
The social logic of historiographical compendia in the Carolingian period

Helmut REIMITZ

Princeton University

About twenty years ago, Gabrielle M. Spiegel published her article ‘History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text’, which is to my mind still one of the best discussions of the consequences of the linguistic turn for research on medieval texts.¹ It appeared in *Speculum* as part of a collection of essays about the perspectives of what was called new philology at the time. In this volume a number of medievalists reflected on the challenges and opportunities that accompanied the new concepts and approaches to texts that French postmodernism had inspired. The new, postmodern concept of the text extended the meaning of the literary work beyond what had been seen as an intricate relationship to *the* author, to the social reality of the work’s production and reception. In what Roland Barthes famously called his semiological adventure, a text came to be understood not only as a ‘signification, but as a signifier, not a group of closed signs endowed with a meaning to be discovered, but as a volume of traces in displacement’.²

Particularly for medieval research, which since its establishment as a modern scholarly discipline had developed a complex instrumentarium to reconstruct and interpret the texts and documents that have come down to us in a variety of versions and combinations, *l’aventure sémiologique* presented new challenges and opportunities. The fundamental critique of postmodern literary theory and philosophy to approaches that reduced the text to one exclusive form and reality was for many medieval historians a welcome inspiration to refine what were influential but more simplistic views of the relationship between text and reality. To be sure, medieval historians had played an important role in developing new historical approaches in the decades before publication of Spiegel’s article. The critique of the Annales school, for instance, against the narrow interests and themes of older historical research contributed to a defamiliarisation of seemingly well known historical sources, and it helped to redirect attention to hitherto neglected bodies of evidence and topics.³ But medievalists had not yet problematised the authority that their literary sources had acquired in older historical research. In this respect they were still building on the results of a view

1 Gabrielle M. Spiegel, ‘History, historicism and the social logic of the text in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp. 59–86; see also the essays in her: *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore and London, 1997). I should like to thank Jamie Kreiner for the correction of the English and her insightful comments as well as Walter Pohl, Pavlina Rychterova, David Ganz and Max Diesenberger for reading an earlier version of this article and for their as ever extremely helpful comments. The research presented here has been generously supported by ERC advanced grant-project awarded to Walter Pohl in 2010 “Social Cohesion, Identity and Religion in Europe”.

2 Roland Barthes, ‘The semiological adventure’, in *The semiotic challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), p. 7.

3 See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, new edition with a new epilogue (Middletown, 2005).

established in the course of the nineteenth century that saw the original text—the archetype—as the key to the past. In the context of ambitious projects of positivist ideology, but also as a result of pragmatic short cuts, the authenticity and reality of the ‘original’ text had ‘acquired a coherence and self-evidence that might sometimes remind us of nineteenth century reconstructions of damaged medieval buildings or paintings’.⁴ While highly sophisticated methodological debates developed a complex toolkit for the reconstruction of the archetype, the broken relationship of the ‘original’ with the realities of the manuscript record took a backseat.⁵ But in the decades after the second world war, more and more historians went hunting for human flesh, asking new questions of the materials they had while discovering new sources for research; and it was only a matter of time before the growing numbers of cannibals came to recognize the manifold social realities of the texts they held prey. The new conception of texts as signifying practices, as a constant work and game, as a volume of traces in displacement, provided for the medievalist in particular among the hunters a valuable and welcome tool.

To be sure, medieval historians not only embraced the postmodern critique; they also had a lot to offer for the establishment of its empirical basis.⁶ In particular, the work that an edition of an original text requires, involving as it does the reconstruction of an archetype out of the variety of versions that transmit the text, tends to amass a rich arsenal of examples that impressively illustrate the inherently unstable nature of medieval texts.⁷ The obvious overlap of interests and experiences led to fruitful exchange, especially in the 1990s. The new perspectives that made a more open concept of the text possible were picked up, tested, and developed further across different fields of medieval scholarship. Already a few years after Stephen Nichols had edited the special issue in *Speculum*, he himself refined new philology as material philology, suggesting that literary works should be analysed as they existed materially in the extant manuscripts, in order to transcend the artificial distinction between a hypothetical original text and its transmission.⁸ Medievalists took up and developed these trajectories in the United States as well as in Europe. A new terminological toolkit for such an approach, which focused on the physical form of texts in the extant manuscripts as an integral part of its meaning, was introduced by Gérard Genette, who published his study on *Paratexts* in 1987.⁹ Ever since, the philological disciplines in particular (such as German and Romance studies) experimented intensively with the new research possibilities that transmitted texts offered, as well as with new ways of representing them in digital editions.¹⁰ But historians too

4 Walter Pohl, ‘History in fragments. Montecassino’s politics of memory’, *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), pp. 343–74, here 346; see also id., *Werkstätte der Erinnerung. Montecassino und die Gestaltung der langobardischen Vergangenheit* (Wien, 2001).

5 See Hartmut Hoffmann, ‘Die Edition in den Anfängen der Monumenta Germaniae Historica’, in *Mittelalterliche Texte. Überlieferung — Befunde — Deutungen. Kolloquium der Zentralkommission der Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer, MGH Schriften 42 (Hannover, 1996), pp. 189–232; the intense debate about how to best reconstruct the original is already well documented in the first volumes of the *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* (1820ff.); for a more general history of the development of the methodology and ideology linked to the *archetype* see Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method*, transl. Glenn W. Most (Chicago, 1995).

6 On the mutually beneficial relationship of medieval and postmodern studies see Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago, 2005).

7 Cf. the essays in *Mittelalterliche Texte. Überlieferung — Befunde — Deutungen*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer; *Mittelalterliche Textüberlieferungen und ihre kritische Aufarbeitung* (München, 1976).

