

Introduction

For a great many years there lived in Rue de la Harpe one of those men of stay-at-home habits for whom the only distraction consisted in occasional visits to the flower market and who, on returning home, would rediscover with ever-renewed pleasure his modest lodgings where order and cleanliness reigned everywhere. One day, as he hurried home, his landlord stopped him in the stairway and told him that the house had to be demolished because of some street repairs and that he would have to find another place to live for the next trimester. On hearing the news the poor lodger remained paralyzed with surprise and chagrin. Returning to his apartment, he immediately took to his bed and stayed there several months, the victim of a profound sadness accompanied by a raging fever. In vain his landlord tried to console him, promising him a more comfortable lodging in the new house that was going to be built on the land of the old one: "It will no longer be my lodging," he responded with bitterness, "the one I loved so much, that I embellished with my own hands, where, for thirty years, I had all my habits and where I cherished the hope of finishing my life!"

The eve of the day fixed for the demolition, he was warned that he must absolutely give back his keys the following day by noon at the latest. "I will not return them," he responded coldly. "If I leave here, it will only be feet first." Two days later, the *commissaire* was required to force open the door of the stubborn lodger. He found the poor man dead; he had suffocated from the despair of having to leave the abode he cherished too much.¹

HERE WAS A “textbook” case, from Jean-Baptiste-Felix Descuret’s 1841 volume, *La médecine des passions*, exemplifying symptoms of an ailment over which Descuret and many others of the scientific community in the early to mid-nineteenth century were engaged in heated debate. Coming to the conclusion that they were witnessing the symptoms of a disease, doctors struggled over the correct pathology and proper treatment for what had long been known as the affliction of “nostalgia,” an illness “that doctors regarded as potentially fatal, contagious, and somehow deeply connected to French life in the middle of the nineteenth century.”² Central to the debate over this disease was the question of what constituted a person’s “healthy” or “normal” relationship with the past. Clearly, too much nostalgia could prove fatal in an era deeply committed to the idea of progress. The inertia caused by this disease, it was argued, allowed the expanse between the victim’s static, “inhabited” past and the ongoing present to widen beyond reach. Responding to changes in the present became impossible to those paralyzed by their “malignant” memories. Beset with nostalgia, the poor lodger diagnosed by Descuret could not tolerate such a shock to his system as the changing of his cherished environment and routine. Rather than cope with the fickle present, he became a passive casualty of circumstance—a kind of living anachronism—rendered immobile by his “pathologically” deep attachment to a gilded past.³

If this brief account of doctors operating in the field of the historian seems strange, one might first consider the fact that historians themselves have, from the earliest times, borrowed from the lexicon of the physician.⁴ When speaking of a society or a state, historians have often utilized an organic metaphor, providing themselves with a flexible model that encapsulates the complex in the simple. As Paul Dutton has observed, “whenever we find the state compared to a diseased body, a poisoned body, or a body naturally growing old, we are in the presence of this organic metaphor.”⁵ By extension, historians thus become the (often hypochondriacal) “physicians” of this social organism, rendering “diagnoses” and evaluating its “health” by using additional medical metaphors. For example, the concept of a “crisis” has been widely used in historiography since the seventeenth century, referring to moments of particular stress upon the normative equilibrium—or “homeostasis”—of a society.⁶ Yet the word *crisis* itself is an ancient Greek medical term, used most often to describe the point at which a disease will, according to Hippocrates, “increase in intensity or go away or change into another disease or end altogether.”⁷

Carolingian Europe, the great empire of Charlemagne and his family,

during the ninth century is the subject of this study. I have begun with Des-curet's nineteenth-century account of the nostalgic lodger not only because it serves as a vivid reminder of the influence that doctors have traditionally had upon historians in their analyses of change but also because it offers a particularly apt illustration of the specific form of metaphorical thinking that has long influenced and shaped Carolingian historiography. Indeed, the precedent for this kind of metaphorical analysis was set by the Carolingians themselves.⁸ Agobard, bishop of Lyon, lamented in 833 that, rather than subjugating the barbarian nations that were threatening from every side, all the kingdoms of the realm were instead focusing their attention upon the empire's center, preparing to tear its "intestinal innards" to pieces with civil war.⁹ By 863, however, Ermentarius, a monk of Saint-Philibert, despaired that the civil wars were so frequent and fearful they resembled nothing so much as "tightly-packed intestines."¹⁰ Evidently, the empire had not yet disemboweled itself. Regino, a monk, chronicler of the monastery at Prüm, and contemporary witness in 888, famously described what he perceived as the end of the Carolingian empire using similar terms, but this time to suggest a kind of mitosis: "After Charles [the Fat's] death, the kingdoms which had obeyed his will, as if devoid of a legitimate heir, were loosened from their bodily structure into parts and now awaited no lord of hereditary descent, but each set out to create a king for itself from its own innards."¹¹

