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Kings, Evil Courtiers, and the Intended Audience of the *Historia Langobardorum*

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by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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The *Historia Langobardorum* (*History of the Langobards*) was written by Paul the Deacon in the 780s-790s. It is an important work of historiography, but little attention has been paid to the power of the text as political propaganda. This study sets out to analyze how Paul promotes harmony between Carolingians and Langobards, uplifts the image of the old Langobardic king Grimoald I, and encourages an agreeable view of the contemporary prince of Benevento, Grimoald III, who rebelled against Charlemagne in 791.

Table of Contents

Kings, Evil Courtiers, and the Intended Audience of the *Historia Langobardorum*.....1  
Works Cited.....31

Kings, Evil Courtiers, and the Intended Audience of the *Historia Langobardorum*

The *Historia Langobardorum* (*History of the Langobards*), written by Paul the Deacon in the 780s-790s, is a work of historiography, widely circulated in the middle ages, in which dramatic narratives are embedded.<sup>1</sup> The work, which is six books in length, is thought to be unfinished, as it ends with King Liutprand who reigned from 712-744.<sup>2</sup> The Langobards, a Germanic tribe that might have migrated south from Scandinavia, gained enough power to conquer medieval Italy in 568 and to maintain control until the Carolingian invasion in 773-774.<sup>3</sup> Charlemagne, who was ruler of the Carolingians, a Frankish dynasty with a greater military than the Langobards had, conquered most of Italy in less than a year.<sup>4</sup>

Paul dedicated his first work of historiography, the *Historia Romana* (*Roman History*), to Adalperga, the daughter of a Langobard king and duchess of Benevento. He was later recruited by Charlemagne to be a scholar at his court.<sup>5</sup> Thus, he was an important figure politically because he had relations with both Carolingian and Langobard rulers.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77: There are over twenty manuscripts dating from before the eleventh century, and over eighty thereafter. Henceforth the *Historia Langobardorum* will be referred to as the HL. The precise date of the text remains uncertain. McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 77. She argues for a date in the mid-780s. Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*. (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981), 29. He thinks it was composed in the 790s. Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 340. He believes it “cannot antedate the later 780s.”

<sup>2</sup> Goffart, *Narrators*, 329: Paul probably died in the 790’s, leaving it unfinished. Neil Christie. *The Lombards*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), See xxv for a list of Langobard kings.

<sup>3</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, ix-x. Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., *The Barbarian West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1985), 44: “His [Paul’s] general sketch of the movement from Scandinavia down through Central Europe to Pannonia does not entirely lack confirmation, though his details fall into the literary pattern set by Cassiodorus and Jordanes for the Ostrogothic migration... Long before Paul’s time, there existed an accepted corpus of Germanic migration-legends upon which all Germans drew, more or less at random.”

<sup>4</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 47.

<sup>5</sup> Goffart, *Narrators*, 329 and 332. He wrote the HL after the fall of the Langobard kingdom to the Carolingians in 774, and after returning from the Carolingian court around 785.

The translator of the only English translation of the Latin text thought little of its literary qualities.<sup>6</sup> However, with the appearance of Walter Goffart's book *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, the power of the work's literary aspects was recognized by the suggestion that it had been composed to instruct a Langobard prince in Benevento: Grimoald III.<sup>7</sup> This study sets out to throw light on the design of the HL for another audience as well: medieval Carolingians in the eighth century. This paper will analyze the text as political propaganda meant to promote harmony between audiences of both Frankish and Langobard royalty.

In a recent book Rosamond McKitterick suggests that the text could have been written "for the Carolingian court in Italy, if not for the Frankish court in Francia. It was conceivably written at the specific request of the Frankish ruler, who had asked him [Paul] to write so much else."<sup>8</sup> Her view of the text's possible audiences is novel. That Paul wished to encourage good relations between the two peoples may be suggested by the fact that in his narrative there is no direct mention of the Carolingian conquest of Langobard Italy in 774.<sup>9</sup> Around this time, Prince Arechis II elevated the duchy of Benevento into a principality, making it the last independent

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<sup>6</sup> Trans. William Dudley Foulke. *History of the Langobards by Paul the Deacon*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1907), xxxvi: "He [Paul] was also properly a compiler. It was his nature to collect and transmit in more convenient form what was at hand, not to create anything new."

<sup>7</sup> Goffart, *Narrators*, 333: "It is not far-fetched to conjecture that the H.L. had as its immediate purpose to edify and instruct young Grimoald III."

<sup>8</sup> McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Neil Christie. *The Lombards*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 221-3: The lack of any direct reference to the Carolingian conquest is mentioned in a discussion about how Paul could not bring himself to tell of his kingdom's fall. But, as Christie points out, Paul does tell of its fall in his *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, composed at Charlemagne's court at Aachen, so there is probably another reason that we do not find any direct reference to the Frankish conquest in Paul's text.

Langobard territory.<sup>10</sup> Grimoald III was the prince who succeeded Arechis.<sup>11</sup> His ancestor King Grimoald I had ruled more than a century before him.<sup>12</sup> We meet Grimoald I in Book IV of the HL as duke at Benevento and he has a prominent role as king at Ticinum in Book V. Close examination of narrative representations of Langobard kingship will show how Paul shapes the text for both the prince in Benevento, his main audience, and for the Carolingian royal audience (possibly King Pippin of Italy's court and/or Charlemagne's court).<sup>13</sup> Paul's relation to both the Beneventan and Frankish courts makes it seem possible that the text is designed for both.<sup>14</sup>

Paul was no stranger to writing texts for political purposes.<sup>15</sup> We should keep in mind that there were attempts to revolt against Frankish rule even after the conquest of Italy; for instance, in 776 the duke of Friuli and other Langobard leaders tried to revolt but failed.<sup>16</sup> Prince Grimoald III was an important rebel.<sup>17</sup> After having been installed by Charlemagne in Benevento, he dropped Charlemagne's name from his coins and charters in 791 and fought

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., xxvi: this prince ruled from 774-87. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 48: "From now on, [after the Frankish takeover] the Lombard kingdom became a sub-kingdom of the Frankish empire, and its institutions slowly began to alter."

<sup>11</sup> Christie, *Lombards*, xxvi. He ruled in Benevento from 788-806.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., xxvi: Grimoald I ruled from circa 646-71.

<sup>13</sup> McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 82: "The manuscript dissemination of Paul's *Historia Langobardorum* uncovers the possibility that it was originally produced in northern Italy, possibly in association with the court of Pippin of Italy. It was subsequently disseminated both in northern Italy and the Carolingian realms north of the Alps." 77: She also notes that Paul uses information from books known to have been at Charlemagne's court, which may suggest that he composed the HL there, but he also could have relied on his memory for this information.

<sup>14</sup> Goffart, *Narrators*, 347: "There is no way to establish what part, if any, Paul played in Beneventan-Frankish relations from 785 to his death. No personage known to us, however, enjoyed closer and more confidential relations than he with both courts" (p. 347). McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 70: sees Paul as torn: he is pro-Frankish, but still feels loyal to Grimoald III.

