Memorable crises: Carolingian historiography and the making of Pippin’s reign, 750-900

Goosmann, F.C.W.

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CHAPTER THREE

Between History and Memory

The Succession Crisis of 741

741. Charles, mayor of the palace, died.

742. When the mayors of the palace Carloman and Pippin led an army against Hunald, duke of the Aquitanians.1

Thus begin the well-known Annales regni Francorum. Written in close proximity to the Carolingian court, these have been characterized as ‘a skilfully constructed and highly selective triumphal narrative and a subtly nuanced portrayal of the Carolingian rulers, whose success is identified with that of the Frankish people.’2 Their opening entries are succinct, but their message is not lacking in force: the history of the Carolingians begins with the succession of Charles Martel by his sons, Carloman and Pippin. The ARF create an image of dynastic continuity and uncompromised succession and are, in this respect, not unlike the more or less contemporary Continuations. According to the Continuations, when Charles’s health began to deteriorate, he divided the realm equally between his two sons. The primogenitus Carloman received Austrasia, Alemannia and Thuringia, while Pippin, the filius iunior, received Neustria, Burgundy and Provence.3 According to Childebrand, under whose supervision the first section of the Continuations were composed, the succession of 741 had gone according to these plans and he presented it as an uncontested transition

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1 ARF, s.a. 741: ‘Carolus maior domus defunctus est.’ Ibid., s.a. 742: ‘Quando Carolomannus et Pippinus maiores domus duxerunt exercitum contra Hunaldum ducem Aquitaniorum.’
2 McKitterick, ‘Political ideology’, 164.
3 Continuations, c. 23.
of authority, from one Carolingian generation to the next. Childebrand had thus presented the succession of 741 as the very opposite of Charles's own violently contested rise to power in 715/6.4

Contemporary evidence, however, paints a markedly different picture. As a letter from Boniface reveals, which he composed in response to the news of Charles's demise, there had been a third heir named Grifo. Both the Continuations and the ARF are initially silent about this third heir.5 Later narratives, however, reveal that Carloman and Pippin had denied Grifo his inheritance and instead had placed him under lock and key in a stronghold in the Ardennes – a situation eerily similar to Charles's own arrest in 714/15, after the death of his father, Pippin II. The consequences of this in-house coup were not limited to the Carolingian family or the court elite, but affected the entire polity. Before the year was out, armies were mobilizing across the Frankish world, as political loyalties were tested, broken and created anew. Though Pippin would prevail in the end, this might not at all have been as self-evident as Carolingian authors made it appear in their narratives. Rather than an uncontested succession, those who had witnessed these events probably recalled a torn and divided realm, a decade of violence and armies on the march. Childebrand was such a witness, yet chose to invest in a highly stylized account to prevent of the opening years of Carloman's and Pippin's reign.

Mary Douglas once noted that 'the revisionary effort [in history writing] is not aimed at producing the perfect optic flat. The mirror, if that is what history is, distorts as much after revision as it did before. The aim of revision is to get the distortions to match the mood of the present times.'6 Carolingian narratives were not meant to be 'perfect optic flats,' especially when it concerned the less flattering episodes of Carolingian history. What is more, the case of the succession crisis of 741 will make clear that the earliest testimonies of these events are also the least revealing ones. The main reason for this is that those responsible for their composition were not passive observers, but active participants in events in which they, too, had had a vested interest.7 It took several decades before the memory of the succession crisis and its aftermath stopped being a threat to the leading members of the polity, and Grifo could be admitted into the written records of Carolingian history. Whether or not these

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4 On Charles's succession of Pippin II, see: Semmler, 'Sukzessionskrise'; Gerberding, '716'; Fouracre, Charles Martel, chapter 3; Fischer, Karl Martell, pp. 50-66.
5 Letters of Boniface, no. 48. See below, pp. 95-6.
6 Douglas, Institutions, p. 69.
7 McKitterick, 'Illusion', 4.
later accounts also provide a less distorted image of these events, is difficult to know; they may simply have been different distortions.

Matthias Becher, aptly referring to the succession crisis of 741 as a 'verschleierte Krise', has argued that these later testimonies were in fact closer to the actual events. In his attempt to unveil them and lay bare the skeletons that were hiding in the Carolingian closet, Becher meticulously stripped the various written testimonies of their rhetorical veneer, observing that as time progressed and new narratives were composed to replace older ones, Carolingian histories became more open about their past. He ascribed this to the dynasty's success, which allowed for 'an apparently more open relation with their past and its darker sides.' Looking beyond the attempts at concealment, the half-truths and the falsities, Becher suspects that 'according to Charles Martel’s will, Grifo was to become his chief or even only heir.' Whether the picture that emerges from Becher’s convincing source-critical exercise merits such a hyper-critical conclusion is doubtful, but he certainly makes a convincing case for Grifo’s importance to Charles. I see no real evidence, however, to support the claim that Charles held Grifo in higher regard than his older half-brothers.

The present chapter focuses in particular on the role of Grifo in the succession of 741 and how it came to be reflected in Carolingian historiography. As such, this chapter is heavily indebted to Becher’s work, although it does not share its conclusions or research aims. The purpose of this study is not to recover what was meant to be hidden, but to understand the social logic behind the long-term process of the construction of the past. The crisis of 741 had been a dramatic event in Carolingian history, and those who had taken it upon themselves to put this history into writing struggled to give it a fitting place in the Frankish collective memory. Four extant historical narratives – the Continuations, the ARF, the Annales Mettenses priores and the Revised ARF – allow us to track the transformation of this event’s literary reflection over a period of roughly eighty years. This chapter will investigate how the Carolingian historiographical narrative changed over time, what caused these changes and how written history related to the collective memory of its

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8 Becher, 'Verschleierte Krise'.
9 Ibid., 109: ‘anscheinend einen offeneren Umgang mit ihrer Vergangenheit und deren dunklen Seiten.’
10 Ibid., 131: ‘Grifo sollte nach dem Willen Karl Martells sein Haupt- oder sogar Alleinerbe sein.’
11 Becher’s conclusion is based on the assumption that Swanahild became a dominant influence at the Frankish court, at the end of Charles’s life, and on the extant letter by Boniface to Grifo (Letters of Boniface, no. 48), which Becher interprets as evidence for Grifo’s privileged status among Charles’s sons.
readership. I shall argue that the driving force behind this process of transformation was the impulse to alleviate the tension between social memory and historical (re)production, whilst remaining true to the authorial agenda. The production and circulation of historical texts among the Carolingian learned elite imply that the past was a matter of debate, through which the collective memory of the learned court elite could be influenced and manipulated.

In order to be able to assess the extreme measures taken by Childebrand and the author of the ARF to present the succession of 741 as an uncontested affair, by omitting Grifo from their narratives and disassociating the subsequent revolts of the 740s from Grifo’s arrest, it is first necessary to establish the political context in which these events occurred. Some insight into Charles Martel’s political agenda is necessary to explain Grifo’s central position within the Carolingian political constellation (3.1). Contemporary sources such as letters and charters will confirm that Grifo was not a second-rate member of the family (3.2). The political turmoil that erupted once Grifo had been arrested (3.3), and which received a second life after his escape in 747 (3.4), help to understand why the Continuations and the ARF resorted to the extreme measure of attempting a damnatio memoriae – and why, in the end, Grifo’s memory could not be banished. Against this backdrop, and by taking into account the unique context in which each narrative was composed, it becomes possible to understand why the history of Grifo and the succession of 741 was transformed the way it was and how these doctored testimonies related to the collective Frankish perception of their past.

3.1. Ostpolitik

Charles Martel took a special interest in the eastern provinces and their most prominent family, the Agilolfings. They were an ancient and well-established house, tied by marriage to royal families on both sides of the Alps, and by law entitled to the governance of Bavaria. In addition, the Agilolfings had close ties to the family of Plectrud and, if incited against Charles, posed a formidable threat. If, on the other hand, they were brought on board, Charles could settle the bad blood between him and Plectrud’s supporters, creating greater stability in the eastern Frankish world. Much like Charles’s own family, the Agilolfings were not a homogeneous group, but divided into various rivalling subgroups,
each with interests and aspirations of its own. Therefore, when Charles intervened in Alemannian and Bavarian politics in 725 and 728, his aim was not to conquer, but to support the claims of the Agilolfing faction headed by Hugbert (d. 736).\textsuperscript{15} By helping Hugbert to best the competition, Charles managed to ally himself with the new duke of Bavaria, whose loyalty was ensured by his dependence on Carolingian support.

In addition to helping Hugbert obtain a seat of power, Charles would also marry one of his relatives. While still a lower-ranking son of Pippin II, Charles had married Chrotrud, his first wife. Almost nothing is known about her, except that she died in 725 and that she had born Charles three children: Carloman (b. c. 708), Pippin (b. 714/5) and Chiltrud (b. ≤725).\textsuperscript{16} The year Chrotrud died, Charles entered Bavaria. According to the *Continuations*, Charles, \textquote[Continuations, c. 12: 'Subacta regione illa thesauris multis cum matrona quondam nomine Beletrude et nepta sua Sunnichilde regreditur.']{17} when he had subjected this region and many treasures, returned with a certain matron named Beletrud and her niece Swanahild.\textsuperscript{17} This was no small catch. Beletrud (or Pilitrud) had been the wife of the Bavarian Duke Grimoald, Hugbert’s chief rival, and the widow of Grimoald’s brother, Theodebald.\textsuperscript{18} She is also known to have been a close relative of Plectrud and may therefore have represented the final pocket of resistance against Charles’s leadership over the former Pippinid domains.\textsuperscript{19} Beletrud ended up suffering a violent death, while her niece, Swanahild, became Charles’s new wife.\textsuperscript{20} For Charles, Swanahild constituted a dynastic treasure trove, having been related to both Plectrud’s kin and the illustrious Agilolfing dynasty.\textsuperscript{21} Perhaps their union elevated Charles’s social status, but it certainly provided him with a foothold in the political network in the east, which revolved around the Agilolfing family and which allowed him to mend some of the political affiliations that had been broken when he seized control of the Pippinid family at the cost of Plectrud’s descendants.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{15} Jarnut, ‘Beiträge’, 350-1; Jahn, ‘Hausmeier und Herzöge’, 335.