8 Stephen Nichols, ‘Why Material Philology? Some Thoughts’, in *Philologie als Textwissenschaft. Alte und neue Horizonte = Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 116 (1997), Beiheft, pp. 10–30.

9 Gérard Genette, *Seuils*. Paris, 1987; engl. transl. *Paratexts. Thresholds of interpretation* (Cambridge, 1997).

10 See, for instance Martin Baisch, *Textkritik als Problem der Kulturwissenschaft. Tristan-Lektüren*. Berlin and New York, 2006; the special theme: ‘Überlieferungsgeschichte — Textgeschichte — Literaturgeschichte’, *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 34 (2002); *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, eds. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, Baltimore, 1996; *Philologie als Textwissenschaft. Alte und neue Horizonte*, eds. Helmut Tervooren and Horst Wenzel = *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 116 (1997), Beiheft. For digital editions see the ongoing presentation and discussions of trends and projects the *Jahrbuch für Computerphilologie* 1ff. (1999ff.) <http://computerphilologie.uni-muenchen.de/ejournal.html>, Jan 1, 2012 or the *Digital Medievalist* 1ff. (2001ff.) <http://www.digitalmedievalist.org/journal/>, Jan 1, 2012.

increasingly joined in Bernard Cerquiglini's 'praise of the variant'. Instead of grouping differences and similarities between different versions of medieval texts and ranking them according to a hypothetical original, they moved their center of attention to the differences themselves, in order to reconstruct new sources and entries into medieval textual culture.¹¹

The new approaches not only provided new opportunities: they also posed new challenges, in particular the question of the relation of text and reality. As Walter Pohl observed about a decade ago:

'When historians and linguists discuss method, they often reach a deadlock over the fundamental problem of reality'.¹²

Indeed, the problem of reality is different for historical research than it is for literary or semiotic studies. As Hayden White put it recently:

'... insofar as critique has a meaning beyond the idea of discerning formal structures of expression, meaning and value in one's own and others' discourses and examining these for logical or artistic consistency, then this meaning is nothing other than the effort to identify the irreducible *historicity* of all things. And this means discerning the time-and-place relationship of a thing, identifying the ways in which it relates to its context or milieu and determining the extent to which it is both enabled and hamstrung by this relationship'.¹³

In understanding extant texts as historical sources, historians have to try to discern their 'contextual referent', their relationship to a reality beyond the text. 'It is the continuous tension between text and context that is constitutive of historical method'.¹⁴ This does of course not mean giving up on the insight of postmodern criticism that the meaning of our historical sources is subject

11 For early medieval studies, see now the different contributions in *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift. Frühmittelalterliche Hagiographie und Historiographie im Spannungsfeld von Kompendienüberlieferung und Editionstechnik* (Vienna, 2010), with further references. For the Viennese workshop, where I have had the privilege to work and develop my approaches, see Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*; id., 'History in fragments'; id. 'Einleitung: Vom Nutzen des Schreibens', in *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens. Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz*, eds. Walter Pohl and Paul Herold (Vienna, 2002), pp. 9–19; Helmut Reimitz, 'Anleitung zur Interpretation. Schrift und Genealogie zur Karolingerzeit', in *ibid.*, pp. 167–81, id., 'Der Weg zum Königtum in historiographischen Kompendien der Karolingerzeit', in *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung*, ed. Matthias Becher and Jörg Jarnut (Münster: Scriptorium, 2004), pp. 283–326; id., 'Ein karolingisches Geschichtsbuch aus St. Amand: der Cvp lat. 473', in *Text, Schrift und Codex. Quellenkundliche Arbeiten aus dem Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, ed. Christoph Egger and Herwig Weigl, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungband 34 (Vienna and Munich, 2000), pp. 34–90; see also Richard Corradini, 'The Rhetoric of Crisis: Computus and Liber annalis in Early Ninth-Century Fulda', in *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages Texts, Resources and Artifacts*, ed. Richard Corradini, Max Diesenberger, Helmut Reimitz (Leiden and Boston, 2003), pp. 269–321; id., 'Die Annales Fuldenses — Identitätskonstruktionen im ostfränkischen Raum am Ende der Karolingerzeit', in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini, Rob Meens, Christina Pössel and Philip Shaw (Vienna, 2006), pp. 121–36; Maximilian Diesenberger, 'Der Cvp 420 — die Gemeinschaft der Heiligen und ihre Gestaltung im frühmittelalterlichen Bayern', in *Les réécritures hagiographiques dans l'Occident médiéval. Atelier III: L'hagiographie mérovingienne à travers ses réécritures*, ed. Martin Heinzelmann (Ostfildern, 2010), pp. 221–50; id., 'How Collections shape the Texts: Rewriting and Rearranging Passions in Carolingian Bavaria', in *Livrets, collections et texts. Études de la tradition hagiographique latine*, ed. Martin Heinzelmann (Beihefte der Francia 63, Ostfildern, 2006), pp. 195–224.

These approaches to the early medieval transmission of histories and hagiographies in the early Middle Ages owe a lot to Brigitte Resl (Liverpool) who taught until the beginning of the 21st century in Vienna; see, for instance, her 'Ein Passauer Historikerstreit im 13. Jahrhundert: Ein Versuch, die Geschichte stillzulegen', in *Text — Schrift — Codex. Quellenkundliche Arbeiten aus dem Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, eds. Christoph Egger and Herwig Weigl (Vienna and Munich, 2000), pp. 286–303; 'Vom Nutzen des Abschreibens — Überlegungen zu mittelalterlichen Chartularen', in *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens. Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz* (Vienna, 2002), and the inspiration provided by Patrick Geary, see his *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the end of the first Millennium* (Princeton, 1996).

The influence of the pioneer of the study of Carolingian literacy Rosamond McKitterick on my research on historiographical compendia is obvious, cf., for instance, her *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge 1989), or more recently her *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004). McKitterick however did not link her work to the semiotic challenge.