<sup>15</sup> McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 67: Paul writes the *Historia Romana* for Duchess Adalperga circa 773, and he writes the *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* for the Carolingians in 784 to legitimize their rule.

<sup>16</sup> Giovanni Tabacco. *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1989), 117.

<sup>17</sup> Christie, *Lombards*, xxvi. He ruled in Benevento from 788-806.



against his sons in various skirmishes.<sup>18</sup>

Paul was presented with a challenging situation in designing the text. Grimoald I was likely a harsh, oppressive king in his own time, and Grimoald III was quite openly opposing Carolingian rule.<sup>19</sup> How could our author uplift the image of a traditionally unpopular king for his Beneventan audience and also ease his Frankish audience into an agreeable view of the rebellious prince?

To answer this question we shall focus on stories about Langobard kings that Paul narrates in the last three of the six books of the HL. All three narratives have unity of place because they all occur at Ticinum (modern Pavia).<sup>20</sup> The first is from the end of the fourth book.<sup>21</sup> We are introduced to two brothers, Godepert and Perctarit, who try to usurp each other's territories after their father, King Aripert, has bequeathed the realm to them. Godepert sends a messenger, Garipald, to Duke Grimoald of Benevento to enlist his help against his brother, but the messenger decides to betray his master and to persuade Grimoald to take the Langobard kingdom for himself.

Before we even meet Garipald, we are told that the conflict between Perctarit and Godepert has been caused by anonymous evil men.<sup>22</sup> We are supposed to believe that the royal siblings do not desire power for themselves, but have been manipulated by others into wishing to usurp each other's realms. This brief reference to evil men anticipates Garipald's role in the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>19</sup> The assertion about Grimoald I is based mainly on the analysis of Perctarit's flight in 15-18 of this paper.

<sup>20</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 36. "The king's court and the construction of the state were the basis for Lombard royal power. Both were centered on a capital, Pavia, where the royal *palatium* or *curtis regia* was."

<sup>21</sup> Ed. Georg Waitz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI-IX* (Hannover: 1878), 138-9. The following discussion considers IV. 51. All passages from the HL are taken from this book. All translations and summaries are my own.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 138: "...facientibus malignis hominibus..."

story. The first few sentences of the chapter make us expect that we will be told about the brothers' conflict, but the story takes an unexpected turn with the introduction of Garipald, who at first seems simply to be a messenger of Godepert. He is a cunning character, however, who is good with words and therefore able to persuade both kings easily. Why this messenger decides to betray his master we are never told, and how he may benefit from encouraging the usurpation of Godepert's land by Grimoald remains unexplained. He is like the anonymous evil men who seem to take pleasure in making trouble between kings for its own sake. The only self-seeking action with a clear motivation is that Garipald does not send all the gifts he should back to Benevento, but this act of greed has nothing to do with the usurpation: as he is presented in the narrative, he seems to embody pure evil. That he is judged negatively for not sending the gifts to Benevento shows that this story is oriented towards the Beneventan court. By contrast with the messenger, Grimoald is judged positively for his generosity to the Beneventans in the first chapter of Book V (immediately following this chapter) after he has been confirmed in his royal power at Ticinum: "Indeed the army of Beneventans, by the aid of whom he had gained the kingdom, he sent back home endowed with many gifts."<sup>23</sup>

It is perhaps unconvincing that Grimoald should follow the advice of the treacherous messenger so readily, but Paul tells us exactly how Garipald manipulates him: he praises Grimoald for being "mature in age, provident in counsel, and mighty in strength," in contrast with the young kings who are dissipating the kingdom.<sup>24</sup> A coat of mail under Godepert's clothes, which Garipald has convinced him to wear, makes Grimoald think that he is going to be

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 142: "Beneventanum vero exercitum, cuius auxilio regnum adeptus erat, multis dotatum muneribus remisit ad propria." Ibid., 139, about Garipald's keeping of gifts: "...quae deferre Beneventum debuerat, non integra deportasset."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 138, about Grimoald: "...aetate matures, consilio providus et viribus fortis existeret." About Perctarit and Godepert: "...ut veniret et Langobardorum regnum, quod aduliscentes germani dissipabant..."

attacked, which is why he murders him. The usurpation is thus narrated in a way that removes any sense of trickery or guilt on Grimoald's part, because he too is the victim of Garipald's manipulation. It is perhaps surprising that the killing of Godepert should be over so fast, as it is described in a single sentence: "And without delay, he robbed him of life with his unsheathed sword."<sup>25</sup> That he is killed by Grimoald's hand is not a point Paul wishes to emphasize because that would make the king himself look power-hungry. That is also why the usurpation is narrated in a single sentence.<sup>26</sup> It is not supposed to be the king's aim, so Paul makes it read as if it were unforeseeable by Grimoald because the encounter between the kings has been engineered with deceit by Garipald, who is the only one who truly knows what is going on. Paul cannot be more emphatic about Garipald's treacherous role. He refers to him as "acting deceitfully against his master," the "originator of the whole wickedness," the "artist of deceit," and the man "by whose instigation and by whose effort these things were accomplished."<sup>27</sup> The villain turns Godepert and Grimoald into his puppets.

What follows the story of the killing and the usurpation is a tale of revenge. A dwarf from Turin, who is from the household of Godepert, decides to avenge his master by killing Garipald in the church of Saint John on Easter. In contrast with the very brief account of the killing of king Godepert by Grimoald, the moments leading up to Garipald's murder by the dwarf are covered more descriptively by an intensification of details in order to retard the action and build anticipation: the method of narration is the perfect counter to the death of Godepert and the usurpation of his kingdom by Grimoald, which are brief and factual, though framed by

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 139: "Nec mora, evaginato gladio eum vita privavit."

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 139: "Regnumque eius et omnem potentiam invadens, suae subdidit ditioni."

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 138-9: "Sed legatus ipse fraudulenter contra suum dominum agens...", "...totius nequitiae seminator...", "...fallendi artifex...", "...cuius instigatione et certamine ista patrata sunt..."

references to Garipald's plotting. In this episode, we are told that the dwarf is so small that he must climb on the font of the baptistery and support himself from a small column, which shows a degree of planning comparable to Garipald's own preparations. We are told that he waits for the moment when Garipald is about to pass, that he strikes him in the neck "with all exertion," so that his head is severed.<sup>28</sup> The violence of the blow shows his dedication and his strong desire to avenge his master. He then dies a violent death at the hands of Garipald's companions, which intensifies the sense of self-sacrifice of this follower, as opposed to the selfish nature of Garipald, the evil follower of the same king. That the death of Garipald takes place on Easter gives the whole episode a sense of Christian, poetic justice; that the dwarf supports himself against a small column in the baptistery also suggests divine support for his actions. Paul makes the main point of this story clear in the final sentence of the book: it is about the loyalty of a follower to his king.