\textsuperscript{16} Hlawitschka, ‘Vorfahren’, 73-82. Information on Charles’s family largely derives from the Reichenau confraternity book: Zurich, Zentralbibliothek Ms. Rh. hist. 27. Facsimile edition: Autenrieth, Geuenich and Schmid (eds), *Das Verbrüderungsbuch der Abtei Reichenau*. Chrotrud’s death is recorded in *AP*, s.a. 725. This name is also used for several of Charles’s descendents, as does the name ‘Ruodhaid’, who is believed to be the mother of Charles’s illegitimate sons: Remigius, Bernard and Jerome.

\textsuperscript{17} *Continuations*, c. 12: ‘Subacta regione illa thesauris multis cum matrona quondam nomine Beletrude et nepta sua Sunnichilde regreditur.’


\textsuperscript{20} *Vita Corbiniani*, c. 31.

\textsuperscript{21} Jarnut, ‘Beiträge’, 351.

\textsuperscript{22} Jarnut, ‘Herkunft Swanahilds’; Becher, ‘Verschleierte Krise’, 112-14; Hammer, *Ducatus to Regnum*, 283-90. According to Becher, Swanahild was instrumental in offering Charles access to the Lombard court.
Charles’s union with Swanahild soon produced a son. Grifo was probably born the following year, in 726, and personified the bond between Charles and Swanahild’s branch of the Agilolfing family — arguably the two most powerful families in the Frankish world. Charles maintained his good relations with Bavaria as Grifo was growing up. When Duke Hugbert died in 736, Charles supported Odilo, who is said to have been Swanahild’s cousin. If indeed Odilo originated from the Alemannian branch of the Agilolfing family, as Jörg Jarnut suspects, it would strengthen the idea that Charles, by supporting the claims of a semi-outsider, did not seek to promote Bavarian political stability to the point where it could be tempted to shake off its Carolingian collar. Charles could be relied upon to serve his own interests best: with Odilo in control of Bavaria, he was setting Grifo up with the support he needed after Charles was gone.

Charles and Odilo were close allies. In 740, Odilo ran afoul of certain elements within the Bavarian nobility. The Bavarian elite may have viewed Odilo as an agent of Charles and Odilo certainly knew whom to turn to for help. Between August 740 and March 741, Odilo resided at Charles’s court, and it was with Carolingian support that he was soon restored to the seat of the Bavarian duchy. Given the context, it becomes tempting to argue that on this occasion Charles arranged the union between Odilo and his daughter, Chiltrud. However, there is no evidence to support this notion; only later testimonies by authors openly hostile to Odilo and any connection he may have had to the Carolingian family. According to Childebrand’s testimony in the Continuations, the marriage between Odilo and Chiltrud did not take place until immediately after Charles had died, later that year. He presents the affair as a scandal: ‘Chiltrud, with the evil counsel of her stepmother, fraudulently crossed the Rhine with the help of her accomplices and went to Duke Odilo in Bavaria. To be sure, he married her against the will or counsel of her brothers.’

The author of the Annales Mettenses priores, who leaned heavily on the testimony the Continuations, identified this ‘illicit marriage’ as one of two reasons for the conflict that would arise between Charles’s oldest sons and their unwanted brother-in-law — the other being Odilo’s alleged struggle ‘to
wrestle his duchy free from Frankish domination.' Even during the reign of Louis the Pious, the marriage between Odilo and Chiltrud was remembered as a scandalous affair. Allegedly, the event even had inspired Louis to evict his wanton sisters from the royal palace at Aachen after succeeding Charlemagne in 814.

3.2. The hybrid prince

Grifo was in his mid-teens by the time Charles died. No law excluded the children of a second marriage from succeeding their father, but, as Birgitte Kasten argued, ‘with his first marriage a ruler clearly entered into a far-reaching political coalition with the wife’s kin group, which – regardless whether the first wife was still alive or had died – had long-lasting implications for the succession arrangement.’ Nonetheless, in the end the succession and the division of the realm was a matter to be settled in an arrangement between the ruler and his magnates. In light of Charles’s Ostpolitik, not considering Grifo as one of his successors becomes hard to explain. Charles had certainly made sure that Grifo’s bed was laid out for him.

There is contemporary evidence to back this up. In September 741, as Charles made the final arrangements for his memoria by the monks of St Denis and his burial in the basilica’s royal crypt, he made a donation to the monastery consisting of the royal palace of Clichy, to assure the monks’ cooperation and the martyr’s favour. The grant was confirmed by charter, which carried the subscriptions of Charles and the leading members of the polity. Among these names also featured those of Swanahild and Grifo. If the document itself came to have a limited audience, its creation was a public event at which, it would

29 *AMP*, s.a. 743: ‘Ogdilo dux Bavariarum, qui Hiltrudem filiam Caroli ad se fugientem in coniugium sibi copulerat contra voluntatem Pippini et Carolomanni, ipsum etiam ducatum suum, quod largiente olim Carolo princepe habuerat, a dominatione Francorum se subtrahere nitebatur. Qua de causa compulsi sunt gloriosi germani exercitum contra ipsum ducere.’
30 Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 21.
31 Kasten, *Königssöhne*, p. 118: ‘Mit der ersten Ehe ging ein Herrschender offenbar zugleich eine weittragende politische Koalition mit den Anverwandten der Frau ein, die sich – unabhängig davon, ob die erste Frau noch lebte oder verstorben war – bis zur Regelung für die Nachfolge als langfristig wirksam erwies.’
32 The succession of Pippin II (d. 714), who had already installed the sons of his first marriage on high positions, was exceptional. Kasten, *Königssöhne*, p. 91. points to a parallel with the succession of the contemporary Bavarian Duke Theodo.
33 Becher, ‘Verschleierte Krise’, p. 131, proposes that Grifo was Charles’s main, or even sole heir. However, in my opinion this position is unnecessarily extreme and cannot be sufficiently supported by the evidence.
appear, Swanahild and Grifo held centre stage.\textsuperscript{35} The charter has been interpreted as evidence of Charles's formal recognition of Grifo as his heir.\textsuperscript{36} Carloman and Pippin do not appear to have been present, for their names are missing from the document. Because of this, Becher has argued that Grifo may not have been merely a successor, but Charles's main, if not sole successor.\textsuperscript{37} But Carloman's and Pippin's absence does not necessarily mean that Charles had rejected his oldest sons in favour of Grifo. Though Carloman's whereabouts at that time are unknown, Pippin's activities are well-documented in the \textit{Continuations} and the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores}. Moreover, as the latter text also states, Charles intended for Grifo to inherit a territory centred on Paris/St Denis, which goes a long way towards explaining why Grifo subscribed Charles's final charter to this basilica, and not his half-brothers.

According to Childebrand, however, Charles's plans for the division of his realm only included Carloman and Pippin.\textsuperscript{38} Having settled the \textit{divisio}, Pippin is said to have entered Burgundy for a mission of considerable weight: 'Duke Pippin, having assembled the army, directed it to Burgundy with his uncle, Duke Childebrand, a multitude of the leading men and a great score of followers, where they seized the lands of this region beforehand.'\textsuperscript{39} The more elaborate account of the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} adds additional detail and states that after the \textit{divisio}, which it copied from the \textit{Continuations}, 'Pippin, now made a ruler (princeps), led the army into Burgundy to have some matters corrected and he corrected with a firm hand those which had to be amended in the territory.'\textsuperscript{40}

Pippin's expedition into Burgundy is open to interpretation. Becher argued that Pippin was not sent to Burgundy by his father to ‘correct an unruly people,’ but rather retreated to that region (of which Childebrand was duke) because his father and stepmother had just stripped him of a considerable part of his inheritance.\textsuperscript{41} Kasten, on the other hand, put more stock in the accounts

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\textsuperscript{35} McKitterick, \textit{Written Word}, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{36} Heidrich, ‘Titulatur’, 150-1.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Continuations}, c. 23.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Continuations}, c. 24: ‘Pippinus dux, commoto exercito, cum auunculo suo Childebrando duce et multitudine primatum et agminum satellitum plurimorum Burgundia dirigunt, fines regionum praeoccupant.’
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{AMP}, s.a. 741: ‘Pippinus iam princeps factus pro quibusdam causis corrigendis exercitum in Burgundiam ducit et ea quae emendanda fuerant in principatu gentis illius solida gubernatione correcit.’ The meaning of the words ‘princeps’ and ‘principatu’ is problematic. In a Carolingian context, this vocabulary is used to reflect the exalted position of the Carolingian mayors before they obtained the royal title. For that reason, I translate ‘princeps’ and ‘principatu’ as ‘ruler’ and ‘realm’ respectively. See also: Fouracre and Gerberding, \textit{Late Merovingian France}, pp. 68-9
\textsuperscript{41} Becher, ‘Verschleierte Krise’, 122-3.
of the Continuations and the Annales Mettenses priores, and interpreted Pippin’s armed entry into Burgundy as an ‘Erhebungsakt’. It was, so to speak, merely a young prince flexing muscles. I support the latter interpretation, since there is no evidence that Pippin rebelled against Charles directly.