12 Pohl, 'History in fragments', p. 346.

13 Hayden White, 'Afterword. Manifesto time', in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan and Alun Munslow (London and New York, 2007), pp. 220–213, here 224.

14 Pohl, 'History in fragments', p. 346.

to the play of difference and contingency and that we have to accept the fundamental discontinuities in the different processes of the *configuration du texte en histoire*. But as Michel Foucault suggested some time ago, if we are willing to accept contingency and discontinuity as historical categories, we also have to define the conditions and circumstances, the limits and opportunities, or the room for manoeuvre of their appearance in a specific historical context as precisely as possible.¹⁵ To my mind Foucault's appeal for a radical (or a happy) positivism¹⁶ can still be regarded as a warning for historians not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. In taking stock of the postmodern approaches to the text, historical research has to be careful to not simply absorb the social into the textual,¹⁷ and eventually end up with a relation of text and reality which ironically would appear very similar to approaches of older medieval research with its emphasis on the archetype as the main key to past reality.

In her article that my title quotes, Spiegel had identified this problem from very early on. In suggesting an exploration of the 'social logic of texts' she formulated an approach capable of satisfying the needs both of literary criticism and of history, as separate but complementary disciplinary domains, which share a common concern for the social dimension of textual production in past times. Spiegel proposes understanding texts as representing situated uses of language, as lived events which are essentially local in origin and determined by a specific social logic. This understanding permits us, as Spiegel puts it, to examine language itself with the tools of the historian, to see language within local and regional social contexts, within the systems of communication and the networks of power that can account for its particular semantic inflections, and thus aid in the recovery of its manifold cultural meanings. From such a perspective, all texts must be seen as occupying determinate social spaces, both as products of the social world of their authors, and as active textual agents. They thus both reflect and generate social realities; they are constituted by and help to constitute the social and discursive formations, which they may either reinforce, contest or seek to transform.¹⁸

As famous as Spiegel's discussion about the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic turn has become, the methodological toolkit she presented in this article have surprisingly been less influential. This may well have to do with the fact that Spiegel exemplifies her method with a generic category of texts, namely genealogically structured chronicles of the High Middle Ages, and with a specific textual tradition, Pseudo-Turpin's *Historia Karoli Magni* and its Old French translations. Thus it might have appeared to many of her colleagues that she was focussing on examples constituted as textual 'units' by modern historical conceptualisations but not by medieval authors and writers themselves. At a time when the diversity and contingency of medieval transmission were stressed in order to safeguard the empirical claims of the new critical approaches, Spiegel's proposals may not have seemed radical enough, or perhaps they seemed too anchored to conventional models of interpretation and classification. But in discussing examples of genealogically structured chronicles and of versions of the *Historia Karoli Magni*, she explored the single texts as events, as situated uses of language, whose authors did not just use any language. They chose to work with and continue a specific textual tradition whose social logic to some extent provided as well as limited the room for manoeuvre to build on the values and meanings of this social logic and adapt it to new contexts.

15 Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris, 1971), p. 57f.

16 "..., et disons, pour jouer une seconde fois sur les mots, que si le style critique, c'est celui de la désinvolture studieuse, l'humeur généalogique sera celle d'un positivisme heureux." Foucault, *L'ordre du discours*, p. 72.

17 Spiegel, 'History, historicism', p. 84f.; Pohl, 'History in fragments', p. 346.

18 Spiegel, 'History, historicism', p. 77f.

With the passing of two decades this could also be understood as a statement not to take the material dimension of texts in manuscripts as a short cut to a ‘more real’ relationship of these texts to the social realities in which they have been written.¹⁹ However even most of the scholars working with approaches labeled as new or (later) even material philology did not build on Spiegel’s suggestions to explore the social logic of text in the manuscript-transmission.²⁰ In the context of the 1990s it may have been more important for medieval scholars to emphasize the individuality and originality of a specific manuscript in view of the well established and still influential older apparatus of *Quellen- und Textkritik*. But also more recent approaches that focus on the history of texts and textual traditions in the processes of *écriture et réécriture*, *Niederschrift und Wiederschrift*—the writing and rewriting of texts which have become particularly important in my own field of study, early medieval history²¹—have for the most part not developed Spiegel’s suggestions further.²² I would thus like to take the opportunity, having been invited to reflect on the *configuration du texte en histoire*, to bring these approaches together more explicitly, by working with some examples from my own study on historiographical sources from the Merovingian and Carolingian period.

If we agree with Spiegel that we should try to avoid determining, a priori, the social function of a text or its cultural locus, and that only a minute examination of the form and content of a given work can help to define its relationship with its contexts, a careful study of the texts and their manuscript transmission can indeed contribute a lot to explore their social logic(s). This is particularly true of the rich and varied transmission of historiographical compendia of the Carolingian period. Frankish historical sources have come down to us via multiple routes of transmission and in a number of different versions from the Merovingian period onwards.²³ But it is only from the Carolingian period that they have come down to us as part of larger historiographical compendia.²⁴ As I will be arguing at greater length elsewhere, this tendency can be linked to the new politics of identity in the Carolingian period.²⁵ Whereas historians and chroniclers from the Merovingian period such as

19 Granted, many of the traces in manuscripts help to define the circumstances and the social play that was possible in their production more precisely, and it is also true that in the effort to establish an archetype many of these traces have been neglected or even suppressed in modern editions. But scholars’ concentration on reconstructing original texts led them to develop fine and highly sophisticated modes of source criticism that should not be dismissed out of hand; and the editions of texts these methods produce should not be opposed to the manuscript transmission on which it rests. However complex and vulnerable it may be, a good modern critical edition usually discloses how the text was reconstructed and thus still allows for a critical evaluation of the relation of the text to the reality in which it was originally produced, as well as a sense of its transmission—or it at least gives indispensable starting points for further research into the social logic of texts. Whether an edition and its accompanying publication(s) (such as the volumes published by the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* on *Studien zur Überlieferung*) is capable of offering this information is rather a question of its quality.