There are two strong emphases in this chapter: the first on a follower's betrayal of his king, and the second on a follower's loyalty to his king. The original source of the trouble is the group of unnamed, evil men who are part of the background of the story. In the foreground, the dwarf and Garipald create a binary opposition in their central roles. We have the sense that these characters have been elevated by our author, so that even the kings seem in the background: they are there for Garipald to manipulate and to be avenged, but they do not seem to have centrality. When the kings do interact, despite the detail of the discovery of the armor, the moment seems to be over too quickly to have much of a dramatic effect, especially in comparison with the death of Garipald. We have the feeling that the encounter of the kings has been eclipsed to some degree in order to enhance the conflict of their followers. On the one hand, the point of this chapter seems

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 139: "...toto adnisu..."

to be that loyalty, in whatever form it may appear, no matter how humble, arises to avenge disloyalty. On the other hand, we also feel a sense of pathos surrounding the loyal figure: he dies violently for the principle he represents because he is outnumbered. However noble this moment may be, there is the suggestion that loyalty is scarce in the Langobards' kingdom.

In order to avoid an apparently limited analysis of loyalty and disloyalty based on internal evidence in the HL, we shall briefly consider a story from another early medieval work of historiography. In chapter 27 of the fourth book of the so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar* (*Fredegarii Chronica*) there is an instance of disobedience similar to Garipald's.<sup>29</sup> Brunehildis, the evil grandmother of the royal brothers Theuderic and Theudebert, makes Protadius mayor of the palace, who is described as intelligent and capable, but also greedy and cruel. The old woman and the mayor both encourage Theuderic to attack Theudebert, despite the fact that Theuderic's men do not wish to fight, wanting peace instead. The warriors, planning to kill Protadius, surround the tent where he is playing dice, but King Theuderic sends a messenger, Uncelen, to tell his soldiers that they should leave him alone. Instead the messenger tells the men: "Lord Theuderic orders that Protadius should be killed!"<sup>30</sup> The warriors then kill him and Theuderic agrees to peaceful terms with his brother. What we have then is, as with Garipald, a messenger who manipulates the orders of his king, but here the messenger, by doing so, brings about the ideal outcome. His decision to disobey his lord is made to look right, as it serves to bring the kings together despite his actual disobedience, unlike Garipald who encourages murder and usurpation by his disloyalty. The point of this comparison is to show that though the representation of disregard for a monarch's orders, in these cases by messengers, is present in the

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<sup>29</sup> Ed. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill. *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*. (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960), 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18-19. "Sic iubet domnus Theudericus, ut interficiatur Protadius."

work of more than one early medieval historiographer, we must focus on each author's particular usage of this motif. In this case, Fredegar uses it quite differently from Paul, who as we shall see represents disobedience to kings negatively.

We now return to the HL in order to consider part of the fifth book, in which Grimoald has become king.<sup>31</sup> Perctarit, Godepert's brother, having heard of his death, has fled to Scythia to live with the Avars, but he is forced to return when Grimoald threatens to break the peace between the Langobards and the Avars if they permit Perctarit to stay with them. He then returns to King Grimoald because he has heard of his mercy. Grimoald has promised protection to Perctarit through his servant Unulf, whom Perctarit has sent ahead to announce his arrival.

Their meeting is highly idealized.<sup>32</sup> The king seems both in his speech and in his actions to be merciful, generous, and pious as he receives Perctarit well, provides him with lodging, and even swears an oath to him that nothing evil will come his way. The scene has certain gestural touches, as when Perctarit tries to prostrate himself before the king, the king lifts him in order to give him a kiss, indicating that he is almost an equal to him. It is apparent from their verbal exchange that the king appreciates Perctarit's trust in him immediately. This appreciation makes the following change in his mood seem all the more baffling.

In his brief summary of this story, a German scholar fails to note how it is that Grimoald turns against Perctarit, or rather is turned. "The great rush of followers, which Perctarit enjoys, arouses Grimoald's suspicion."<sup>33</sup> The suspicion, however, does not come from the king, but is encouraged by others. Similar to the evil men who incite Perctarit and Godepert against each

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<sup>31</sup> Waitz, MGH, 142-146. The following discussion considers chapters V.1-V.5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 142-3. V.2.

<sup>33</sup> Otto Gschwantler, "Formen langobardischer mündlicher Überlieferung," (Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik 11: 1979), 58-85, 83: "Doch der große Zulauf, dessen sich Perctarit erfreut, erweckt Grimoalds Verdacht." The translation is my own.

other, “certain wicked flatterers”<sup>34</sup> tell the king that crowds, which are really only greeting Perctarit, are in fact conspiring with him to murder Grimoald and take his kingdom, so that the king must kill Perctarit. The flatterers in this scene share traits with both the evil men and Garipald, whom we have met in the previous book (IV.51); on the one hand, we are told exactly how they manipulate the king by misrepresenting the motives of the crowds that surround Perctarit to convince the king of an evil plot against him which will cause him to lose his life and kingdom. This manipulation, performed by misrepresenting appearances, resembles that of Garipald.<sup>35</sup> His manipulation makes Grimoald believe that he will lose his life because he notices the armor under Godepert’s clothes, which Garipald had tricked him into thinking was part of a plan to murder him. On the other hand, the flatterers remain unnamed and enter the narrative only briefly, like the evil men who start trouble between Godepert and Perctarit. The motivations of the flatterers can only be guessed: just as with the evil men and Garipald, we are never told precisely why they wish to encourage discord. Perhaps we are expected to make some assumptions about them, imagining the flatterers to be members of the king’s court, and thus people whom the king trusts. But, Paul highlights their sinister narrative power with a moralizing comment just before they show up: “However, what can an evil tongue not break?”<sup>36</sup>

The description of the king’s reaction to the words of the flatterers is significant. “After Grimoald heard these things, he became very credulous, and, having forgotten what he had

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<sup>34</sup> Waitz, MGH, 143: “...quidam maligni adolutores...” The adjective “maligni” is the same one used to describe the men who incite Perctarit and Godepert into conflict, 138: “...facientibus malignis hominibus....”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 143: “totam...civitatem.” The flatterers use the image of the crowds of people around Perctarit to lie and exaggerate by saying that the whole city is on Perctarit’s side, and thus against the king.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 143: “Verum quid non mala lingua inrumpere potest?”

promised, was inflamed at once to the murder of innocent Perctarit.”<sup>37</sup> That we are supposed to believe the king is made credulous by what he is told and that he has forgotten his oath seems to suggest that Paul is casting the blame on the flatterers rather than Grimoald, who is just another innocent victim. But if he is truly innocent, it is hard to make sense of his remarkably sinister words when he is told how greedily Perctarit is drinking the wine he has been given by the king’s servants: “Let that drunkard drink; indeed tomorrow he will vomit back that same wine mixed with blood.”<sup>38</sup>

Paul emphasizes this statement by the king, as it is in direct speech and stands alone in this part of the narrative. No other statement in the story is similar to this powerful declaration of violent intentions. From the perspective of dramatic tension, it serves to add a sense of urgency at a critical point in the narrative, as it naturally leads to the next scene, in which Unulf and the valet beg Perctarit to flee and disclose their plan for his escape. We are struck, however, by the extreme and swift change in Grimoald’s personality. Perctarit meets him, and he is a pious, merciful, generous king, and then, after the wicked flatterers influence him, he seems to suffer from a kind of induced schizophrenia, which we will see is *temporary*. Nevertheless, the king acts for some time like a different person: he goes from being the most Christian king to a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 143: “His auditis Grimuald nimium credulous effectus, et quod promiserat oblitus, in innocentis Perctarit statim necem accenditur...” Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897) s.v. “accenditur” can mean a person or thing that is inflamed. It can also mean kindled, lit, incited, and roused up. Compare it with s.v. “fomes,” which can mean kindling-wood, touch-wood, and tinder. It is used to describe the kindling of discord and of hatred in the brief description of the conflict between Perctarit and Godepert encouraged by evil men, 138: “Inter quos fratres, facientibus malignis hominibus, discordiae et odiorum **fomes** surrexit in tantum...”