The words used by Childebrand to describe Charles’s succession are worthy of note. While Carloman was, in more conventional terms, ‘raised over’ (sublimare) his territories in the east, Pippin was actually ‘sent forth’ (praemittere) to Neustria, Burgundy and Provence. The wording of the Continuations seems deliberate. Carloman’s sublimare, as Paul Fouracre pointed out, had hitherto been used for royal and, more rarely, episcopal successions. Though at first glance Pippin’s praemittere might suggest a difference in the status of the two heirs, Childebrand’s personal predisposition towards Pippin makes this unlikely. Rather, the verb praemittere resonates particularly well with Pippin’s subsequent entry into Burgundy on Charles’s instruction, and can be seen to emphasize Charles’s paternal authority over his son – a reading of events Childebrand would surely have sought to instil upon his readers.

Furthermore, the decision to ‘send Pippin to Burgundy’ while Charles was still alive made political sense. Burgundy and Provence, after all, had been recent conquests of Charles, who intended to integrate these provinces into his territories by supplanting the indigenous leadership with his own satellites, among whom Childebrand, who is referred to in his Continuations as the Duke of Burgundy. These new leaders were probably not grounded in the local political infrastructure and had to rely on the Carolingian centre for support. From this perspective, sending Pippin ahead to smooth over the transition becomes understandable. If indeed the St Denis charter was meant to confirm Grifo’s status as heir, another reason why Pippin’s name was not attached to it was that his status, unlike that of his teenaged half-brother, needed no confirmation: Pippin was already out there, leading Frankish armies across the fields of Burgundy.

In addition to the St Denis charter, a letter by Boniface survived that is addressed to Grifo and dated shortly after Charles’s death. In its extant form, the letter has been at the centre of an extensive debate. To summarize, this

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42 Kasten, Königssöhne, p. 112. Kasten argues that Carloman probably made a similar tour in his part of the realm. Childebrand’s personal interest, as Duke of Burgundy, and his predisposition towards Pippin, might explain why Carloman’s Erhebung was ignored.
44 Letters of Boniface, no. 48.
45 For an overview of the debate, see: Becher, ‘Verschleierte Krise’, 125-30; Hammer, Ducatus to Regnum, pp. 290-6. The letter argues that the contents of this letter was manipulated at a later stage in order to cover up that the well-remembered missionary had only sent a letter to Grifo. Becher, on
document appears to be a compilation of two separate letters. The first part is specifically directed at Grifo, whom Boniface asks to be the patron of his mission in Thuringia. The second section, however, consists mostly of a series of (from a political point of view) non-descript biblical citations. It addresses Charles's sons (*filii*), consoling them about the death of their father.\textsuperscript{46}

The interpretation of this letter depends on whether one is willing to assume that letters of similar content had also been sent to Carloman and Pippin, but have become lost. Alternatively, as Becher has argued, Grifo may have been the sole recipient of the political section of the letter. The former option would suggest that Boniface, far removed from the hustle and bustle of court life, did not know which of Charles's sons would succeed him in the east.\textsuperscript{47} Becher considers this unlikely, arguing that Boniface, who served as papal legate in *Germania*, would have been well informed on such important matters. Conversely, Boniface's letter collection reveals two things: first, Boniface was not one to enjoy the comforts of life at court – nor do Frankish courtiers appear to have enjoyed his company.\textsuperscript{48} Second, the earliest sign that Boniface became closely involved with the Frankish leadership appears to have been after Charles's death, when Boniface was asked by Carloman to restore the Frankish Church to its pristine glory in a series of councils.

The bishop may not have feigned his ignorance of Charles's succession plans after all. But regardless of whether Boniface was informed of Charles's plans for his succession, the letter proves that Grifo was not viewed as a peripheral son. Moreover, in persuading the young prince to support his mission, Boniface reminded Grifo 'that we bear you in mind before God, as your father, during his lifetime, and your mother also desired me to do.'\textsuperscript{49} The letter therefore not only informs us that Grifo should be considered an heir to Charles, but also that the old mayor and his wife had ensured Grifo's name was on the praying lips of important church prelates.\textsuperscript{50} Both the contemporary charter and the letter support the argument that Grifo had been groomed for office.

\textsuperscript{46} Becher, 'Verschleierte Krise', 127.
\textsuperscript{47} Tangl, *Briefe*, p. 607, n. 1.
\textsuperscript{48} *Letters of Boniface*, no. 63.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., no. 48: 'quod memoria vestra nobiscum est coram Deo, sicut et pater vester vivus et mater iam olim mihi commendarunt.' Trans. Emerton, *Letters*, p. 54. Note Rau, *Briefe*, p. 139, n. 2. Rau relates 'olim' specifically to Swanahild. More likely, it related to both Swanahild and Charles.
\textsuperscript{50} Airlie, 'Aristocracy', 116.
3.3. A dispossessed heir

Charles’s plans for his succession survive in several versions that shall be discussed in detail below. The *Annales Mettenses priores*, however, are the only account that give a description of the territory that Charles’s allegedly had allotted to Grifo. A likely reason for the text’s emphasis on the succession of 741 was that its first section, running up to 805, had been composed on the occasion of the *Divisio regnorum* of 806, in which Charlemagne laid down his plan for the division of his own realm between his then-living sons, Louis, Pippin and Charles. Concerning Grifo’s share, the author of the *Annales Mettenses priores* stated:

> But when Charles was still alive, when he was about to divide his realm between his sons Carloman and Pippin, he assigned to his third son, Grifo, whom he had from his concubine Swanahild, whom he had led away from Bavaria as a prisoner, on the advice of this concubine, a share to him in the middle of his realm, that is, some part of Neustria and a part of Austrasia and Burgundy.51

Kasten identified Grifo’s territory as the duchy of Champagne, which Pippin II had earlier consigned to his son Drogo (d. 708). Becher, on the other hand, argued that Grifo had been assigned the lion’s share of Charles’s territories (using Boniface’s letter as proof that Thuringia was a part of it, too) and that Carloman’s and Pippin’s allotted territories, if any, amounted to marginal regions on the edges of the Frankish world.52 Both views are speculative, and one should bear in mind that the author of the *Annales Mettenses priores* had his own political agenda to tend to.53 Becher is right, though, in pointing out that the creation of a new realm for Grifo would have been problematic. Such a new territory, carved from the centre of the Frankish realm, would have lacked a viable political infrastructure that could sustain it, and would have disrupted the pre-existing networks and ties of reciprocity in the region. This in itself might explain why a crisis erupted in 741. Even if, according to this division, Grifo was assigned the centre of the Frankish realms, this does not automatically mean he was a privileged heir.54 Although the region at the heart

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51 *AMP*, s.a. 741: ‘Carolus autem adhuc vivens, cum inter filios suos Carolomannum et Pippinnum principatum suum divideret, tertio filio suo Gripponi, quem ex concubina sua Sonihilde, quam de Bawaria captivam adduxerat, habuit, suadente eadem concubina, partem ei in medio principatus sui tribuit, partem videlicet aliquam Niustriae partemque Austriae et Burgundiae.’


53 See below, chapter 4.6.2.

of the Frankish world would have been rich in fiscal property, it was also locked in on all sides, leaving Grifo with no room for expansion or plunder, argued to have been the driving force behind the Carolingian economy.\textsuperscript{55} And what might also be significant in this matter: it would have isolated Grifo from the people who were most liable to support him.

The \textit{divisio} as presented in the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} can thus be interpreted as a well-balanced partition in which Charles kept each of his sons out of the regions where they were most likely to find the strongest support, ensuring a more or less equal distribution of power and income. The division was meant to stimulate the integration between east and west, but, as harmonious as this sounded in theory, in practice Charles’s policies regarding the Bavarian elite met with strong opposition. A conservative faction within the Frankish elite that included Childebrand did not take kindly to the arrival and installation of their eastern colleagues in Francia proper.\textsuperscript{56} In the wake of Charles’s death, conflict erupted as his critics mobilized behind the sons of Chrotrud, demanding the expulsion of Grifo and his mother, as the figureheads of a large aristocratic constituency with Bavarian roots. With Charles gone, new – or perhaps old – political winds were again picking up.

Grifo’s arrest in the winter of 741 effectively beheaded the Agilolfing faction in Francia, which now regrouped in Bavaria under Duke Odilo – a Carolingian by marriage and Grifo’s uncle. While Grifo was imprisoned in the Ardennes (741-747), a series of armed conflicts erupted that Carloman and Pippin ultimately managed to overcome. Contemporary commentators, among whom Childebrand, presented these campaigns as a series of unrelated incidents, inflicted upon the Franks by peoples whose nature it was to either provoke (\textit{provocare}) or rebel (\textit{rebellare}) against Frankish authority. To account for the motive behind these insurgencies in the Frankish periphery, Childebrand merely stated that such was the ‘customary manner’ (\textit{mos consuetus}) of its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{57} To antagonize the dynasty’s opponents further, they were systematically presented in Carolingian historiography as ‘non-Franks’ with an unchristian demeanour. Stripped of their Frankish identity, they came to be referred to as Bavarians, Alemanni, Saxons, etc., despite the fact that their leaders had been well integrated into Frankish political culture. However, under the early Carolingians the definition of the Frankish identity

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{55}{Reuter, ‘Plunder’}
\footnotetext{56}{Kasten, \textit{Königssöhne}, pp. 113-14.}
\footnotetext{57}{\textit{Continuations}, cc. 25-29 and 31. The \textit{ARF} rarely state the motives behind Frankish military campaigns.}
\end{footnotes}
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was reinvented: a Frank was not just someone who was subject to Carolingian leadership, but someone who was subject to the right Carolingian.