20 A good example is the introduction of Stephen Nichols in: *The Whole book: cultural perspectives on the medieval miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 1–6, where many of the comments of Nichols come close to link the relation of text and context in medieval miscellanies to the concept of the social logic. But Nichols decided to go into the direction of emphasizing the individuality, which he himself comments today as something that was a necessary strategy at the time: “That position was a necessary corrective in the face of then prevailing views, which had argued strongly for a “fixed text” critically determined by scholars seeking to minimize—or at least deplore—variation” (Abstract of his paper at the conference in Ghent: Between Stability and Transformation. Textual Tradition in the Medieval Netherlands. September 2010, <http://www.stabilityandtransformation.ugent.be/> Jan 1, 2012; as one of the organisers of the conference and editors of the forthcoming volume, Youri Desplenter, kindly let me know, the publication is to be expected in 2013.

21 Cf. for instance *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift*, eds. Corradini, Diesenberger and Niederkorn-Bruck; Monique Goulet, *Écriture et réécriture hagiographiques. Essai sur les réécritures des Vies de saints dans l’Occident latin médiéval, VIII^e–XIII^e s.* (Turnhout, 2005); *Miracles, vies et réécritures dans l’Occident médiéval*, ed. Monique Goulet and Martin Heinzlmann (Osfildern, 2006).

22 An exception is Pohl, ‘History in fragments’, pp. 343–54.

23 For this see my forthcoming *Writing for the Future. History, Identity and Ethnicity from the Merovingian to the Carolingian period (5th to 9th cent.)* (Cambridge); id., ‘The Art of Truth. Historiography and Identity in the Frankish World’, in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini et al. (Vienna, 2006), pp. 87–104.

24 The pioneering work on historiographical compendia in the Carolingian period has been done by Rosamond McKitterick, see *History and Memory*, pp. 28–59 with references to her previous studies, for her methodological foundations see the introduction in her *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 1–22.

25 Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.

Gregory of Tours, the Fredegar chroniclers or the author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* developed very different and competing conceptions of history and identity,²⁶ Carolingian historiographers mainly continued these histories rather than adding new historiographical alternatives to them. But in their continuation they tried to integrate these older competing histories into one common vision of Frankish history and future. This absorption of different histories into one shared perspective had been developed in efforts to legitimise the Carolingian family as new rulers of the Frankish kingdoms, after they deposed the Merovingians as Frankish kings around the middle of the eighth century. But in the context of the political and military success of the Carolingians and their elites, the expansion of their rule, the establishment of a Carolingian empire, and the division of the empire among the grandsons of Charlemagne in the turbulent ninth century, historiographical compilations became an ever important tool to flexibly adapt the resources of the past for a quickly and constantly changing present. The historiographical spin doctors of the Carolingians worked long and hard: they rearranged the texts, combined them with other works of history, and made subtle transformations through nearly inconspicuous insertions in order to adapt them to differing needs of identification with Frankish history and identity.

This can be briefly illustrated by a historiographical compendium written in the second quarter of the ninth century in northwestern France, the Codex Paris, BnF lat. 10911. It consists of an ensemble of three historiographical texts: the Neustrian version of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, followed by the *Continuationes Fredegarii* up to the death of Charles Martel, and thirdly the *Annales regni Francorum*, which covers the years from 741 to 829.²⁷ All three texts are available in separate modern editions, whose authors also had to identify the circumstances, the *Sitz im Leben*, of their original production. The *Liber historiae Francorum*, written in 726/27, represents a view of Frankish history that reserves the term *Franci* for the Neustrian political elite concentrated in the centres along Seine and Oise.²⁸ The *Continuationes Fredegarii* are usually seen as continuing efforts at legitimisation of the Austrasian perspective of the Fredegar *Chronicle*. The third text in the compendium, the *Royal Frankish Annals* in their redaction from 742 to 829, is mostly regarded as an example of the new Carolingian-centred historiography, aiming at legitimising the Carolingian ascent to royal power with a perspective underlining that the political and social centres were where the Carolingians were. In the *Annals*' account of the rise of the Carolingians from 741 onwards, the assertion that the Carolingian kings acted in accord with the wishes of all of the Franks—*omnes Franci*—forms one of the central themes of the narrative.²⁹

Although the manuscript contains the oldest extant exemplar of the *Royal Frankish Annals* in this version up to 829 and the second oldest text-witness of the *Continuationes* of Fredegar, the combination of these two texts with the Neustrian version of the *Liber historiae Francorum* does not square with the common understanding of each text's context of production. The appropriation of the Neustrian-Merovingian past into the Carolingian story of success appears to mismatch the usual, Austrasian localisation of the *Continuationes* and the *Annales regni Francorum*. Yet such an

26 Helmut Reimitz, 'Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge in der fränkischen Historiographie', in *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. Walter Pohl (Vienna, 2004), pp. 191–209.

27 For discussions and descriptions of the manuscript see McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 13–19; Matthias Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli. Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*, MGH Schriften 48, 1 und 2 (Hannover, 2001), pp. 1156–58, who suggests that the manuscript was written in Fleury and dates to the late ninth century. However, I think that the earlier date is more likely, see my arguments in, 'Der Weg zum Königtum', pp. 295f. and below n. 34.

28 Richard Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987); Ian Wood, *The Merovingian kingdoms 450–751* (London, 1994), pp. 257–59.