<sup>38</sup> Waitz, MGH, 143: “Bibat ebriosus ille; cras enim pariter eadem vina mixta cum sanguine refundet.”



schemer who takes pleasure in the thought of violence.<sup>39</sup>

The transient nature of the king's schizophrenia is made plain in the third and fourth chapters of the fifth book. The king's return from this fit of malevolence gives unity to the story told over these chapters. He begins and ends as a pious, generous king. His return begins when he stands up to a unanimous crowd, which is the first time we see him contradict his people. After he asks them what is to be done with the valet, who has helped Perctarit to escape, they suggest a harsh death by torture. His answer to them announces the return of the good king we met at first. That his personality comes full circle is made quite clear, because he even uses the same language as when he praises Perctarit's trust in him: "By him who caused me to be born..."<sup>40</sup> He promises Unulf that "nothing of evil will happen to him," which also mirrors his first meeting with Perctarit.<sup>41</sup> He also "mercifully" lets Unulf keep his own property, just as he shows mercy in letting the valet live, and as he shows mercy to Pectarit initially and gives him lodging.<sup>42</sup> Just as Grimoald uses wine, food, and other drinks nefariously in the plot to murder Perctarit in the second chapter, making his guest relax so that he will not think of his safety, he puts them to quite heroic use in the fifth chapter when he marches against a Frankish army. The Langobard pretends to leave his camp, which is full of much excellent wine, and when the Franks have been weighed down with the various dishes and with much wine and sleep,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 143: "...rex laetus respondit..." ("the king responded happily") Paul tells us the emotional state of the king as he utters his evil words.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 143: the king says this to Perctarit: "Per eum qui nasci fecit..." on 145 he says the same to Unulf.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 145: "...quod nihil pateretur mali..." is what he tells Unulf. In his encounter with Perctarit, 142: "Haec ille audiens, fidenter promisit, in sua eum fide venientem **nihil mali passurum fore.**"

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 143, about Perctarit: "...rex eum **clementer** retenuit..." 145, about Unulf: "...omnes eius facultates et quicquid habere poterat eidem **clementer** concessit."

Grimoald rushes on them.<sup>43</sup> The kind of cunning that seems perfectly sinister when he uses it against Perctarit has been transformed here into a heroic trick worthy of Odysseus.<sup>44</sup>

Before the king puts the question to the crowd, he asks the valet exactly how Perctarit escaped, and he tells the king about the escape just as it occurred. What we learn from the king's answer to the crowd is that he is impressed by the valet's loyalty to Perctarit. In fact, the king appreciates this man so much that he puts him among his own valets, and asks him to have the same loyalty for him that he has for Perctarit. He appreciates the valet's willingness to "hand himself over to death," which is rather like the story of the dwarf who sacrifices himself for his king. That the king appreciates loyalty so much and wants the valet among his own followers may indicate that this virtue is generally *lacking* in his own kingdom, or at least at his court, and that this measure is meant to counteract the deficiency in a couple of ways: first, by letting his courtiers know that he is quite aware that disloyalty may exist at his court and second, by making Perctarit's valet seem exemplary. There is perhaps also the possibility that this valet may be expected to act as the king's own informant, which would mean that Grimoald cannot trust anyone in his kingdom but rather has to borrow a follower from Perctarit.

The king, then, has the account of Perctarit's escape told by the valet in public.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 146: "Fugere quippe se eorum impetum simulans, castra sua simul cum tentoriis et diversis pariter referta bonis praecipueque **vini optimi copia** hominibus omnino vacua reliquit... Qui dum **diversis epulis multoque degravati vino** somnoque quievissent, Grimoald super eos post noctis medium inruens..." Compare with 143: "Cui denique ad vesperam **diversos cibos, vina quoque** praecipua variaque potionum genera transmisit, ut eum inebriare possit, quatenus multa eadem nocte potatione **resolutus vinoque sepultus**, de sua nihil salute cogitare valeret."

<sup>44</sup> Goffart, *Narrators*, 409. The comparison of Grimoald with Odysseus is Goffart's, but he fails to see this transformation. That Grimoald fights the Franks in this chapter may seem to contradict the idea that Paul wants to encourage peace between Langobards and Franks in his own time, but in V.32 the king enters into a treaty with the Franks.

<sup>45</sup> Waitz, MGH, 145. The king wants him to recount everything in order ("per ordinem"), which he does.

bystanders and perhaps the guards make up the audience of his story. After the king hears the story from the valet, he asks the bystanders what should be done with him, perhaps as a test of their appreciation of loyalty: that he even asks this question suggests that he suspects they do not value loyalty. The crowd shows no appreciation for it because they think he ought to die a harsh death. The possibility that the story is used by the king as a lesson or reminder to his own followers is perhaps strengthened when he has Unulf repeat it to him. Although there is no mention of an audience at that moment, we know that the king already knows exactly what happened since he has heard the same tale from the valet. The king's request to hear the events again, in order, may be both a test of Unulf's truthfulness and a way for the king to instruct and remind his own followers by example.

From a more technical perspective of narrative construction, we may speculate about how Paul might have composed this sophisticated narrative about Grimoald's manipulation by courtiers. It is hard to believe that he invents a narrative in which the king acts in quite contradictory ways. It seems more likely that he is either adding his own words to an old tale or combining two stories together and reshaping them somehow to make sense as a unified whole. The narrative about the flight of Perctarit strikes us as unusually elaborate.<sup>46</sup> It also seems significant that Grimoald later has the valet and probably Unulf recount the events publicly, himself stressing that they must do so in the same order in which they really happened. Whether this retelling reflects a historical reality or not, Paul wants us to be convinced that the flight of Perctarit is a story that has been recited orally, and thus ultimately comes from oral tradition.

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<sup>46</sup> Gschwantler, "Formen" 83: "Die Erzählung von der abenteuerlichen Flucht Perktarits dank der Klugheit seines Dieners Unulf und seines Kämmerers ist überhaupt das umfangreichste Erzählstück in der *Historia Langobardorum* (V,2-V,4)." "The story of the adventurous flight of Perctarit thanks to the cleverness of his servant Unulf and of his valet is generally the most extensive piece of narrative in the *History of the Langobards* (V.2-V.4)."

This very likely fact explains the contradictory character of the king that we encounter when first reading the narrative: I would suggest the injurious-sounding king belongs in the older version of the story, and that the pious treatment of Perctarit in the beginning and of the valet and Unulf at the end have been added later, most likely by Paul, in order to elevate the image of the king as far as possible within the limits set by tradition. The wicked flatterers could easily have been added by Paul, as a way to conceal a real concern of the king about Perctarit as a rival power.