Over a millennium later, modern Carolingian historiography continues to bear the stamp of this very metaphor. James Westfall Thompson employed organic imagery when speaking about the "decomposition" of the Carolingian "body politic and body social," while Marc Bloch, Louis Halphen, and Jan Dhondt would discuss the later years of the realm beneath a rubric of "dismemberment."¹² Other historians would offer more detailed diagnoses. For Heinrich Fichtenau, who made ironic use of a metaphor that Europeans had long applied to the Ottoman empire, the Carolingian empire "was like a sick man who could not live, but could not die."¹³ Gerald Simons was more certain about the nature of this peculiar illness: "Charlemagne's empire was, in fact," he pronounced, "a giant dying of its own great size—and of his very efforts to preserve it."¹⁴ François Louis Ganshof, however, saw these same efforts by Charlemagne not as cause of the empire's illness but as its cure: "Even a rapid reading of the capitularies reveals all the symptoms of a defective administration," explained Ganshof. "Excesses and irregularities became endemic. The seriousness of the situation gave Charlemagne cause for constant concern, and he did what he could to apply a remedy."¹⁵

As their incredible persistence attests, such metaphors, once adopted, become increasingly difficult to dispense with owing to their attractive conceptual economy.¹⁶ In addition, when used frequently and habitually, metaphors often subtly impose a situational construct upon their user, circumscribing all analysis within their confines, if not directing the course of the analysis itself.¹⁷ For example, when one speaks of a society as “sick,” there remains the possibility of a recovery. Yet when the metaphor of decline into old age is used, there can be no such reversal. Moreover, the notion of senescence in this latter case could also predetermine a pattern of analysis, organizing it according to related metaphors of organic decrepitude. Because a society is in its “old age,” it should not be able to “see” and “hear” as well as it once had; hence, an examination of the society’s communication network is demanded.¹⁸

These consequences of adopting organic metaphors for historical analysis bring us back to our nineteenth-century doctors and the poor, nostalgic lodger. Just as historians long ago appropriated biological and medical terminology for their use as metaphors, so too have they often observed within the larger social body the doctors’ pathology of nostalgia as an enervating disease.¹⁹ The case of the nineteenth-century Swiss historian J.-C.-L. Sismondi de Sismondi is instructive of this tendency. In the introduction to his history of early medieval France, Sismondi justified his general approach to the study of the past as follows:

It is true that the study of history [that I propose] too often arrests the mind upon sorrowful remembrances, and nourishes painful feelings. We shall have to recount atrocious crimes which never drew upon their authors the deserved chastisement, of harrowing sufferings, a state of misery and despair, from which we should be eager to turn our eyes if it were presented to us in a fiction. But a friend of mankind ought to approach the study of history with that species of firmness, that he who wishes to relieve his fellow-man carries to the study of medicine or surgery.²⁰

Later in the same work, Sismondi abides by this rigorous methodology, detailing with a doctor’s “firmness” a whole host of political, social, economic, religious, and genetic factors deemed responsible for the “degeneration” and “decline” of his patient, the Carolingian empire. Yet, despite all his clinical observations, his final diagnosis of the “ailing giant” recalls nothing so much as Descuret’s description of the poor, nostalgic lodger: “The empire appears

to be nothing more than a great body,” concluded Sismondi, “in which we perceive the last convulsion of failing sensibility, when thought has fled, and the soul ceases to be present.”²¹ Given this vivid, suggestive assessment of pathogenesis, the fact that Sismondi’s own mother, years earlier, had fallen gravely ill from nostalgia is perhaps of more than passing interest.²² To what extent did the latent memory of his mother’s illness inform his diagnosis of a nearly comatose Carolingian Europe?

Certainly Sismondi was not the only scholar to internalize the symptoms and pathology of nostalgia and to invoke them in his historical analysis. Indeed, much like the cases of Descuret’s lodger and Sismondi’s mother, Carolingian society has been diagnosed repeatedly by historians as having succumbed to a particularly virulent strain of this debilitating disease: unable to deal “realistically” with change, struggling in traditional—and thus ineffectual—ways against its own “dissolution” over the course of the ninth century, Carolingian society vociferously bemoaned its fate in nostalgic tones.²³ It is little wonder that historians have arrived at such a diagnosis, for the Carolingian literary corpus is replete with nostalgic laments. Take, for example, the following mid-ninth-century jeremiad of Paschasius Radbertus, a bitter abbot of the monastery of Corbie:

And who would have been able to guess that such a glorious realm, one so spacious and fortified, so populated and powerful, was destined to be humbled and disgraced by the atrocities of such men? . . . And so among us the sword of the barbarian rages, unsheathed from the scabbard of the Lord! And we, wretched creatures, live as though paralyzed, not only among the hideous evils done by savages, but as well among the wars fought without pity between our own peoples, amid pillaging and plundering, sedition and fraud. Day by day men’s hearts burn with new ardor to commit greater and more wicked crimes!²⁴

In the 840s, Nithard, a disgruntled nobleman and grandson of Charlemagne, similarly decried the present state:

In the times of Charles the Great of good memory, who died almost thirty years ago, peace and concord ruled everywhere because our people were treading the one proper way, the way of the common welfare, and thus the way of God. But now since each goes his separate

way, dissension and struggle abound. Once there was abundance and happiness everywhere, now everywhere there is want and sadness.²⁵

Evaluating the latter passage, the historian Janet Nelson once wrote that Nithard's "final comparison of the wretched present with the golden past of the 'great Charles' [could never] have been thought fit for the eyes of Nithard's former patron and confidant [King Charles the Bald]."²⁶ Taking his lament at face value, Nelson understood Nithard to be so despondent over his day and age that he opted to escape into the past by way of nostalgic recollection—a move that implicitly condemned the present and thereby could offend the current king; hence, Nelson's conclusion that Nithard could not have intended such an account for royal eyes.