Writing six decades later, the author of the *Annales Mettenses priores* broke with this discourse. Instead of a series of isolated incidents with rebels operating in the margins of the Frankish world, the *Annales Mettenses priores* presented the opposition as a concerted conspiracy under the leadership of Duke Odilo. The author stresses that Odilo ‘held [the duchy] due to the largesse of the former leader Charles,’ making his later rebellion against Charles’s sons all the more damnable.58 Where earlier accounts presented Carloman’s and Pippin’s joint campaign against Odilo in 743 as business as usual, the *Annales Mettenses priores* presents it as the epic finale in which the sons of Chrotrud came to triumph over a united opposition.59

The opposition, moreover, was not inspired by Merovingian loyalism, nor would it have been born out of a separatist desire. In fact, it probably was not even opposed to Carolingian rule per se.60 Not ideology, but self-preservation and the preservation of their political, social and economic interests is what drove men like Odilo to take up arms against Carloman and Pippin. For the elite of the Frankish periphery, Grifo’s unexpected expulsion from power, whom they had considered their Carolingian representative, had posed a serious threat to their position. In the wake of Odilo’s defeat in 743, Carloman and Pippin launched several more campaigns in retaliation against those who had defied their authority. Odilo himself, however, appeared to have accepted the new regime and, perhaps owing to his status as brother-in-law, was allowed to remain in place as the leader of the Bavarians.61 The other ringleaders were less fortunate and faced relentless persecution. The Alemannian elite paid an especially high price for breaking the oaths they had sworn in 742; four years later, in 746, they were put to the sword by an irate Carloman.62

3.4. Enfant terrible

The following year, in the autumn of 747, Carloman abdicated and left for Rome. He appointed his oldest son Drogo as his successor, trusting Pippin to watch over him. But Pippin had much to worry about himself. If the Frankish realm was at peace for now, it was only because he and his brother had met

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59 *AMP*, s.a. 743.
61 *Annales Mosellani*, s.a. 744.
62 See chapter, 4.1.2.
opposition with violence and terror; no sustainable solution had yet concluded this conflict. Once the eastern dukes recovered from recent blows, there was no telling how they would respond to Carloman’s absence. The political rift that divided the eastern and western elites cut right across the Carolingian family. Pippin may therefore have reasoned that if he could repair matters within his own household, the outside world would soon follow suit. Thus, picking up where Charles Martel had left off, Pippin released Grifo in 747/8 and offered him a position at his court. He did not go so far as to acknowledge Grifo as his equal, though. Pippin’s vision of order only had room for one leader.

Grifo, on the other hand, did not share Pippin’s vision. As the later Reviser of the ARF disapprovingly stated: ‘Grifo, who did not want to be subject to his brother Pippin, even though he would live honourably under him, collected a band of soldiers and escaped to Saxony.’63 Pippin’s plan thus backfired and Grifo escaped to where he was most likely to find support. Watching a precarious peace unravel, Pippin once more assembled the Frankish host and marched east. With the exception of the Continuations, whose author persistently remained silent about Grifo (noticeably struggling to keep his narrative standing) all the major court-oriented sources recorded in considerable detail the cat-and-mouse game that now ensued. It made Stuart Airlie, thought-provokingly, speculate that once there may have existed ‘a Grifo “saga”, the stories of his journeys and escapes, circulating among his followers and enemies,’ which may have formed the basis of these later historiographical narratives.64 It would certainly account for the sudden enthusiasm with which Carolingian historians, from the 790s onwards, wrote of the adventurous history of this Carolingian rebel-prince.

While Grifo may have been kept out of Childebrand’s Continuations, the author of the ARF allowed Grifo to enter the annals at this point. The ARF describe how Grifo fled to Saxony in 747 and how he entered Bavaria the following year.65 According to the author of the Annales Mettenses priores, always a great one for drama, Grifo was a charismatic figure, who was ‘followed by many young men from the noble race of the Franks, led by fickleness, abandoning their own lords:’66 Grifo’s timing was fortunate, for Odilo had died earlier that year, leaving the widowed Chiltrud and their young son, Tassilo, in a precarious situation. With the help of powerful men like Swidger and

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63 Revised ARF, s.a. 747: ‘Grifo, Pippino fratri suo subiectus esse nolens, quamquam sub illo honorifice viveret, collecta manu in Saxoniam profugit.’
64 Airlie, ‘Aristocracy’, 120.
65 ARF, s.a. 747 and 748.
66 AMP, s.a. 748: ‘Quem plurimi iuvenes ex nobili genere Francorum inconstantia duxi, proprium dominum relinquentes, Grifponem subsecuti sunt.’ Airlie, ‘Aristocracy’, 120.
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Landfrid, Grifo was able to briefly seize control of the duchy.\(^67\) It did not, however, allow him to ward off Pippin’s army and Grifo was captured a second time. A likely reason why the author of the ARF readmitted Grifo, was that his temporary occupation of Bavaria had formed the occasion for Pippin to install his young nephew as duke of the Bavarians, making Tassilo’s betrayal in 763 all the more shameful.\(^68\)

There was to be a sequel to the Grifo saga. In an astonishing act of mercy that may have owed to the intervention of Carloman, now residing as a monk in Monte Cassino, and Pope Zachary, Pippin offered Grifo a second chance by assigning him the command over a duchy centred on Le Mans.\(^69\) Hope remained that Grifo could be useful to Pippin’s agenda and by having him command a duchy on the western frontier of the Frankish realm, Pippin isolated his half-brother from his supporters in the east. It was an important position, as the duchy centred on Le Mans formed a defensive marcher designed to shield Neustria from opportunistinc raids from Brittany and Aquitaine.\(^70\) But Grifo bolted a second time. Nibelung, who had at this point taken over his father’s patronage of the Continuations, at this point broke the silence and invoked his cousin’s name for the first time to report his demise:

Meanwhile, a messenger came to the aforesaid king from the Burgundian territories, because this brother of the king named Grifo, who had recently fled to the leader Waifar in Wasconia [i.e. Aquitaine], was killed at the city of St Jean-de-Maurienne on the banks of the river Arc by Theodoenus, count of Vienne, and Frederic, count of Trans-Jura, when he sought to enter Lombard territory and prepared a plot against the aforesaid king.\(^71\)

Grifo died in 753. We may perhaps imagine how Pippin’s two counts, who had both also died in the fighting, would have been surprised to find Grifo at their backs, as their gazes would have been directed at the slopes of the Mont Blanc, in anticipation of the arrival of Pope Stephen II.\(^72\) As Grifo’s saga came to its end, a new and even more spectacular story would take its place, about how the

\(^{67}\) See above, chapter 2.2.1.

\(^{68}\) See above, chapter 2.


\(^{70}\) Rouche, L’Aquitaine, pp. 119-20; Smith, Province and Empire, pp. pp. 45 and 48.

\(^{71}\) Continuations, c. 35: ‘Dum haec aegeretur, nuntius veniens ad prefatum regem ex partibus Burgundie quod germanus ipsius regis nomine Gripho, quod dudum in Vasconia ad Vasinarios principe confugium fecerat, a Theudoeno comite Viennense seu et Frederico Ulteriorano comite dum partibus Langobardie peteret et insidias contra ipso praeedito regem pararet Maurienna urbe super fluidum Arbeiis interfector est.’

\(^{72}\) CC, nos. 4-5 and LP, Life 94 (Stephen II), cc. 15-27, are evidence that the visit of Pope Stephen II to the Frankish court was carefully arranged.
Franks heroically ventured south to rescue Saint Peter and his special people from the Lombards.

3.5. The many divisiones regni of Charles Martel

Modern preoccupations with the origins of the nation state (*Verfassungsgeschichte*) have made dynastic succession and territorial division central research themes. However, the succession of Charles Martel and the *divisio* of 741 have proven to be a complicated affair, as each source tells a different story. On the basis of source-critical grounds, some narratives have been judged more compelling than others. Nevertheless, a frequently encountered method in attempts at historical reconstruction, especially in cases where testimonies are scarce, has been to 'blend' a disparate array of narratives into a single collage, apparently under the assumption that each account at least presents a partially accurate description of the events being studied. During the past few decades, however, historians have become increasingly wary of the manipulative character of Carolingian historiography, which does not present its readership with an objective rendering of the contemporary past, but manipulates the memory of the past in support of presentist agendas. The early medieval historian thus became an ideologue. Reality, defined here as a socially accepted truth on the basis of collective experience and remembrance, continued to form the framework within which these authors composed their annals and chronicles, but it was a framework with very flexible boundaries.

Having attempted above to sketch a loose historical framework, the remainder of this chapter will study the authorial strategies behind the different presentations of the succession crisis of 741 in Carolingian historiography. Each account sought to connect two fixed parameters: the death of Charles Martel, marking the beginning of this crisis, and its outcome, namely Carloman’s and Pippin’s consolidation of their claim as Charles’s heirs. Due to the continued importance of the outcome of this succession to the Carolingian identity, the first attempt to capture these events in writing did not immediately result in a definitive rendering of historical events. The ever-changing social and political contexts demanded that the past was continually adapted to the moral values and political agendas of the present. In the process, some Frankish authors cut one corner too many and risked severing the elastic

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74 See for example: Geary, *Phantoms*; McKitterick, ‘Political ideology’; Hen and Innes (eds), *Uses of the Past*; Collins, ‘Deception’.
75 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 25.
but vulnerable link between historical narrative they proposed and the collective memory of their readership. If this link broke, a narrative had lost its plausibility. Yet this appears to have been an important function of these narratives: to influence and manipulate the Carolingian identity and the perception of its past, by correcting on parchment what in practice had spelled disaster.