In an effort to trace how Paul refashions the story from a source, whether oral or written, we may consider the following outline.

A) As Gschwantler points out, this story is extensive, but it has an encapsulated feel to it, running from V.2 to V.4. In fact, we never encounter Unulf and the valet again. The story of Perctarit's flight appears to be embedded in the narrative, but not without an effort by Paul to harmonize it with the idealized and heroic representations of Grimoald in other stories in the fourth and fifth books.<sup>47</sup>

B) The loyalty of Unulf and the valet is emphasized in the story by one- or two-word adjectives, which seems typical of Paul's style (for instance the evil men, certain wicked flatterers.) With the introduction of Unulf, we are told he is a "most loyal man."<sup>48</sup> About Unulf and the valet we learn that, "(they)...were quite loyal to him"<sup>49</sup> and the valet is referred to later on in the story as: "that most loyal valet."<sup>50</sup> In this way Paul tries to harmonize the story with the king's reaction to it; as we read we are supposed to be eased into a similar reaction.

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<sup>47</sup> Waitz, MGH, 128-32. For instance in IV. 37 Paul includes a story about Grimoald's heroic youth: even though he is a very young boy, he kills an Avar who holds him captive, and then rejoins his brothers. He is described in heroic terms, 142: "...erat enim ipse puerulus eleganti forma, micantibus oculis, lacteo crine perfusus..." "That boy was indeed of elegant form, with sparkling eyes, (and) covered with blond hair."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 142: "...sibi fidelissimum virum..."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 144: "...qui utique eidem satis erant fideles..."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 144: "...vestiarius ille fidelissimus..."

C) As has been pointed out, the king starts and ends the story with pious-sounding language: “By him who caused me to be born...” in his interactions with Perctarit and the valet. His words contradict the moment when he happily says: “Let that drunkard drink; tomorrow indeed he will vomit back that wine mixed with blood.” The rather abrupt changes in his personality suggest that the sinister portrait of Grimoald and the good image of the king come from different sources: the evil one is probably older, from a story in which Perctarit was the main protagonist and Grimoald the villain. The existence of such a source would suggest a historical Grimoald who was harsh and unjust.

D) The scene in which Unulf puts sheets, a bedspread, and a bear’s skin on Perctarit and whips and insults him as if he were a slave from the country seems, because of its extreme inversion of roles, its excessive violence, and unusual number of harsh details, including the king falling to the ground because of the whipping, to have been originally for entertainment.<sup>51</sup> The loyalty of Unulf, however real, is made to seem coarse.

E) The conversation between Unulf and the guards, who delight in the miserable treatment of Perctarit, echoes Grimoald’s evil delight in the violence he thinks Perctarit is going to suffer. The guards seem to have been presented in the older source as harsh and evil too; their role adds to the depraved impression of the king, as they of course act under his orders.<sup>52</sup>

F) At the end of the second chapter Unulf helps his master escape. Perctarit is united with companions and “they hurried that night to the city of Asti, in which friends of Perctarit

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 144: “...Unulfus pannos suos lectaricios et culcitram ursinamque pellem supra dorsum ac cervicem Perctarit inposuit, cumque ex consilio quasi rusticanum servum extra ianuam impellere coepit...”

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 144: “Cumque eundem Unulfum regii satellites, qui ad custodiam positi erant, requirent, quid hoc essent: ‘Servus iste’, inquit ‘nequam lectum mihi in cubilico ebriosis istius Perctarit statuit, qui in tantum vino plenus est, ut quasi mortuus ita cubet. Sed satis est, quod eius nunc usque amentiam secutus sum, iam deinceps in vita domni regis in domo propria manebo’. Haec illi audientes et vera quae audierant esse credentes, **laeti effecti sunt**...”

remained and those who were still living as rebels against Grimoald.”<sup>53</sup> Why are there rebels to Grimoald? The narrative provides no explanation, so this detail must be a vestige of the older source, in which Grimoald is not a wholly popular king.

G) At the end of the second chapter, Perctarit returns to the realm of the Franks and resides with people who are rebels against Grimoald. In the fourth chapter, the king makes efforts to reunite Unulf and the valet with Perctarit. These followers would surely tell Perctarit of their good treatment by Grimoald. However, after this moment we never see Unulf or the valet again; in V.32, Perctarit is still shown fearing Grimoald, so that there is a problem with the logic of the narrative because it should be clear to Perctarit that he should not fear Grimoald, who has helped Unulf and the valet reunite with him.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that the scenes in which King Grimoald praises and aids Perctarit’s followers comes from another source, which is either Paul himself or another story that he includes and emphasizes. If these loyal followers had such large roles originally, it seems more likely that we would see them again, or that there would be some mention of them in another story in the fifth book. The followers of Perctarit are useful because they are the kinds of followers Grimoald does not have (that is, loyal ones, which is why he puts the valet among his own followers and tests the bystanders in his court with a question), and they allow the king to look as if he is trying to establish good relations with Perctarit, because supposedly he supplies them with aid so that they may rejoin their master.

We also sense considerable refashioning of this story by Paul in an attempt to shift blame away from the king. The wicked flatterers explain the vacillation in Grimoald’s personality in an

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 144: “...eadem nocte ad Astensem properant civitatem, in qua Perctarit amici manebant et qui adhuc Grimualdo rebelles extabant.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 155: “Cuius Grimualdi vires Perctarit etiam apud Francorum patriam constitutus metuens...” “Also Perctarit, who had settled in the country of the Franks, fearing the power of that Grimoald...”

attempt to build a psychological profile of a king whose image Paul is trying to elevate as much as tradition will allow. There is a particularly revealing line after Perctarit escapes with Unulf's help that represents Paul's efforts concisely: "And thus omnipotent God, by his merciful arrangement, both rescued an innocent man from death and preserved a king from atrocity, who wished in his heart to do good."<sup>55</sup> The line reveals the competing claims with which Paul is working: on the one hand, he preserves the traditional representation of Perctarit as an innocent victim, and on the other, he elevates the portrait of Grimoald by suggesting that his actions are not always reflective of his essentially good character.

Despite Grimoald's emphasis on loyalty, he is plagued by treachery until his death. His end is described quite briefly: after he tries to kill a dove with an arrow, a vein in his arm ruptures. "The doctors, as they say, administered poisoned medicines to him and robbed him completely from this life."<sup>56</sup> His murder is premeditated by those trusted with healing him, making it seem all the more traitorous. The doctors have the same brief narrative presence and relative anonymity as the evil men and the wicked flatterers we have already met. Also, just as in the previous cases, no reason is given for their actions. Grimoald's kingdom, and especially his court, seems rife with dangerous disloyalty and trickery. We must ask ourselves why Paul wishes to emphasize this weakness in the political structure of the Langobard kingdom by his repeated use of this narrative pattern.