29 McKitterick, *History and Memory*, esp. pp. 113–18; Helmut Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci. Identifications and Identities of the Early Medieval Franks', in *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov et al. (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 51–70.

annexation of the Merovingian past by Carolingian historians is in tune with other historiographical tendencies during the reign of Louis the Pious, as for instance was the case with the composition of *Gesta Dagoberti* during the 830s.³⁰ The tendency to absorb Merovingian history into Frankish historiography reached its high point under Charles the Bald, as can also be gathered from other historiographical compendia, such as the Viennese codex Wien, ÖNB lat. 473 or a manuscript kept today in St. Petersburg, which I will discuss later. Earlier signs of this historiographical tendency, furthermore, can be witnessed in the *Genealogia domni Arnulfi*, which was written in Metz some time during the first decades of the ninth century: in this text the Carolingians are portrayed as descendants of the Merovingians.³¹ Recently Ian Wood has drawn attention to the subtle way in which genealogical constructs in texts composed in a Carolingian context (such as, for example, the *Continuationes* or the *Annales Mettenses priores*) were employed to offer aristocratic lobbies in western *Francia* a place in a shared past.³² A similar motive may also have inspired the compilation of the compendium in Paris BnF 10911, which anticipates the Carolingian rise to power and embeds it in the narrative, so that the ‘omnes Franci’ of the *Annales regni Francorum* are historiographically defined as the elites of the Western parts of the Frankish realm.

In the manuscript, this vision of Frankish history is woven together with great care. For instance, in order to avoid repetition of the historical narrative between the last chapters of the *Liber historiae Francorum* and the first ten chapters of the *Continuationes*, only chapters 10 to 24 of the *Continuationes* were included. Yet the manuscript counts the part of the *Continuationes* that it did include as Chapters 52–55 of the *Liber historiae Francorum*. The script of the Paris manuscript is of high uniformity and elegance, written with much care in a slightly archaic style. Although the manuscript was surely copied after 829 (the end of the narrative of the *Annales regni Francorum*), some of the features of the script are reminiscent of a classical Carolingian minuscule from the end of the eighth century.³³ But the manuscript seems to have been written not long after 829. Bernhard Bischoff has dated it to the second quarter of the ninth century and localised its origin to northwestern France.³⁴ The script is difficult to locate palaeographically, but a colophon on folios 47v and 48r indicates that it must have been preserved in Rheims already around the middle of the ninth century. (François Dolbeau and Pierre Desportes found the same colophon in an eighteenth-century copy of a mid-ninth-century polyptych of St.-Remi.)³⁵

What is also of interest here is that the manuscript appears to have been copied in two parts simultaneously. After the end of the text of the *Continuationes* followed a number of leaves that were originally left blank and which form the last folia of the quire. After these empty leaves,

30 *Gesta Dagoberti I. regis Francorum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hannover, 1888), pp. 396–425; cf. for the context of this text: Maximilian Diesenberger, ‘Hair, sacrality and symbolic capital in the Frankish kingdoms’, in *The Construction of Communities. Texts, Resources, Artefacts*, eds. Richard Corradini, Maximilian Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden and New York, 2003), pp. 173–212, 202ff.; Max Buchner, ‘Zur Entstehung und zur Tendenz der ‘Gesta Dagoberti’. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Eigenkirchenwesen im Frankenreiche’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 47 (1927), pp. 252–274, 271f.; Léon Levillain, ‘Étude sur l’abbaye de Saint-Denis à l’époque Mérovingienne’, *Bibliothèque de l’École de Chartes* 82 (1921), pp. 5–116, esp. 104ff.

31 *Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 13 (Hannover, 1881), pp. 245f., this genealogy claims that Arnulf’s grandfather, Ansbert, was married to the daughter of the Merovingian king, Chlothar; for the genealogy see the still fundamental article of Otto Gerhard Oexle, ‘Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), pp. 250–364.

32 Ian N. Wood, ‘Genealogy defined by women. The case of the Pippinids’, in *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 234–56.

33 For images of the manuscript cf. Reimitz, ‘Der Weg zum Königtum’, pp. 315 and 316 (fol. 56v/57r and 57v/58r).

34 I should like to thank Birgit Ebersperger, the editor of „Bernhard Bischoff’s posthumously published *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts* for the information based on Bischoff’s notes (e-mail vom 24. 4. 2001). Bischoff also dated the manuscript to the second quarter of the ninth century in a letter to Pierre Desportes and François Dolbeau, see their article, ‘Découverte de nouveaux documents relatifs au Polyptique de Saint-Remi de Reims. A propos d’une édition récente’, *Revue du Nord* 68 (1986), pp. 575–607, here 585, with note 35.

35 Desportes and Dolbeau, ‘Découverte de nouveaux documents’, with images of the colophon in the copy of the polyptique (Carpentras, Bibl. Ing. 1779, fol. 319v/320r) and in Paris BnF lat 10911 (fol. 47v/48r) on p. 584.

which acquired their texts only around 1200, the *Annales regni Francorum* take over the historical narrative at the beginning of the subsequent quire in the same carefully styled archaizing script as in the first part.³⁶ It is clear, therefore, that the copyists worked either from a pre-existing exemplar or from a carefully elaborated outline, which already contained a vision of Frankish history that reflected its creator's political project for the future, rather than a representation of the past. Neither in the last decade of Louis the Pious's reign nor in the first years of Charles the Bald's did the specific combination of historiographical traditions evidenced in this codex correspond with actual political loyalties; we should therefore see the production of the compendium as part of an effort to establish such loyalties.