The four central narratives in this debate – the Continuations, the ARF, the Annales Mettenses priores and the Revised ARF – can be understood as a dialogue to the extent that their respective authors were acquainted with the accounts or traditions of their predecessors, or at least understood the basic ideas behind them. Changes in the political context notwithstanding, each of these texts was written, composed and read by the members of a very select circle of the political elite, who were already favourably disposed towards the Carolingian dynasty, which, after the events of 741, had come to be represented by the descendants of Chrotrud rather than Swanahild. To analyze this historiographical debate and understand the transformations in the literary reflection of Charles’s succession, the individual accounts need to be studied on their own terms, so that the authorial agenda might be reconstructed and the literary and rhetorical devices with which this agenda was given expression revealed.

3.5.1. First to the scene: the Continuations and the ARF

The Continuations have already been introduced in the previous chapter. The section that covers the succession crisis of 741 was composed under the aegis of Childebrand, with whom we have already become acquainted. In the Continuations we come across him as the Duke of Burgundy and a loyal military commander in Charles’s campaigns in southern Gaul. When Charles’s health was in decline, we encounter Childebrand at Pippin’s side as they entered Burgundy with a large force. Nothing else is known of his political activities, except that Childebrand is said to have commissioned the Continuations. Whatever his precise role in these matters, it is clear that this text does not present us with a testimony of a neutral observer, but with that of someone who strove to justify and eulogize the new regime, in which he himself actively participated.

The Continuations present the events that led up to Charles’s succession as follows: after Charles and Childebrand took control of Provence, ‘Charles’s
health began to decline’ (c. 21). *Eo tempore*, Pope Gregory III (731-741) twice sent an embassy to Charles (c. 22). After this, Charles, according to Childebrand, divided his territory among his two heirs:

The aforementioned ruler [Charles], having asked the counsel of his leading men, divided the kingdoms between his sons. On that account he elevated his first-born, named Carloman, in Austrasia, Swabia (which is now called Alemannia) and Thuringia; however, he sent the younger son, named Pippin, forth to Burgundy, Neustria and Provence.77

Directly following this *divisio*, and for reasons not explained by the author, Pippin and Childebrand entered Burgundy. In the meantime, bad omens announced the impending death of Charles Martel, which, we know, occurred on 22 October 741. Childebrand’s account makes no mention of Grifo. If we were to rely solely on the Continuations, we would not have known of Grifo’s existence. There is no mention, therefore, of Grifo having been an heir of Charles Martel, of the conflict that erupted between him and his two half-brothers after the death of their father, or of his six-year imprisonment in the Ardennes. Instead, the Continuations report that Chiltrud had eloped with Odilo on the bad council of her stepmother and to her brothers’ dismay (c. 25). Their retaliation was suspended, however, as trouble arose in Aquitaine and Carloman and Pippin first had to march their armies south against Hunald. In considerable detail, the Continuations relate how the Frankish army crossed the Loire, burned the outskirts of Bourges to the ground, and occupied the fortress of Loches, but Childebrand makes no reference to a redivision of the realm at Vieux-Poitiers.

For this we need to turn to the *ARF*, composed c. 795. Unlike the Continuations, these annals begin their account with the death of Charles Martel and therefore offer little insight into Charles’s original plans for succession – and perhaps intentionally so. Like the Continuations, the *ARF* do not mention Grifo at first, but they do introduce Grifo in 747, when he is said to have fled to Saxony and later Bavaria.78 This was necessary for the author of the *ARF*, because Grifo formed Pippin’s motive to enter Bavaria and, having captured his

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77 Continuations, c.23: ‘Igitur memoratus princeps, consilio obtutum suorum expetito filiis suis regna dividit. Idcirco primogenito suo Carloman nomine Auster, Suavia, que nunc Alamannia dicetur, atque Toringia sublimavit; alterius vero filio iuniori Pippino nomine Burgundiam, Neuster et Provintiam praemisit.’ Note that the Continuations are unreliable for their dating of this *Divisio* to 740, because their narrative is based on a literary instead of numerical organization. Furthermore, the author may have manipulated the chronology to add additional seniority to a plan that excluded Grifo from participating in this succession.

78 *ARF*, s.a. 747 and 748.
renegade half-brother, install Tassilo to the duchy. But while the ARF present
the succession of 741 as a relatively straightforward transfer of power from
Charles onto his two sons, Carloman and Pippin, they also imply that, at the
time of Charles’s death, the division of his realm was either still unresolved or
contested. With the entry for 741 only stating that ‘the mayor of the palace
Charles died,’ the entry for 742 continued:

At that time the mayors of the palace Carloman and Pippin led the
army against Duke Hunald of the Aquitanians and took the fortress
called Loches. And on that campaign they divided the kingdom of the
Franks between them in the place, which is called Vieux-Poitiers.

The circumstances of this division merit additional attention: if there had been
no succession plans made during Charles’s lifetime, one might expect such an
important event to have warranted a general assembly of the Frankish elite.
Instead, the division was settled between Carloman, Pippin and their
immediate circle of followers who had accompanied them on their campaign
into Aquitaine. The division of Vieux-Poitiers thus strikes as an arrangement
made in haste, to which only a select body of the Frankish elite had been
present. In all likelihood, it had been an alternative to earlier plans of Charles
Martel, which had, apparently, not been to the satisfaction of Carloman and
Pippin, or their constituencies.

The Continuations and the ARF thus offer two ostensibly incompatible
perspectives on the succession of Charles Martel. According to the former,
Charles’s plans had been a cut and dried matter, neatly arranged during the
mayor’s lifetime and executed when the old mayor died. The annals, on the
other hand, vaguely imply that plans may already have been made by Charles,
but instead of executing them, the annals state that Carloman, Pippin and their
supporters had come up with an alternative plan whilst on campaign in
Aquitaine. How the division of Vieux-Poitiers differed from the original plans,
and which, if any, elite groups were excluded from these deliberations, is not
made explicit.

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79 See chapter 2.2.2.
80 ARF, s.a. 742: ‘Quando Carlomannus et Pippinus maiores domus duxerunt exercitum contra
Hunaldum duce Aquitaniorum et ceperunt castrum, quod vocatur Luccas; et in ipso itinere
diviserunt regnum Francorum inter se in loco, qui dicitur Vetus-Pictavis.’
3.5.2. Bringing narratives together: the Annales Mettenses priores

The Annales Mettenses priores are another example of a historiographical text composed in close proximity to the court. The first section of the Annales Mettenses priores, spanning the period 687-805, was probably composed in the spring of 806. As Yitzhak Hen has pointed out, the Annales Mettenses priores were actually not designed as a set of annals, but as a chronicle.81 Its author had access to both the Continuations and ARF, on which his, or her, narrative relied strongly. One of the aims for this work was to create a unified vision of the Carolingian past, which would explain why the author did not wish to choose one reading over another, but instead decided to accept both the testimonies of the Continuations and the ARF and combine them into a single account. To this, the author added original information from an unknown source, making it the most detailed, if not necessarily most accurate, account of the events of the 740s.82

Three distinct sections can be discerned. The first spans the period 687-805 and was probably composed by a single author who finished early in 806. The second section spans the period 806-829, and relies heavily on the narrative of the ARF. The third and final section consists of the entry for 830 and appears to be an original account, written contemporaneously. For the purpose of this study, I shall look at the first section of the text. While there is consensus about the text’s compositional background, historians are less decided on the place of composition or the identity of the author. Suggested sites are Metz, St Denis and Chelles.83 In the case of the latter, Gisela, a daughter

81 Hen, ‘Canvassing for Charles’, 123. Unlike the Continuations or the ARF, the dissemination of the Annales Mettenses priores appears limited in the Carolingian period. Five manuscripts survive, of which only Durham, Cathedral Library C IV 15, fol. 2r–28v, contains the full text, from 687-830. It was copied at the monastery St Arnulf of Metz in the twelfth century, hence the text’s current name. Of the other four, only London, British Library, Arundel 375 consists of more than a single folio. The Arundel MS consists of a copy of the Liber historiae Francorum, appended to the anonymous Excidium Troiae and continued with the Annales Mettenses priores (687-692). This is also the oldest MS, which according to Hen was composed on the occasion of the royal inauguration of Charles ‘the Straightforward’ (a translation of Simplex to be preferred over ‘the Simple’) at the cathedral of Rheims in 893. The three remaining fragments date to the tenth century. See: Haselbach, Aufstieg und Herrschaft, p. 15, n. 40

82 Kasten, Königsohne, pp. 110-18. With regard to Kasten’s reconstruction, note the methodological critique by Collins (see above, n. 73).

83 For an overview of this debate, see: Fouracre and Gerberding, Late Merovingian France, pp. 338-9.

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of Pippin, is a likely candidate for authorship or sponsorship of the text.\footnote{Nelson, ‘Gender and genre’, 191–4. In reaction to Nelson’s thesis: Fouracre and Gerberding, _Late Merovingian France_, 337–40; McKitterick, _History and Memory_, p. 125.} Although there is no definitive answer to these questions, there is little doubt that whoever composed this narrative belonged to the circle of the ruler and his family. The more pertinent questions that need to be asked are therefore why and for whom the _Annales Mettenses priores_ were composed.