We should reconsider possible political purposes for these narratives, since even though they are about old Langobard kings, especially Grimoald I, they were presented to audiences in

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 144: "Sicque Deus omnipotens dispositione misericordiae et innocentem a morte eripuit et regem ex animo bona facere cupientem ab offensione servavit."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 155: "Cui, ut ferunt, medici venenata medicamina supponentes, eum ab hac funditus privarunt luce."

the eighth century and thus are shaped for them.<sup>57</sup> For the young Grimoald III, an elevated image of Grimoald I might add legitimacy to his rule by association with his ancestral namesake, especially if the ancient Grimoald had had a poor reputation in tradition as a ruler before Paul refashioned stories about him. With the introduction of Garipald, Paul is able to remove the blame and guilt from Grimoald I for the usurpation of Godepert's territories. The refashioned story about Perctarit's flight with the introduction of the wicked flatterers shows our author transferring the desire to eliminate a rival from the king to courtiers, who manipulate the king with false information.

Grimoald III was the Beneventan prince who, in Paul's time, rebelled against Charlemagne, after he had been installed by him as a vassal duke-prince. At first he remained loyal to the king, but eventually he desired independence.<sup>58</sup> Keeping in mind that Paul likely desired to encourage good relations between the Franks and Langobards, we may also see these narratives as offering an explanation of Grimoald III's behavior to the Carolingian court: the king should not be judged harshly when, traditionally, his ancestor suffered from manipulation and traitors frequently, even until the time of his death. The point of the narrative in book five is that the king is only temporarily affected by the plotters, so that eventually he comes around, even though he seems capable of iniquity. It is important that he never actually does anything violent, or permanently harmful. The focus of the story is the bad influence of disloyal courtiers and its power to change the behavior of a king. The king does overcome it, and so the suggestion to the Carolingians is that his descendant will come around too, and that he will remember his old loyalties: in Grimoald I's case that is his loyalty to Perctarit because of the oath he had sworn

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<sup>57</sup> See Goffart's suggestion in footnote three above.

<sup>58</sup> Christie, *The Lombards*, 208. After Grimoald (III) had stopped a Byzantine attempt to install a Hellenized Langobard Adalchis on his throne, he was buoyed by success.



to him, and in Grimoald III's case it is his loyalty to Charlemagne and the Carolingian kingdom, which he betrays in 791. A possible parallel is that Perctarit is residing in the country of the Franks at the time when Grimoald tries to do good by him and his followers by attempting to reunite them.

In fact, just before we learn of Grimoald's death, he enters into a treaty with the Franks ruled by Dagipert.<sup>59</sup> We are told that Perctarit still fears Grimoald, and makes his way to Britain. He is then informed, by what he believes is a divine messenger, that he may return because Grimoald has been dead for three days. When he arrives in Italy he finds, remarkably, a whole retinue ready at the palace and all the royal dignitaries with a great crowd of Langobards expecting him.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this warm welcome by Langobards for the new king is a sign of Grimoald's oppressive rule.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Grimoald dies leaving the kingdom quite prepared for Perctarit to inherit. That Grimoald tried to reunite Unulf and the valet with Perctarit and apparently encouraged no bad feelings against him in the Langobard kingdom suggests that he has ultimately honored his loyalty to Perctarit: he takes over the kingdom with ease shortly after Grimoald signs a treaty with the Franks and then dies. Grimoald seems to look honorable in the end, despite his conflict with Perctarit and the Franks. That we see first the treaty between Langobards and Franks and then the take-over of a new king of the Langobards, who had lived in the Frankish realm for protection, seems important because of the historical situation

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<sup>59</sup> Waitz, MGH, 154-55: "Hac tempestate Francorum regnum apud Gallias Dagipertus regebat, cum quo rex Grimuald pacis firmissimae foedus inierat." "In this time Dagipert ruled the kingdom of the Franks, with whom King Grimoald entered into a treaty of most enduring peace."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 155: "Exindeque ad patriam tendens, cum ad claustra Italiae venisset, iam ibi omnia obsequia palatina omnemque regiam dignitatem cum magna Langobardorum multitudine praeparatam, se repperit expectari." "After that he drove to (his) country, (and) when he came to the enclosures of Italy, he found there all the royal dignitaries and the retinue of the palace already ready, (and) expecting him."

<sup>61</sup> Christie, *Lombards*, 101. This reading agrees with Grimoald's harsh representation in the story of Perctarit's flight.

contemporary to Paul, in which Grimoald III is rebelling against the Franks. Paul wants to elevate the image of Grimoald I, and thus that of Grimoald III by association with his namesake, and encourage peace between the two peoples in his own time.

In order to strengthen the given reading of the narratives about Grimoald, and to add to the portraits of Langobard kings we have considered, we should look at a story about the last king Paul includes in the HL: Liutprand. After the king is confirmed in his power, his brother Rothari wishes to kill him, but the plot fails when Liutprand hears of his plans from mysterious sources.

When this [Rothari's plan] had been reported to Liutprand, he ordered that he be summoned to his palace. When the king felt Rothari with his hand, he discovered on him a coat of mail put on under his clothes, as had been reported to the king. When Rothari found out he was detected, he immediately leapt backwards and unsheathed his sword so that he might strike the king. On the other hand, the king removed his own sword from its scabbard. Then one of the king's followers named Subo, seizing (Rothari) from behind, was wounded by him on the forehead. But others leapt on this Rothari, and killed him in that very place. Indeed, four of his (Rothari's) sons, who were not present there, were killed where they were found.<sup>62</sup>

In his translation of the HL, William D. Foulke writes in a brief footnote: "The story of Grimoald and Godepert seems to be here repeated with a slight variation."<sup>63</sup> In comparison with the Grimoald and Godepert story, this episode strikes us as being less complicated and more straightforward. There is a measure of deception on Rothari's part but it goes nowhere, as Liutprand's mysterious sources tell him about it. The main similarity between the two stories is

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 178: "Quod cum Liutprandum nuntiatum fuisset, eum ad palatium suum evocari praecepit. Quem, sicut ei dictum fuerat, lorica sub veste indutum, eum ipse manu pertractans, repperit. Qui Rothari cum se detectum cognovisset, statim post se exiliens spatham evaginavit, ut regem percuteret. Econtra rex suum ense vagina exemit. Tunc unus e regiis satellitibus nomine Subo Rothari a tergo comprehendens, ab eo in fronte vulneratus est. Super quem Rothari et alii insilientes, eum ibidem occiderunt. Quattuor vero eius filii, qui non aderant, ubi inventi, ibi et perempti sunt."

<sup>63</sup> Foulke, *History of the Langobards*, 281.

the armor under Rothari's clothes that Liutprand discovers, just as Grimoald feels armor under Godepert's clothes when he embraces him, though other similarities are also present: the threat of usurpation, which is here shown to be intentional on Rothari's part, and the setting in the king's palace. What we have is a divergent representation of a similar episode.

