although his *prouincia* and *praetorium* may be thought to reflect the schoolroom rather than the locale of his addressee, Avitus could be quite explicit about the non-Roman character of northern Gaul and the Rhine, and he paid much attention to relations between Clovis and pagan barbarians.²²¹ If Clovis were in the north, we should expect Remigius to deploy different terminology – to type his king as defender, rather than exemplar, of Roman virtue – and so his particular use of the language of Roman institutions may hint at the location of his king in victory, just as the bishop hearing the important news by rumour intimates that he is far from home (the *peregrini* likewise). All these indicators combined suggest that Clovis was somewhere in southern Gaul, sometime after 500, and recently victorious in battle. Conciliating citizens – and bishops – is always politic, and as he pacified his new domain, he would have resided in the *praetorium* of a general in the field, with captives whom he might ransom. Clovis *rex*, administering justice, was by then hardly new, and neither attribute provokes comment. Long ago Sirmond was attracted to the overlap of this text and the letter of Clovis himself after the war in Aquitaine; another point of contact is with his convocation of the Council of Orléans in 511 (such deference to his bishops). When evidence is scarce, it can be tempting to tie it all together, but the links are there.

Our letter may therefore be situated amidst one of the successful campaigns of Clovis in southern Gaul between 500 and his death in 511. This interpretation brings us close to the king remembered by the *Vita Genovefae*, composed perhaps a decade later: ‘Clovis of glorious

²²⁰ Avitus of Vienne, *Epp* 45, 91-2.

²²¹ Avitus of Vienne, *Ep* 46; cf. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep* IV.17, esp. 1-2.

memory, king of wars' – *rex bellorum* recalling *bellice*? – 'and justly terrible', the Clovis too of Gregory of Tours, 'a great and outstanding fighter'.²²² Such was certainly his afterlife at Reims, where Hincmar three centuries thence looked back on that 'singularly warlike battler' who had subdued Gaul.²²³ The vagueness of *secundam* ('another', but also 'victorious') reminds us that the history of Clovis at war is messier and less linear than Gregory of Tours would have it.²²⁴ We cannot confidently pick out a first campaign after 500 against the Burgundians and a second in 507 against the Visigoths, clear and chronologically discrete operations which the king, as if with a kind of late antique general staff, fought in successive seasons, to assert that it must be the latter. While 507 or after seems the most likely context, appearances may deceive, and so we resist picking any one date in the early 6th century – such precision would only be illusory.

Exposition extended, conclusion concise. *Epistula Austrasica* 2 is one of few authentic documents from the foundation of the Frankish kingdom in the post-imperial West. In this lies its significance, yet it is in equal measure difficult, obscure, and frustrating. From the printing of the letter in 1613 to its edition by Gundlach in 1892, a diversity of competing interpretations reigned. The manuscript inaccessible, pseudo-transcriptions jostled quasi-translations; wildly divergent theories developed, predicated on the same imperfect text with a travelling circus of supplementary sources. Paradoxes abounded: arguments became detached from their bases as an orthodoxy coalesced, before fading without focussed defence. The ferment did not solve the letter, but the creativity, vigour, and often striking intellectual quality of the debate repay study. Progression from those arguments has come in part through forgetting rather than surpassing

²²² *Vita Genovefae*, c. 56; cf. *Vita Sulpicii Episcopi Biturigi*, in Krusch (ed.), *Passiones II*, c. 6; Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, II.12.

²²³ Hincmar, *Vita Remigii*, c. 11, cf. *Liber Historiae Francorum B*, in Krusch (ed.), *Fredegarii et Aliorum Chronica*, c. 7; Wallace-Hadrill, pp. 163-4.

²²⁴ See G. Barrett, G. Woudhuysen, *Clovis at War and Peace*, forthcoming.

them. The critical editions of the later 19th century came caparisoned in what seemed science and certainty.²²⁵ Both were phantasms, bringing a hiatus to the creative debate of the preceding centuries. We have come to think too little of the earlier scholarship embodied in the *Patrologia Latina*, and too much of the modern achievement of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. The scales are imbalanced; the work of each editor – Sirmond or Gundlach – needs to be considered with the same rigorous scepticism. For *EA* 2, a problematic emendation yielded a new letter, clearer and more useful than what had held its place, widely accepted and, as the period is dim but the creation bright, enduring in histories surprisingly diverse. Before clarity and honesty, it cannot stand: clarity about what the text can mean, honesty about what it can be made to prove. The letter does not date to 481 or 486, it must postdate when Clovis became Christian, and it most plausibly dates to the period after 500, congratulating him on some recent victory.

We each create a Clovis of convenience: tool of absolutism, prop for aristocratic rights, Christian crusader, and now the proof that the Roman Empire never really fell, in an unending Late Antiquity of provinces, prelates, and the past. We are missing something. The point of the letter is intangible: the words resist every effort to force some fixed and certain meaning. This elusive generality is the message – not what is said, but how it is said.²²⁶ Rightly read, the letter is unchained from Roman administrative continuity, its importance no longer a demonstration that Belgica Secunda survived or that Clovis derived his legal authority from a grant of office. Instead it records a more subtle survival: of Roman political idiom after Rome. Our late antique world hints that this was what mattered, that rulers and ruled sought to keep familiar titles and insignia, to retain familiar patterns of thought, much more than to imitate imperial institutions exactly. Procopius muses on the Berbers of North Africa: ‘it was a law among the Moors that no one should be a ruler over them, even if he was hostile to the Romans, until the emperor of

²²⁵ cf. Cheminade, pp. 360-61.

²²⁶ H.D. Williard, *Letter-Writing and Literary Culture in Merovingian Gaul*, in *European Review of History*, 21, 5, 2014, p. 695.

the Romans should give him the tokens of the office'.²²⁷ And not just the Moors, 'for the Franks never considered that their possession of Gaul was secure except when the emperor had put the seal of his approval upon their title'.²²⁸ A century later, when Jonas of Bobbio tried to sketch the course of Gallic history, he leapt in a single bound from the end of Empire to the age when the grandsons of Clovis enjoyed their own power and made war on Italy itself; between was but a hazy transition.²²⁹ What endures out here, beyond the Roman order, is a way of thinking about rule, of presenting and discussing it, rather than any given structure. Political culture was Roman in the 7th and 6th centuries, much as in the 5th and 4th. What else could it be? Deposing Romulus Augustulus did not at a stroke create a new language of politics: people reached for the old paradigms.²³⁰ With care Remigius casts his Clovis as a Christian warrior king on campaign in southern Gaul, responsive to bishops, keen to establish himself as a successor to imperial rule in style more than substance – the very same Clovis who emerges from the only known communication to survive from the king's own hand.

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²²⁷ Procopius, *De Bellis*, III.25.5; H.B. Dewing (transl.), *Procopius*, 7 vols., Cambridge, 1914-40, 2, p. 201.

²²⁸ Procopius, *De Bellis*, VII.33.4; Dewing (transl.), 4, p. 439.

²²⁹ Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Iohannis*, in Krusch (ed.), *Ionae Vitae Sanctorum Columbani*, c. 15; cf. Procopius, *De Bellis*, VII.33.2-6.

²³⁰ cf. S. Airlie, *The Aristocracy*, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, II. c.700-c.900*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 449; Y. Hen, *Conversion and Masculinity in the Early Medieval West*, in I. Katznelson, M. Rubin (ed.), *Religious Conversion: History, Experience and Meaning*, Farnham, 2014, pp. 156-7.