The tone of the _Annales Mettenses priores_ leaves little room for doubt: whoever compiled this text was a staunch promoter of the Carolingian dynasty, leading one historian to characterize its narrative as a ‘tour de force of Carolingian propaganda.’\footnote{Hen, ‘Annals of Metz’, 189.} To understand the finer points of what this particular chronicler had hoped to convey, historians have looked to the historical context of its composition. Irene Haselbach, for instance, argued that the _Annales Mettenses priores_ should be understood as a dossier for legitimizing and solidifying the royal and imperial claims of the Carolingians in their past, at a time when Charles was still getting used to the weight of the imperial crown.\footnote{Haselbach, _Aufstieg und Herrschaft_, p. 10.} Others have recognized in the _Annales Mettenses priores_ a Frankish attempt to counter the growing influences of the papacy, following Rome’s involvement in the inauguration ceremonies of 751/4 and 800.\footnote{Ibid., 10; Fouracre and Gerberding, _Late Merovingian France_, pp. 344–5; Hen, ‘Annals of Metz’, 179. See below, chapter 5.} Alternatively, the _Annales Mettenses priores_ may have been composed in response to a climate of deteriorating relations between the Frankish and Byzantine courts, again related to Charlemagne’s recent imperial promotion. The author’s intentions were probably many. Perhaps the most compelling motive for the production of this polemical account of Carolingian history, as Hen has argued, is its connection to the _Divisio regnorum_ of 806, which this text may have wished to ‘sell’ to a Frankish elite that, in Charlemagne’s eyes at least, was acting in an increasingly restless manner.\footnote{Hen, ‘Annals of Metz’, 183–5.}

The _Divisio_ of 806 was a response to a series of crises and forewarnings that had troubled the aging emperor. The document expressed Charlemagne’s wishes on how the realm was to be divided between his three sons, should they outlive him, and contained numerous provisions to prevent Frankish elite society from erupting in chaos once one ruler, and one unified realm, became three. This, according to the prologue of the _Divisio_, was Charlemagne’s main concern: ‘that he may not leave confusion and disorder or bequeath them
controversies, strife and disputes by speaking of the realm as a whole.\textsuperscript{89} Charlemagne had the \textit{Divisio} composed at a time when he was busy reaffirming his subjects’ loyalty to him through sworn oaths. He did not fear another coup, like the one of 751, but worried about his succession and the situation that would be created if the Frankish nobility rallied behind the wrong Carolingian.\textsuperscript{90} In short, what Charlemagne dreaded was precisely the kind of situation that, according to the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} at least, had occurred in 741.

Contrary to earlier historical accounts, there was now a reason to recall, rather than forget, this Carolingian crisis. It would explain why the author of the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} broke the silence that had been created by this text’s immediate predecessors, the \textit{Continuations} and the \textit{ARF}. However, the author of the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} drew extensively on the narratives of the \textit{Continuations} and the \textit{ARF} for his information. In fact, his account of Pippin’s reign reads, for the most part, as the sum of these two earlier accounts, occasionally interpolated with additional anecdotes and information that is either original material or is derived from a third, unidentified source.

Concerning the succession of 741, the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} closely follows the narrative of the \textit{Continuations} to recount the final years of Charles’s life and copied the chronicle’s division of the realm between Carloman and Pippin. The author also noted that Pippin afterwards went to Burgundy. Although the text does not refer to Childebrand’s involvement in the campaign, it does add a motive, by stating that Pippin led his army to Burgundy ‘to have certain matters corrected.’\textsuperscript{91} The account continues with ‘signs in the sun and the moon the stars’ and notes how ‘the most holy order of Easter was disturbed.’\textsuperscript{92} These signs did not bode well, and Charles ‘knew’ it. Men of influence hurried to Paris, where Charles made donations to the martyr Dionysius and prayed at his grave. Having made his peace, he died and was subsequently laid to rest in the monastery’s crypt. It is at this point that the author abandons the narrative of the \textit{Continuations} in order to reveal that Charles had made a last-minute revision to his plans, which now also included Grifo:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89}Divisio regnorum (806), prologue, p. 127, lines 7-8: ‘Non ut confuse atque inordinate vel sub totius regni denominatione iurgii vel litis controversiam eis reliquamus.’ Trans. King, \textit{Charlemagne}, p. 251.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Hen, ‘Annals of Metz’, 184-5.
\item \textsuperscript{91} AMP, s.a. 741: ‘pro quibusdam causis corrigendis.’
\item \textsuperscript{92} AMP, s.a. 741: ‘Eodem anno in sole et luna et stellis signa apparuereunt, et sacratissimus ordo paschalis turbatus est.’
\end{itemize}
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But when Charles was still alive, when he was about to divide his realm between his sons Carloman and Pippin, he assigned to his third son, Grifo, whom he had from his concubine Swanahild, whom he had led away from Bavaria as a prisoner, on the advice of this concubine, a share to him in the middle of his realm, that is, a part of Neustria and a part of Austrasia and Burgundy.93

Swanahild's demotion to the status of a concubine and a captive is telling of the author's disapproval of her influence on Charles. Though Grifo and his mother had been allowed back into Carolingian history, they remained enemies of the dynasty. As Kate Cooper noted, womanly influence was a rhetorical figure used as a 'protective cloak of signs by which families attempted to protect those of their male members under public scrutiny.'94 The author's somewhat misogynistic tendency to turn powerful women into scapegoats in order to absolve the male protagonists from their wrongdoings is something of a trope in Carolingian historiography.95 Charles is thus kept free from blame as Swanahild is held solely responsible for the crisis of 741.

Contemporary records referred to Swanahild as an 'illustrious matron'.96 Her denigration as a Bavarian captive and a meddling concubine was not just meant to discredit her, but also meant to rub off on her son, who the authors of these histories did not consider one of Charles's legitimi heredes. According to the Annales Mettenses priores, Charles, in his final, feverish hours, had let a woman (and a captured concubine at that!) come between him and his nobles, causing them to resist:

However, with regard to this third portion, which the soon to be deceased leader had handed over to young Grifo, the Franks were very saddened that through the counsel of a wicked woman they should have been divided and separated from the legitimate heirs.

And having formed a plan, having taken with them the leaders

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93 AMP, s.a. 741: ‘Carolus autem adhuc vivens, cum inter filios suos Carolomannum et Pippinum principatum summum divideret, tertio filio suo Gripponi, quem ex concubina sua Sonihilde, quam de Bawaria captivam adduxerat habuit, suadente eadem concubina, partem ei in medio principatus sui tribuit, partem videlicet aliquam Niustriae partemque Austriae et Burgundiae.’


95 See for example: Continuations, c. 25; Einhard, VK, c. 20; Revised ARF, s.a. 792. Dutton, Politics of dreaming, pp. 55-8.

96 Heidrich, Urkunden, no. 14: in the ninth-century Reichenau confraternity book, Swanahild is presented as a queen (regina): Zürich, MS. Rh. Hist. 27, fol. 70r.
Carloman and Pippin, they assembled the army in order to capture Grifo.\footnote{Ibid.: 'De hac autem terna portione, quam Griphoni adolescenti decessurus princeps tradiderat, Franci valde contristati erant, ut per consilium improbae mulieris fuissent divisi et a legitimis heredibus seiuncti. Consilioque in eo, sumptis secum principibus Carolomanno et Pippino, ad capiendaem Griponem exercitum congregant.'}

The account ends with the capture of Grifo and his mother and their removal from public life. Because the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} note that Swanahild was carried off to the monastery of Chelles, the chronicle’s composition has been connected to this monastery, and its authorship (or commission) to its abess. Now borrowing from the \textit{ARF}, the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} note that in 742 the realm was divided a third time at Vieux-Poitiers, after Carloman and Pippin had defeated the Aquitanian duke Hunald.\footnote{Ibid., s.a. 742: ‘Defuncto vero Carlo ab iure fidei promissa superba presumptione deceptus recessit. Ipsius vero Ligerem transeunt germani, Aquitaniam vastant, fugientem Hunaldum persequentes. (...) In ipso autem itinere divisent regnum Francorum in loco qui dicitur Vetus-Pictavis.’}

A key question is whether the author of the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} was able to distinguish between the actual events and their eighth-century reflection in the narratives he used (i.e. the \textit{Continuations} and the \textit{ARF}). If so, did the author mean to reflect on these events, or was it perhaps his intention to reconcile the older, conflicting testimonies that circulated at the Carolingian court? Some historians have been tempted to argue for the former scenario, and believe that the convenient integration of the two older accounts combined two partial truths. According to this collated view, Charles had issued two plans for succession.\footnote{Schüssler, ‘Reichsteilung’; Kasten, \textit{Königssöhne}, p. 110-14; Nonn, ‘Nachfolge’; See note 72 above.} It would mean that Childebrand in his \textit{Continuations} had chosen only to mention Charles’s initial plan, which included just the sons of Chrotrud. He might have chosen to omit the last-minute correction, as this would only muddle his celebratory narrative, knowing that in the end Charles’s original plan had become reality. The author of the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores}, on the other hand, appears to give full disclosure into Charles’s various plans for division, adding also how Charles at the last moment had assigned a third portion of his realm to Grifo, which ended up destabilizing the polity and resulted in fraternal conflict, Grifo’s imprisonment and the redivision at Vieux-Poitiers in 742.