If we want to analyse the social logic of such works and their relationship to the social realities described in them, it is therefore necessary to observe the subsequent histories of the conceptions they contain. For rather than reflecting a static reality, they formed part of a process of a negotiation between conflicting and changing social realities, the nature and contents of which cannot be understood from the mere contents of the texts, but which must be reconstructed on the basis of their transmission and reception. The historiographical compendium in Paris BnF lat. 10911 is extremely well suited for such an approach, for we are fortunate enough to possess two manuscripts, written within a hundred years of the composition of the Paris compendium, both of which build upon the Parisian combination of the three texts: the *Liber historiae Francorum*, *Continuationes* and *Annales regni Francorum*. In both cases, other texts were added to the trio.

In the elder one, Vienna ÖNB lat. 473, written in St.-Amand, the narrative is extended with a part of Einhard's *Vita Karoli*, two genealogical texts, and the *Liber pontificalis*. It was put together about three decades after the Paris manuscript, but as a minute codicological autopsy has shown, the compilers mostly used preexisting texts, and they rearranged them in what we would today call a cut-and-paste system.³⁷ The codex's version of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, however, must have been written for the occasion, since the revisions subtly rework the text itself. The omissions and alterations it involved were inconspicuous, but in effect they created a new scope for the Franks that extended the horizons of old Frankish history to territories, which the original author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* would not have regarded as that of the real Franks, but rather that of the Austrasians or *Franci superiores*. As I have argued elsewhere at greater length, this history book had been written and put together for Charles the Bald, most likely in the context of his conquest and short rule of Lotharingia in 869/70—the kingdom of his just deceased nephew Lothar II, which bordered the west-Frankish kingdom in the East.³⁸ To help legitimate Charles the Bald's takeover of his nephew's *regnum*, the version of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* in the compendium entirely removed the Austrasians—who had been the inhabitants of the eastern Merovingian kingdom—from Frankish history. But it is not only the rewriting of the *Liber historiae Francorum* that reveals the redefinition of Frankish history in this context. The specific arrangement of the texts also construes a specifically west-Frankish genealogy of Frankish history, all of which was summed up by a brief, genealogically structured historical summary at the end of the manuscript that even presents the

36 Although the high grade script is difficult to assign to different hands, the codicological traces clearly suggest that two scribes were working at the same time on the manuscript and combined the the two parts only after they had finished their work, cf. Tischler, *Einhard's Vita Karoli*, p. 1157.

37 See Reimitz, 'Ein karolingisches Geschichtsbuch', pp. 40–51; these implications of the codicological analysis have not fully taken into account by Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, MGH Studien und Texte 44 (Hannover, 2007), p. 124, who believes to argue against my view in saying that the manuscript consists of two independent parts, the first with the *Liber pontificalis* and the second with the texts on Frankish history. But the codicology and paleography of the different parts reveal a much more complex history of the book.

38 Reimitz, 'Ein karolingisches Geschichtsbuch'; for the historical background and the intensification of efforts to present Charles as the privileged heir to the imperial throne of his father Louis and his grandfather Charlemagne in these years, see Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), pp. 221–53.

Carolingians as descendants of a Neustrian *maior domus*.³⁹ Ultimately, Charles the Bald's rule in the kingdom of his nephew did not even last one year; hence the specific model of the compendium did not last either.

The second compendium had a more influential history for later generations of historians, and it also built on the core ensemble of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, the *Fredegar-Continuations*, and the *Royal Frankish Annals*. This manuscript, today in St. Petersburg and written in the first decades of the tenth century, also includes two further texts added to this ensemble: the *Vita Karoli* of Einhard and the *Vita Hludowici* of the Astronomer.⁴⁰ It is precisely this ensemble of texts that was used in the historiographical workshops of St.-Denis towards the end of the twelfth century to produce history book that eventually became the main sources for the early history of the Franks in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.⁴¹

As fascinating as it would be to pursue the social logic of the compendia into the High Middle Ages, I would like to concentrate on their Carolingian history in the ninth and tenth centuries, as the two manuscripts from Paris and St. Petersburg document it. As the editors of the different texts in these manuscripts observed, there are a great number of readings that the texts of both manuscripts share. But other traces show that the Petersburg manuscript is unlikely to be a direct copy of the Paris manuscript but rather a copy of a compendium that had already compiled all of the texts that constituted the Petersburg 'history book'.⁴² Thus the compendium in Paris can be regarded as the starting point for the establishment of a specific historiographical tradition.

Even more striking than the textual similarities are the codicological ones. As the transition between the *Continuationes Fredegarii* and the *Annales regni Francorum* shows, the subsequent compilers followed their originals very carefully. In the St. Petersburg manuscript, just as in the Paris manuscript, these texts are separated by the same number of empty pages. In the St. Petersburg compendium, however, these blank leaves are not located at the end and before the beginning of a new quire, as they are in the older manuscript, but rather in the middle of the quire.⁴³ This is all the more remarkable, if one considers that the St. Petersburg manuscript did not have the *Parisianus* as its exemplar, which means that even the empty pages between the *Continuationes* and the *Annales* had been preserved into the third generation of manuscripts.

By the early eleventh century, the St. Petersburg manuscript was at St.-Medard in Soissons: an addition in the *Annales regni Francorum* to the entry of 750 states that the last Merovingian king, Childerich III, after having been deposed by Pippin, was tonsured and lived thereafter *in monasterio sancti Medardi quod situm est in Suessionis civitate*.⁴⁴ Ernst Tremp, who edited the *Vita Hludowici*, for which the manuscript is the oldest witness, was nevertheless hesitant about

39 See the edition of the text in Reimitz, 'Ein karolingisches Geschichtsbuch', p. 52f.

40 St. Petersburg, NLR F v IV. 4, see the discussion and descriptions in: Ernst Tremp, *Die Überlieferung der Vita Hludowici des Astronomus*, MGH Studien und Texte 1 (Hannover, 1991), pp. 50–53; Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*, pp. 1163–77; Rosamond McKitterick, 'Charles the Bald and his library. The patronage of learning', *English Historical Review* 95 (1980), pp. 28–47; and now: ead., *History and Memory*, pp. 58, 112.