Considerable attention is given to the fight following the discovery of the armor. The details of Rothari's leap, Liutprand's drawn sword, Subo's attempt to seize Rothari and the wound he receives, and how the rest of the king's followers kill Rothari, are rather more elaborate than the less dramatic sentences we get following the discovery of armor by Grimoald. In fact, in that story there is no fight, but rather a swift killing based on a web of misinformation, while here the loyal followers who are present seem to stand in the background, quite the opposite of what happens in the Grimoald story. Subo appears briefly only to receive a wound for his king, and the other followers are left unnamed, and included in the briefest and vaguest way.<sup>64</sup> This representation of the royal entourage is quite different from the memorable traitor Garipald and the dwarf avenger. These facts are revealing because they show how much more nuanced and complicated the story of Grimoald's usurpation is, which suggests authorial intervention in its construction. The sophistication of Garipald makes the deception of Grimoald more understandable and convincing, while the power of the dwarf's character makes a memorable impression on us as he is a perfectly suitable match for Garipald, avenging his lord's death on the treacherous courtier.

The assassination attempt on Liutprand should be compared to an attempt on King Edwin's life in the second book, ninth chapter of Bede's eighth-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the first work of historiography in England. Cwichelm, king of the West

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<sup>64</sup> Waitz, MGH, 178. The king's followers who leap on Rothari and kill him are described as "alii."

Saxons, sends an assassin named Eomer to deprive Edwin, king of the Northumbrians, of both his kingdom and his life.<sup>65</sup> He enters Edwin's hall by pretending to be a messenger, and rushes at the king to attack him with a double-edged short sword, smeared with poison. Rather like Subo in the Liutprand episode, a devoted follower named Lilla, sacrifices his life by interposing his body between the assassin's strike and the king and then dies from the blow. Other unnamed followers kill Eomer, but not before Forthhere, another of the lord's followers, is slain.<sup>66</sup> My point in comparing the Liutprand episode to the one in Bede's *History* is to show how similarly the assassination attempts are staged: they are rather brief, straightforward accounts, with similar dramatic moments, including brief appearances of followers who defend their king to the death. They lack the extensive development that goes into the composition of the Grimoald story, which includes the nefarious messenger Garipald, who occupies center stage (unlike the followers of Liutprand and Edwin) and whose evil plans cause Grimoald's usurpation of Godepert's kingdom. Paul puts more effort into shaping scenes and episodes involving Grimoald than he does with any other king in the HL.

In the same chapter, there is then a second story about armor-bearers who wish to murder the king. Liutprand hears of this plot, again from anonymous sources, and he then goes with the armor-bearers into a deep wood, upbraids them, and encourages them to carry out their murderous plot, while holding his sword up against them. Then surprisingly, after the armor-bearers throw themselves at the king's feet and confess all they had plotted, the king forgives them. This story is probably included to soften the image of Liutprand by showing his forgiveness, as he may seem quite harsh in his decision to have all of Rothari's sons killed.

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<sup>65</sup> trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 164: "...regno simul et vita privaturum..."

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 164: "Qui cum mox undique gladiis inpeteretur, in ipso tumultu etiam alium de militibus, cui nomen Fordheri, sica nefanda peremit."

With the armor-bearers we have the impression that, like Rothari, they are exposed quite easily by the king's anonymous sources.<sup>67</sup> Their posture at the king's feet, and their confession of their plot followed by the king's clemency and appreciation of their honesty reminds us of Unulf and the valet at the feet of Grimoald, but with notable differences. The scene with the armor-bearers and Liutprand takes place in a private setting deep in the woods, while Grimoald's scenes with Unulf and the valet are staged in his court, in public. Paul includes the scene to make a rather simple statement about Liutprand's character as a merciful Christian king unlike the complicated political suggestions surrounding Grimoald's scenes. The public setting in Grimoald's case adds a political dimension because of the interaction between him and the bystanders in court. It is clear that in the stories of Liutprand we have two opposing representations of his character: one is a merciless ruler who kills the sons of Rothari who are not even present at the attempt to murder him, and the other is a king who even pardons people who commit crimes "of great wickedness."<sup>68</sup> What is significant is that Paul makes no attempt to harmonize these two sides of the king's personality; they simply stand next to each other, side-by-side in the two stories.<sup>69</sup> We may use this example to sharpen our sense of Paul's attempt to harmonize conflicting representations of Grimoald. In the case of Liutprand, our narrator has no contemporary political reason to alter the king's traditional image much, aside from including the story of his pardoning the armor-bearers and the vague comment at the end that the king, "did

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<sup>67</sup> Waitz, MGH, 178: "...cum eum duo armigeri eius occidere cogitarent, **et hoc ei perlatum fuisset...**"

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 178: "...sed tamen confessis mox tantae malitiae culpam pepercit."

<sup>69</sup> Paolo Delogu, "Kingship and the Shaping of the Lombard Body Politic." *The Langobards before the Frankish Conquest: An Ethnographic Perspective*. G. Ausenda, et al., eds. (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2009), 267. Delogu suggests that Liutprand "embodied the type of king who was simultaneously Catholic, warlike, and law-giving." These stories in the HL seem to represent the various sides of Liutprand, however his representation appears inconsistent.

this similarly with others,”<sup>70</sup> in order to mitigate the picture we get from the harsh killing of the would-be usurper’s sons. His effort to raise the image of the king is much slighter here than earlier with Grimoald.

From these episodes about Langobard kings certain narrative patterns and themes have emerged. After having looked at each narrative closely, we should think more generally about the representation of vile courtiers and figures of loyalty in order to appreciate how Paul shapes his text for both Langobard and Carolingian audiences.

The representation of courtiers seems shadowy. One reason is that our narrator takes advantage of their moral vagueness to insert them into various situations; without fixed motivations, they can be easily attached to various stories. The following list sums up the courtiers we have met.

- A) Evil men who manipulate Godepert and Perctarit.
- B) The messenger, Garipald, who manipulates Godepert and Grimoald.
- C) Flatterers who manipulate Grimoald.
- D) Bystanders at Grimoald’s court who do not appreciate the loyalty of the valet.
- D) Doctors who poison Grimoald.
- E) Armor-Bearers who plan to murder Liutprand.
- F) Gossips/Informants at Liutprand’s court.

The courtiers are described imprecisely, unlike the kings whom all of them, with the exception of Liutprand’s courtiers, manipulate and betray. This vagueness gives us the sense that this is not a collection of sinister individuals, but rather a general force of perversion that exists merely to influence kings for its own sake; because its agents are so shadowy, they seem inhuman. What

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 178: “Et de aliis quoque hoc similiter fecit...”

we do know about them is their role or job at court, descriptions of which are included to show machinations against kings coming from various angles. Their diversity underscores that wickedness is not particular to any one kind of person near the king, but is rather widespread. Some act ironically, considering their roles at court: the messenger changes his king's message to harmful effect, the doctors poison the king, and the armor-bearers plan to kill him. Many work together to form a kind of chain of discord: the evil men start the conflict between Godepert and Perctarit, which causes Godepert to send Garipald to enlist help from Grimoald. The messenger triggers Grimoald's usurpation and killing of Godepert, causing Perctarit to flee. When Perctarit returns to the king, the wicked flatterers then appear in order to turn the king against him. We should not regard them as historical; they are clearly literary representations inserted to give an image of general iniquity at court. Most of the courtiers fit the same pattern, but what about Liutprand's mysterious informants? Their presence seems positive, as they reveal to the king the murderous intentions of a would-be usurper. On the other hand, what are these informants doing in his court? Their existence presupposes a court full of intrigue. The informants are only mentioned in passing, but the information they supply to the monarch preserves both his life and his kingdom. How close he comes to losing both is strongly suggested by the description of Rothari's plan in the story: "Therefore he [Rothari] prepared a banquet for him in his home at Ticinum, in which house he concealed very strong, armed men who should kill the banqueting king."<sup>71</sup> The king's dependence on gossiping courtiers reveals his tenuous hold on the throne and on his life. That the armor-bearers' plot is reported to Liutprand also reinforces the sense that the king seems to live by information provided by courtiers.