Whether it was the intention of the author of the \textit{Annales Mettenses priores} to compose an account that was more in line with the actual events, or whether the author merely hoped to bring the earlier accounts in line with his own agenda, cannot be said with any certainty. It is nevertheless clear that, when the
Continuations and the ARF were brought together, certain loose ends needed to be resolved. The construction itself is shaky, as the account of the Annales Mettenses priores presents its readers with no less than three plans for division. If we were to accept its testimony as an accurate description of these events, it would beg the question why Charles had not been able to foresee the consequences of his alleged last-minute change of heart, especially since he made these changes without consulting his leading men. Some historians answered this question by pointing to Charles’s poor health at that time, arguing that Swanahild was the true power at court. But by accepting that Charles had revised his plan for division shortly before his death, the division of Vieux-Poitiers becomes little more than a reinstatement of Charles’s original plan, making it difficult to understand why the author of the ARF, in turn, would have felt he needed to mention it. Had he omitted it, the narrative of the ARF would have provided a much more streamlined account of Charles’s succession. To include the event, on the other hand, answered no outstanding questions, but only created new ones. I therefore consider it highly unlikely that the Annales Mettenses priores offer an accurate description of the events of 741. Instead, their author attempted to combine the contradicting statements of his chief sources, for which it was necessary to invent a third divisio. But which, if any, of these divisiones was the real one?

Accepting the testimony of the Annales Mettenses priores implies a positive evaluation of the credibility and accuracy of the Continuations on this point. While historians may have developed something of a blind spot for this chronicle on the basis of its contemporaneity in what would otherwise be a dimly-lit corner of the past, it should be stressed that its author, in his fervent attempt to justify and eulogize the Carolingian regime in which he participated, was willing to manipulate the past to the extent that he omitted key actors such as Grifo and King Childeric from his narrative. At least on parchment, Childebrand was able to reduce the political complexities and fierce rivalry that defined the Carolingian political establishment to a simple rendering of good and evil, in which the missteps of the dynasty were fully ascribed to rebels, women and illegitimate sons. Thus, with regard to the Annales Mettenses priores, which copied the narrative of the Continuations, we are faced with a question of methodology: since the narrative is obviously biased in some aspects, can we still rely on it in others?

100 See above: note 34.
3. THE SUCCESSION CRISIS OF 741

3.5.3. A new perspective: the Revised ARF

In his attempt to ascertain the facts of the matter, Becher has put forward a convincing reconstruction of a series of events that, in the decades that followed, had developed into a complex set of narratives.101 He proposed to reduce the three divisions he encountered in the Annales Mettenses priores, to two. Assuming that Charles had never intended for Grifo to stand on the dynastic sidelines, the divisi as presented in the Continuations ought to be discarded as wishful thinking on Childebrand’s part; Grifo would have been part of Charles’s plans from the start. Charles appears to have underestimated the opposition to this scheme, or possibly overestimated the ability of his youngest heir to withstand such opposition after he was gone. Those unhappy about Grifo’s inclusion had rallied behind Charles’s oldest sons and managed to overwhelm Grifo and his widowed mother, whose allies mostly inhabited the outer provinces of the Frankish realm. Hunald was either the first to mobilize and come to Grifo’s aid, or the first to be taken out by Carloman and Pippin after they had arrested their half-brother. We owe it to Childebrand’s testimony that what may have been intended as a valiant attempt at rescue came to be remembered as a rebellio.

After Grifo’s initial arrest there was no alternative plan for division to fall back on. That, at least, would explain why a new division needed to be arranged and, with Odilo and his allies mobilizing in the east, it needed to be done quick. The division of Vieux-Poïters of 742 was precisely that: a division of the realm, drawn up on the march, in which only Carloman’s and Pippin’s most loyal supporters had had a say.102 Childebrand was certainly part of this group. In fact, he even reported the event in his chronicle, albeit with one crafty adjustment: in the Continuations, the division of Vieux-Poïters was ante-dated to the final years of Charles Martel’s life, making it look like this division between the two brothers had been Charles’s wish from the start.

Becher’s reconstruction of these events, though plausible, will ultimately remain conjectural. However, it finds some support in the Revised ARF. Like the earlier versions of the ARF, the Reviser opens with the entry for 741 in which he records the death of Charles Martel and expands it significantly with information on Charles’s succession plans and the crisis that resulted from it:

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101 Becher, ‘Verschleierte Krise’.
102 Cf. Nonn, ‘Nachfolge’, 72-3. Nonn argues that the division of Vieux-Poïters was nothing more than a division of the spoils of Carloman’s and Pippin’s campaign against Hunald that year, which the author of the ARF turned into a division of the realm.
[Charles] left behind three sons as heirs: Carloman, Pippin and Grifo. Of these, Grifo, who was born later than the others, had a mother named Swanahild, a cousin of Duke Odilo of the Bavarians. She enticed him with evil counsel to the prospect of the whole realm, to such a degree, that without delay he occupied the city of Laon and declared war on his brothers. Having quickly gathered an army, they besieged Laon and captured Grifo. And from then on they set their minds to restoring order in the kingdom and to recovering the provinces which had fallen away from the Franks after their father’s death. To make sure everything was safe in the palace while they were abroad, Carloman took Grifo and had him guarded at Neuf-chateau in the Ardennes, a captivity in which Grifo is said to have remained until Carloman left for Rome.103

Once again, the story of Charles’s succession takes a turn. This time, however, Grifo is actually introduced as a legitimate heir of Charles and even Swanahild is somewhat rehabilitated. No longer a captive and a concubine, as she had been in the Annales Mettenses priores, Swanahild is now presented as the niece of the Bavarian duke Odilo. Still, her noble status did not prevent her from providing her husband with malignum consilium. According to the Reviser, it was Swanahild’s greed that inspired her son to wage war against his half-brothers, forcing them to defend themselves in turn. Laon also no longer is a site of refuge for Grifo and his mother, but an occupied city which Grifo planned to use as his headquarters in his ill-fated war against Carloman and Pippin. Concerning the entry for 742, the Reviser did little more than refresh the language. He remained true to the original entry that recorded how Carloman and Pippin, after their campaign against Hunuald, divided the realm between them in Vieux-Poitiers.104

We do not know when the Revised ARF was composed. Because of the stylistic similarities between the revision and the ‘original’ versions from the entry for 802 onwards, this year can be considered the revision’s terminus post quam. It is assumed, moreover, that the so-called common continuation (the

103 Revised ARF, s.a. 741: ‘[Karlus] tres filios heredes relinquens, Carlomannum scilicet et Pippinum atque Grifonem. Quorum Grifo, qui ceteris minor natu erat, matrem habuit nomine Swanahildem, neptem Odilonis ducis Barioariorum. Haec illam maligno consilio ad spem totius regni concitavit, in tantum, ut sine dimidione Laudunum civitatem occuparet ac bellum fratribus indiceret. Qui celeriter exercitum collecto Laudunum obdibentes fratrem in deditioinem accipiant atque inde ad regnum ordinandum ac provincias, quae post mortem patris a Francorum societate desciverant, recipierandas animos intendat. Et ut in externa protecti domi omnia tuta dimitterent, Carlomannus Grifonem sumens in Novo-castello, quod iuxta Arduennam situm est, custodi drit fecit, in qua custodia usque ad tempus, quo idem Carlomannus Roman prefectus est, dicitur permansisse.’

104 Revised ARF, s.a. 742.
section 802-829) had been the work of the same author. However, as I have already argued above, we cannot be certain that the Revised ARF was composed in a chronological order: the section 741-801 may have been revised at any time during the first two decades of the ninth century.\footnote{See chapter 2.2.2.} Of this revised section, the entry for 741, concerning the succession of Charles Martel and everything that went wrong with it, is the most significant interpolation to the text of the ARF. It may hold the key to answering the question of when this revision was composed, or at least narrow it down.

During the reign of Louis the Pious, two plans for division had resulted in a political crisis and form a fitting context for the composition of the Revised ARF. The first of these occurred in 817, when Louis issued the \textit{Ordinatio Imperii} at a general assembly at Aachen, in which the emperor laid down his plans for the division of his realm and titles in the event of his death.\footnote{Ordinatio imperii; De Jong, \textit{Penitential State}, p. 25. In 821 Louis reaffirmed his plan in light of the recent disasters that struck his empire. See: ARF, s.a. 821.} Louis had three sons at that time, who would each obtain their share of the realm, with the imperial dignity assigned to Lothar, the eldest. Like the \textit{Divisio} of 806, Louis's plan contained several clauses regulating the hierarchy between the three heirs and meant to ensure the peace in the empire. However, what the \textit{Ordinatio} failed to take into account was Louis's nephew, Bernard, who was already king of Italy at the time. When news reached him that he was being excluded from the division, Bernard closed the Alpine passes, which Louis's advisors interpreted as an act of rebellion.\footnote{De Jong, \textit{Penitential State}, pp. 29-9.} Bernard was brought before Louis on charges of conspiracy and sentenced to death. In an act of mercy, Louis converted his death sentence into a blinding, though unfortunately this proved deadly just the same.\footnote{De Jong, \textit{Penitential State}, p. 29. Thegan, \textit{Gesta Hludowici}, c. 23.} For the remainder of Louis's eventful reign, whenever his accusers sought to reproach the emperor, Bernard's demise was the first thing that came up.

In visionary literature that circulated in the 820s, Queen Ermengard, who had died in 818, had come to be implicated in Bernard's demise, too. In her eagerness to help her own sons to power she had indirectly caused Bernard to revolt.\footnote{Dutton, \textit{Politics of dreaming}, pp. 72-3.} According to Dutton, 'the vision (…) implied that an evil queen might secretly enjoin her husband to perpetrate an unjust deed against his better nature.'\footnote{The \textit{Revised ARF} do not implicate Ermengard, but then again, they do not implicate anyone else, either. Nowhere in these annals is it stated that}
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Bernard’s blinding had proven fatal. However, the Reviser did blame Queen Fastrada’s cruelty for the rebellion of Pippin the Hunchback in 792 and, in a similar vein, held Swanahild chiefly responsible for the crisis of 741.