41 An important link of this historiographical tradition has been (re)discovered by Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Ein Geschichtskompodium des frühen 13. Jahrhunderts aus St. Denis (Vat. Reg. lat. 550) als Vorläufer der Grandes Chroniques', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 67 (1987), pp. 447–61, Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of St. Denis. A Survey* (Brookline, Mass. and Leiden, 1978), pp. 68–71: see also Pascale Bourgain, 'La protohistoire des Chroniques latines des Saint-Denis (BNF, lat. 5925)', in *Saint-Denis et la royauté. Études offertes à Bernard Guenée*, ed. Françoise Autrand, Claude Gauvard, and Jean-Marie Moeglin (Histoire ancienne et médiévale 59, Paris, 1999), pp. 375–94, and Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*, pp. 1203–1311; for Carolingian history in the high medieval France see now Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory. The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem Before the First Crusade* (Oxford, 2011).

42 Tremp, *Die Überlieferung*, pp. 50–53; Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*, p. 1166, with nn. 809–10.

43 St. Petersburg, NLR F v IV. 4, fol. 35r–37r; the quire starts at 33r and ends at 39v (one leaf between fol. 36 and 37 is missing).

44 St. Petersburg, NLR; fol. 38r, cf. *Annales regni Francorum* s. a 750, ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH SS rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum [6] (Hannover, 1895), p. 10 with n. *.

specifically locating the place of its composition and suggested northern France, mainly because the style of the script shows a strong influence of the Rheims scriptorium. Matthias Tischler, however, compared the St. Petersburg manuscript with other manuscripts from Soissons of the end of the ninth and the first third of the tenth century and came to the conclusion that it could have been written at Soissons.⁴⁵ He explains the Rheims influence on the style of the script through the close connections of Soissons and Rheims during the time of Abbo of Soissons. Abbo was in charge of the affairs of Hugo, son of the powerful Heribert II of Vermandois, who was made archbishop of Rheims while still a minor.⁴⁶ At that time, an intensified interest in Carolingian history at Soissons, and especially in the reign of Louis the Pious, is also evidenced in the work of Odilo, who died after 930. For his *translatio s. Sebastiani* he was able to utilize chapter 40 of the *Vita Hludowici* and the entry for 826 in the *Royal Frankish Annals*—texts that are also transmitted in the St. Petersburg manuscript. Furthermore, Odilo's interest in the times of Louis the Pious is also reflected in his *Miracula* that follow the *translatio*, in which he also integrated an account of Louis' confinement in Soissons in 833, a matter discussed at length in the *Vita Hludowici* and for which the St. Petersburg compendium is our oldest witness.⁴⁷

The contents of the compendium however could also have interested Heribert II of Vermandois, lay abbot of St.-Medard and count of Soissons, Meaux, and Vermandois, and Heribert's circle.⁴⁸ He descended in a direct line from Bernhard of Italy. His father, Heribert I, along with Fulco of Rheims, had played a decisive role in the royal election of the Carolingian Charles III. In Charles' conflict with Robert I, Heribert II switched sides in 923 and then, after the death of Robert, supported the new King Rudolf of Burgundy, who was crowned king in Soissons in 923. Charles was taken prisoner by Heribert, and Heribert was rewarded by Rudolf with the installation of his minor son Hugo as archbishop of Rheims. However, Heribert's systematic building up of his own position soon led to conflicts with Rudolf, so that in 927/28 Heribert even freed Charles, did homage to him, and led him to Rheims. However, once Heribert had allied himself once more with Rudolf, he had Charles once again taken into custody.

It is easy to imagine that, in the troubled times of the late 920s, those in the sphere of influence of the counts of Vermandois, in Soissons and in Rheims, would have been interested in a historiographical compendium such as we find in the St. Petersburg manuscript. A series of themes, such as the balance of power between the *Franci* (defined as the political elite along Seine and Oise) and their kings, the deposition of kings who only ruled in name, and indeed even the deposition, imprisonment and restoration of rulers (as described by the Astronomer in the Life of Louis the Pious and in the *Annales regni Francorum*), were questions of the highest possible relevance for contemporary politics in the first decades of the tenth century.

We might also see more specific interests of the counts of Vermandois into Carolingian history in the empty pages between the *Continuationes Fredegarii* and the *Annales regni Francorum* in the St. Petersburg manuscript. Although the compilers did not want to ignore the space that had been left blank in their copy, they used it to insert a table of short annals for the years from 532 to

45 Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*, p. 1167f.

46 See Michel Sot, *Un historien et son église. Flodoard de Reims* (Paris, 1993), pp. 320ff.

47 Tremp, *Die Überlieferung*, pp. 50–53 with Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*, pp. 1167–69.

48 Robert Fossier, 'Le Vermandois aux X^e siècle', in *Media in Francia. Recueil de mélanges offert à Karl Ferdinand Werner à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire* (Paris, 1989), pp. 177–86; Régine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franque (VII^e–X^e siècle) Essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1995), s. v. Herbert II.; Helmut Schwager, *Graf Heribert II. von Soissons, Omois, Meaux, Madrie sowie Vermandois (900/06–943) und die Francia (Nord-Frankreich) in der 1. Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Kallmünz/Opf., 1994); Karl Ferdinand Werner, 'Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des französischen Fürstentums V.', *Die Welt als Geschichte* (1960), pp. 87–119; id., 'Die Nachkommen Karls des Großen (1.–8. Generation)', in *Karl der Große. Lebenswerk und Nachleben* 4, ed. Wolfgang Braunsfels and Percy E. Schramm, Düsseldorf 1967, pp. 403–482, 458.