The conspicuous comment about the wicked flatterers in the Grimoald and Perctarit story

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 178: "His enim convivium ei in domo sua apud Ticinum praeparavit, in qua domo viros fortissimos, qui regem convivantem extinguerent, armatos abscondit."

is: “However, what can an evil tongue not break?”<sup>72</sup> This kind of directly moralizing comment on the action is very rare in the HL.<sup>73</sup> In fact, its form uniquely engages the reader: it stands alone, not being part of a longer sentence, and both comments on the action in the story and describes succinctly the pattern of the powerful effect of courtiers we have been noticing.<sup>74</sup> The comment is also significant because Paul is famous for being rather self-effacing, especially in comparison with other early medieval historiographers.<sup>75</sup> The question has the sound of a foregone conclusion, that no one could resist the destructive power of such words. It offers a rare glimpse into Paul’s motivations as a propagandist; what is the point of such representations of intrigue in the Langobard court?

Part of the point must be to offer a dramatic domestic perspective on the complicated picture of conflicts between peoples in the HL.<sup>76</sup> Certain narratives are refashioned to stress that kings deal with villains in their own court and that these possess harmful persuasive power. Their inclusion allows him to shift blame away from kings and thus raise their historical images. But also by emphasizing the power of their plots, an alternative image of decline emerges that does not attribute the fall of the Langobard kingdom wholly to Frankish invasion but rather, at least in

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 143: “Verum quid non mala lingua inrumpere potest?”

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 87: “Cum in convivio **ultra quam oportuerat** apud Veronam laetus resederet...” This is an example of a moral comment in the HL from II.28 about King Alboin and Rosemund, in which the king’s wife plots to have him murdered. Her anger originates from Alboin’s offer to her at table to drink from a cup made from the skull of her father Cunimund, the king of the Gepids, whom Alboin had killed in battle.

<sup>74</sup> Perhaps as another way of engaging the reader, he sometimes writes “Quid Plura?” in his stories, but that is in no way a moral comment, and it is an old convention of Latin writers going back to antiquity.

<sup>75</sup> Paul, at least in the HL, is unlike Gregory of Tours, who includes several stories about himself in his *Historiae*. In V.49, for instance, Gregory tells how count Leudast tries to have him expelled from his bishopric.

<sup>76</sup> In the fifth book alone Paul writes about conflicts between Langobards and Byzantines, Avars, and other Langobards, mostly in the form of martial encounters.



part, to disloyal courtiers who cause instability at the center of power.

Since we have considered the presentation of these evil characters, we should now look at the loyal personages. Three figures come to mind from stories that involve Grimoald: the dwarf, Unulf, and the valet. All show loyalty to their masters while exposing themselves to danger. They, like the evil figures, have no personal motivations for their actions: they seem to embody an ideal. The scarcity of such characters is striking, but perhaps they are supposed to be contrasted with the courtiers.

The loyal characters struggle and sacrifice themselves for a principle. They are always outnumbered. The dwarf sacrifices his life, while Unulf and the valet come up with elaborate ruses to get their master safely away from Ticinum because of the numerous guards surrounding them.<sup>77</sup> Grimoald's guards beat the valet and pull him by his hair to the king's court.<sup>78</sup> We find out that Unulf ends up hiding in a church for sanctuary.<sup>79</sup> By contrast with them, the courtiers perform their evil acts effortlessly. Garipald encounters no resistance to his suggestions from the kings. The wicked flatterers, evil men, and the doctors all execute their plans with ease, and no later punishments are mentioned. Liutprand forgives the armor-bearers, and Garipald, who is the only courtier to suffer for his behavior, is murdered instantly when the dwarf severs his head with one blow. By contrast with his death, the dwarf is killed rather more violently with many blows of the messenger's companions.

The kings encourage loyalty and honesty in their followers, presumably because of the

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<sup>77</sup> Waitz, MGH, V.2, 144: For example, consider Unulf's use of sheets, a bedspread, and a bear's skin to cover Perctarit so that they may get by some guards. "...Unulfus pannos suos lectaricios et culcitram ursinamque pellem supra dorsum ac cervicem Perctarit inposuit, cumque ex consilio quasi rusticanum servum extra ianuam inpellere coepit...."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 145: "Quem statim capillis adprehensum, furentes eumque verberantes, ad palatium petrahunt."

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 145: "...quod in beati archangeli Michahelis basilicam confugium fecisset."

scarcity of these values. Grimoald emphasizes loyalty when he places Perctarit's valet among his own valets at his court and when he tests the bystanders, who have heard the valet's story of Perctarit's flight, about his loyalty to Perctarit. There is also a parallel between Grimoald's emphasis on loyalty from his valets and Liutprand's emphasis on honesty from his armor-bearers. These kings are shown taking matters into their own hands, and doing what they can to restore integrity to their kingdoms: Grimoald is so intent on sending the message of the importance of loyalty that he has the story of Perctarit's flight told twice at his court, and Liutprand confronts the matter of disloyalty by a more pressing measure: he brings his traitorous armor-bearers out alone into the woods with him and urges them to carry out their plot, while holding his sword against them. His forgiveness of them as a result of their honesty about their murderous plans makes a statement about the king's character. Also, like Grimoald with his emphasis on loyalty, Liutprand rewards their honesty, which is a value that must be lacking in his court, especially since he goes on to forgive people who have committed even worse offenses than the armor-bearers as long as they are honest with him.

In these narratives, a significant number of the kings' adversities can be summarized as being caused by malevolent courtiers and by the absence of good values in their own entourage. Our narrator presents his audience with scenes of internal Langobard politics that have an important presence in the HL. They constitute divergent representations of the precarious nature of Langobard kingship. Paul emphasizes the fragility of kingship, as he shows it frequently manipulated by crooked courtiers and surrounded by deficient followers. The number of loyal figures is limited and kings struggle to preserve their power and their lives, giving us the impression that kingship constantly teeters on the knife-edge between success and failure. Paul provides a tragic picture that has the advantage of not placing blame on either Carolingian or

Langobard royalty for the fall of the Langobard kingdom; instead, the narrative is constructed to be politically neutral for both audiences.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See Goffart, *Narrators*, 406 and Christie, *Lombards*, 108. Grimoald III defeats a Byzantine task force after being installed by Charlemagne as duke at Benevento and Grimoald I, as duke at Benevento, defeats Greeks trying to plunder a holy sanctuary; Goffart believes the connection is not quite historical because Paul wants to make the two situations parallel. “Paul sounds as though he were saying something to the reigning Grimoald. The H.L. discourages any designs that involved cooperation with the Greeks.” That the Greeks are enemies may be an implicit political message in the H.L.

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