A second and perhaps equally controversial plan for division was issued by Louis at the assembly of Worms, in August 829. According to this plan, Louis assigned a portion of his empire – consisting of Alemannia, Alsace, Rhaetia and a part of Burgundy – to his youngest son, Charles the Bald (823-877). Charles, unlike Louis’s older sons, was no son of Ermengard, but of Louis’s new Alemannian wife, the Empress Judith (d. 843), whom he had married in 819. The territories that Louis granted Charles had earlier been assigned to Louis’s older sons. Again, or so it might have appeared, Carolingian princes saw their inheritance dwindle because their father had felt the need to accommodate a younger step-brother. The redivision of 829 is not recorded in the ARF, nor is it mentioned in the Astronomer’s biography of Louis the Pious. On the other hand, Thegan, the other biographer of Louis, made a note of it, stating that ‘henceforth [Lothar and Louis the German] were outraged, along with their brother Pippin.’ Nithard, whom Charles the Bald had commissioned to write his Histories in the early 840s, went one step further and stated that the Divisio of 829 had been the reason Louis’s older sons rebelled against their father the following year.

The divisiones of 817 and 829 both ended in a political crisis. The first had resulted in a catastrophe because Louis, to accommodate his sons, excluded his already established cousin, Bernard. The second was problematic because Louis had remarried and wished to accommodate his youngest son, Charles. It is with the latter divisio, that the Reviser’s account of the succession crisis of 741 has the strongest parallels: both cases deal with a plan for division born from the situation that the ruler had remarried and wished to accommodate an additional son, forcing him to go back on an earlier made plans or expectations. If the crisis of 829 formed the inspiration of the revision of the entry for 741, the Reviser presented Judith as another Swanahild, and young Charles as another Grifo. It would mean that the Reviser was no friend of Judith’s, as he subtly implied that it may very well have been Judith’s malignum consilium that had inspired Louis to go back on his earlier plans. Also, it indirectly exonerated Louis’s older sons from having rebelled against their father, as they merely

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111 Thegan, Gesta, c. 35, does not mention Alsace. This is recorded in Annales Xantenses, s.a. 829.
112 On the Astronomer: De Jong, Penitential State, pp. 79-89.
113 Thegan, Gesta, c. 35: ‘Et inde illi indignati sunt una cum Pippino germano eorum.’
114 Nithard, Histories, l. 1, c. 5, sees this event as the cause for the rebellion of 830. Nelson, Charles the Bald, p. 87. Cf. De Jong, Penitential State, p. 41.
stood up against their stepmother’s greed. At the same time, Bernard’s ghost haunted Louis’s reign from 817 onwards. When Louis made a public confession in 822, and when he was forced to do public penance a decade later, it was Berhard’s death that was on everyone’s lips. Admittedly, the link between the composition of the Revised ARF and these cases remains highly conjectural. Nevertheless, they form a likely context for the composition of the Revised ARF, which we might date to somewhere between 817 and, more likely, c. 830.

3.6. Conclusion

The history of Grifo and the succession crisis of 741 is almost exclusively known through the later doctored testi monies written in support of the Carolingian dynasty. On the basis of the rare contemporary snippets of information that survived – the odd letter or charter – and the political structure as it had been created by Charles Martel, there seems little reason to question Grifo’s legitimacy or his claims as a co-heir to his father’s realm, as these court-oriented histories have claimed. Grifo’s expulsion from power was due to the disintegration of Charles’s political landscape, in which he aimed to integrate the eastern elite into the Frankish polity. Charles’s eldest sons had become rallying points for conservative elements within the Frankish elite. As soon as Charles had died, his plans for succession were rejected, ushering in a decade of conflict that ended up costing Carloman his career, Grifo his life, and – though none would have anticipated it – awarded Pippin with the Frankish throne. In the first half of the 740s, Francia had been the stage of a violent dynastic reorientation within the Carolingian family that left Grifo standing on the dynastic side-lines. In the light of this, it is not surprising to find him and his mother vilified in later Carolingian historical narratives. Still, Grifo’s historical image was subject to renegotiation in the later eighth and early ninth centuries. In roughly eighty years time, Grifo’s image recovered from an attempted damnatio memoriae to a full-blown (if greedy) heir of Charles Martel.

This chapter has attempted to show how changes in the way Grifo was remembered and portrayed in Carolingian historiography can be linked to specific political circumstances and developments, and how, by understanding these circumstances, it becomes possible to conjecture what had possibly occurred in 741. In the most contemporary accounts, the Continuations and the ARF, an attempt was made to expunge Grifo from the historical record, thereby creating the impression that Carolingian history began with the uncontested

\[115\] De Jong, Penitential State, pp. 36, 122-31.
succession of Charles Martel by his two oldest sons, Carloman and Pippin, of
whom the latter would ultimately triumph. But removing Grifo meant removing
the linchpin that held this history together: without Grifo at the centre of the
narrative, the conflict-ridden history of the 740s became a series of incoherent
and seemingly unmotivated rebellions against Carolingian authority. This has
left modern historians with ample space to speculate about the causes for these
conflicts, resulting in anachronistic explanations of regional separatism and
Merovingian loyalty. These modern explanations for the succession crisis of
741 appear no less coloured by contemporary political sentiments than our
early medieval accounts.

But Carolingian historiography does not present us with an objective
rendering of events. The authors of these narratives were themselves actors in
the events they described and wrote with a political agenda in mind. Nor did
they write in a conceptual vacuum: in addition to promoting their own agendas,
these history-writers also had to anticipate the expectations and shared
experiences, or collective memory, of their readership. It made for a complex
cocktail of historical credibility, aesthetics and a readership's expectation to not
be presented with the cold facts of the past, but with an account that was at the
same time mindful of its readership's moral values and political sensitivities.

This has two significant implications: first, a readership's collective
memory placed a check on the extent to which an author could deviate from the
socially accepted truth in his retelling of the past. Within the genre of
historiography, as noted in the introduction, the author is bound to a contract
with his readership with regard to the verifiability of that which he, or she,
writes. Contemporary history in particular will be verified foremost on the
basis of the reader's own recollection of these events. If the link between
history and memory is strained too far, it might break and result in the
narrative's recognition as fiction, rather than history. But while early
medieval authors frequently voice such truth claims, the truth to which they
refer went beyond the mere objective factual and held within it also ethical and
aesthetic components. The intended readership of these texts, the learned court
elite, did not expect an objective rendering of events as modern historians have
hoped to find; from a modern perspective, early medieval history-writers had
quite some leeway in how they recounted past events.

Paradoxically, this 'leeway' became bigger, rather than smaller, the more
contemporary a history was. A contemporary readership confronted with
recent events that it had personally experienced also could rely on its own

116 Otter, 'Functions of fiction', 114.
recollection of the events described. While this enabled them to verify the
statements made by the author, it also allowed them to fill in any gaps the
narrative might contain. Thus, while the critical reader, with no personal
recollection of the events described, for example the modern historian, will
judge Childebrand's narrative as flawed, because he removed Grifo, the central
cause, from his account, a contemporary readership would have been able to
cope with these omissions by falling back on its own experiences, using these,
as it were, to recreate the coherence between the events described. Once there
was no personal recollection to fall back on, such omissions became
insurmountable obstacles, leaving the narrative 'broken'. As a way to cope with
the problem that a readership became less knowledgeable of events as time
progressed, narratives required more information to counter the decline in
personal knowledge due to processes of forgetting. In other words, a reader-
ship's collective memory increasingly came to rely on written text, rather than
personal experience. In time, therefore, memory increasingly came to rely on
external repositories of knowledge, such as written accounts.117 For the
modern historian, intent on reconstructing the past, this has the paradoxal
effect that later, rather than contemporary, witnesses offered the most valuable
testimonies.

Nevertheless, the Continuations' author may have deviated too far from
the shared recollection of his readership and Grifo’s damnatio memoriae could
not be sustained. The journey from the heavily manipulated Continuations to
the more open Revised ARF might be understood as the search for consensus
between the ideals of the polity and its audience's collective remembrance,
mitigated through processes of political change and cultural memory
formation. A consensus was reached in the 820s, and formulated in the Revised
ARF. In this text, Grifo came to be recognized as a legitimate heir of Charles
Martel, of noble Agilolfing descent, though he, and especially his mother,
retained a malign streak. By that time, though, Grifo had come to belong to a
distant past that was no longer as potentially threatening as it had once
appeared. Instead, the more distant past could be used for purposes of
instruction and, perhaps, admonition. The authors of the Annales Mettenses
priores and the Revised ARF may well have recognized the succession crisis of
741 as a precursor to contemporary crises caused by unfortunate plans for

117 Assmann, 'Collective memory', provides a theoretical framework and labelled this process as
'memory objectivization', through which communicative memory is allowed to transform into
cultural memory, a more enduring and stable form of collective memory. See also: Erlin and Rigney,
‘Introduction’ and Rigney, ‘Portable monuments’, 364-9, emphasizing the dynamic character of
cultural memory and its formation.
division. On balance, I conclude that eighty years after these events, Carolingian rulers were no longer intimidated by this shadowy aspect of their past or had learned to use it to their advantage. Grifo could be accepted as the *enfant terrible* of a previous generation. Either that, or a ninth-century readership could no longer be intimidated by stories even their grandfathers could not remember.\footnote{Assmann, ‘Collective memory’, 127.} \footnote{Fentress and Wickam, *Social Memory*, 39–40.}