810.⁴⁹ This included a number of small entries referring to the successions to power and deaths of Carolingian rulers from 697 onwards. Interestingly one of the last entries of these brief historical notes mention the death of Charlemagne's son Pippin of Italy in 810, who was the great-great-grand-father of Heribert of Vermandois. The manuscript therefore originated within a network of prominent families in western Francia, who at the time were seeking to emphasize the identification of their area of influence with the former political centres of the Frankish kingdom under the Merovingians, as well as their descent from the Carolingian rulers of the Golden Ages, in order to promote their position as equal and worthy political partners of the ruling Carolingian kings.⁵⁰

But the contextualisation of the copying of the history book as a historiographical export from Rheims to Soissons also illustrates the care with which particular textual traditions were chosen. The repositories of Rheims would have offered a number of alternative histories and historiographical compendia, especially at the beginning of the tenth century. For example, Hincmar of Rheims himself probably incorporated his *Annales Bertiniani* into a major compendium, which is still preserved in most of the manuscripts of the *Annales*. The oldest exemplar (St.-Omer, Bibliothèque munic. 697 and 706) is almost certainly based on a manuscript from Rheims. In this manuscript, both Hincmar's and Prudentius's *Annales* form the end of the compilation. The *Annales regni Francorum* are found in the same compilation as well as a number of texts on Roman history, and a Carolingian version of Gregory of Tours' *Decem libri Historiarum*.⁵¹ From the same period around 900, we also have two other manuscripts, namely, a Rheims manuscript containing the *Chronicle* of Fredegar, which is followed not only by the *Continuationes Fredegarii*, but also by a reworked version of the Lorsch annals and a part of the *Annales regni Francorum* up to 806.⁵² Another manuscript, today in London (Ms Arundel 375) that has been associated with Rheims towards the end of the ninth century and contains the Austrasian reworking of the *Liber historiae Francorum* combined with a part of the *Annales Mettenses priores*.⁵³

It is obvious therefore that the historiographical transfer from Rheims to Soissons as witnessed in the St. Petersburg manuscript can be connected with a certain social logic that governed the deliberate choice and the transmission of the texts. To what extent this compendium built upon an already established vision and interpretation of history, such as is represented in the Paris manuscript, can only be determined through a comparison of the two manuscripts. Such a comparison involves not only an examination of the manuscripts' shared selections, but even more so it involves a consideration of common strategies for controlling the chosen textual resources. It is above all in the obvious concerns about authenticity, which are evident in the composition of both manuscripts,

49 The text has been edited under the title *Annales Bawarici breves*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH SS 20 (Hannover, 1868), p. 8; but nearly one century ago Friedrich Kurze, 'Die Annales Laubacenses und ihre nähere Verwandtschaft', *Neues Archiv für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 39 (1914), pp. 13–41, 41, suggested to call them *Annales regum Suessionenses*, for there is nothing in the text which links it to Bavaria, cf. also Lothar Boschen, *Die Annales Prumienses. Ihre nähere und weitere Verwandtschaft* (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 143–47.

50 For the appropriation of Carolingian tradition in the tenth century see Bernd Schneidmüller, *Karolingische Tradition und frühes französisches Königtum. Untersuchungen zur Herrschaftslegitimation der westfränkisch-französischen Monarchie* (Wiesbaden, 1979); id., *Nomen patriae. Die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie* (Nations 7, Sigmaringen, 1987) bes. 17ff.; Michel Sot, 'Hérédité royale et pouvoir sacré avant 987', *Annales ESC* (1988), pp. 705–33; Régine Le Jan, 'Continuity and change in the tenth-century nobility', in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (London, 2000), pp. 53–79.

51 St. Omer, Bibliothèque municipale 697+706, a codex which is today preserved in two parts, of which the first part (cod. 697) contains: Eutrop, *Historia Romana*; Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*; Notitia Galliarum and the second: Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*; Fredegar book IV cum continuationibus c. 24; *Annales regni Francorum*; *Annales Bertiniani*; for the manuscript and to the other manuscripts of the *Annales Bertiniani* see; *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ed. Felix Grat, Jean Vieillard and Suzanne Clémencet (Paris, 1964) XXIIff.; see also the discussion of the manuscript tradition in the English translation of the *Annales Bertiniani*: Janet Nelson, *The Annals of St Bertin* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 15f.

52 Vatican, Reg. lat. 213; for a fuller description of the manuscript see Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 96–99.

53 London, BL MS Arundel 375; cf. Yitzhak Hen, 'Canvassing for Charles: The Annals of Metz in Late Carolingian Francia', in *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift. Frühmittelalterliche Hagiographie und Historiographie im Spannungsfeld von Kompendienüberlieferung und Editionstechnik* (Vienna, 2010), pp. 139–46 with further references.

Paris, BnF lat. 10911 and St. Petersburg, NLR F v IV. 4, that we can see how important it was to connect to the social logic of already established historiographical traditions. The comparison of such strategies in the manuscripts—in the compilation and organisation of the texts they contain—provides us with many new opportunities to explore more precisely the ‘specific locations of texts’, as Gabrielle Spiegel would probably put it. As I have tried to illustrate with a few examples from the Carolingian and late Carolingian period, exploring the social logic of texts can help us to compare medieval texts and their transmission as part of historical processes without having to resort to notions of *the* original as the main point of reference for such a comparison. Exploring the social logic of medieval texts in their transmission develops a much more flexible perspective that enables us to study the continuous tension between text and context not only in synchronic but also in diachronic comparisons, and to follow it from the social contexts in which they were written into future efforts to build on their social logic, to develop it further or even to avoid it. This is particularly important in regard to research on medieval compendia as it allows us not only to explore how certain texts were connected to specific social logics, but also how certain social logics affected the establishment of a text, or—to use the title of the conference in this sense—the *configuration du texte* in the Middle Ages.