However, to base any diagnosis of a debilitating Carolingian nostalgia on texts such as Nithard's is to ignore not only the implications of nostalgia itself but also the rich tradition of rhetoric in which the Carolingians were steeped.²⁷ Nelson would later change her mind about Nithard's intended audience, and thus about the nature of nostalgia: "Could [Nithard] ever have contemplated Charles [the Bald] as a reader? Perhaps yes . . . Nithard may indeed have intended Charles himself to read his 'Histories.'" Nelson attributed this new perspective to her enhanced sensitivity to Carolingian historiography and the function of nostalgia within it. Rather than viewing nostalgia as a passive, escapist response to historical change, she now understood its use by Carolingian authors as an active form of criticism: by "harking back to the golden days of Charlemagne," Nelson assures us, "Nithard did very effectively criticise Charles's hard times."²⁸ A comparison of the base present with the golden past illustrated the need for current reform and, if shown to the proper person, could even effect such desired, salutary change.²⁹ As she decorously put it, a golden age was not just a stick with which to beat the present but "perhaps as much a carrot as a stick."³⁰ One understands, then, why Nelson attempted to show that the king was a possible reader of Nithard's nostalgic critique of his troubled present. All the courtier's hopes for reform depended on his account of current wrongs gaining the attention of the king—the one person who could right them.

This understanding of the nostalgic lament as instrumental, as a type of strategic, suggestive criticism of the present, endows the nostalgist with agency. Far from the notion of a bedridden, wistful body, Carolingian society is now being reevaluated in light of this "dynamic" paradigm.³¹ Remarkably resourceful in reacting to the many challenges of the ninth century, the Caro-

lingians are now seen as having employed a whole host of strategies not just for coping with social and political change but also for anticipating and often implementing it. Yet, in light of this apparent resourcefulness, it is important to remember that change in the Carolingian world was generally understood and expressed by the literate and learned in pessimistic, if not outright pejorative, terms of decline.³² Bringing our discussion full circle, this somber belief even underlay and informed the practice of medicine; Carolingian doctors perceived any change in the equilibrium of an organism as indicative of a decline in health.³³ To believe that someone like Nithard was exploiting nostalgic rhetoric simply because he deemed it the most expedient means to achieve his ends would, thus, be a rather cynical misrepresentation of mentality during the ninth century, a specious view of “liberation” and empowerment as wide of the mark as that of a paralyzing nostalgia.³⁴ People really did believe that things were getting worse. The signs could be seen everywhere.³⁵ But this did not mean that they believed themselves helpless in the face of such uncertain times.³⁶ Again, early medieval medical practice provides a good example. Using a formula that required the letters of a patient’s name and the number of the particular lunar day on which the patient had fallen ill, Carolingian doctors would occasionally appeal to “ancient” (i.e., pagan) charts in order to prognosticate the outcome of a sickness (Figure 1). The desire to establish with certainty the time of death and thereby secure the performance of last rites for a proper and peaceful transition from this world to the next evidently outweighed any fears of damnation for practicing vaticination.³⁷ Yet, for most such worriers, the solutions to current problems lay not in the nebulous future but in the proven past, not in augury, nor even in novelty, but in reform.³⁸

These are just a few of the many problems and issues one encounters when undertaking broad analyses of social and political change. Language and terminology—especially of the medical variety—can act as obstacles when applied as metaphors. More specifically, when used without caution, the state-as-organism metaphor can predetermine and circumscribe patterns of analysis and interpretation. As I have outlined briefly above, this has been the overriding problem with Carolingian historiography for centuries.³⁹ Unfortunately, the recent historiographical reaction against the traditional, metaphor-ridden grand narrative of Carolingian rise and decline, growth and decay—for all its sophisticated argumentation—has often tended to extremes in its attack upon this inveterate narrative, leading to another problematic representation of the Carolingian past. Just as the narrative of Carolingian emaciation and



Figure 1. Ninth-century copy of a medical prognostication formula and chart. Laon, Bibliothèque municipale 407, fols. 136v–137r. Courtesy Bibliothèque municipale Laon, IRHT-CNRS.

dissolution had long been received as the ineluctable result of a kind of medieval paralysis in the face of change,⁴⁰ the current trend to correct this view by underscoring Carolingian agency has itself produced a skewed narrative of early medieval “strategists,” tacticians who proactively maneuvered through their difficult times in accordance with suspiciously modern notions of pragmatism and utility.⁴¹ From this perspective, the Carolingians paid little heed to Christ’s injunction on the Mount that so moved men such as Saints Anthony and Francis at the opposite ends of the Middle Ages—to “be not solicitous for tomorrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34).⁴²

In the following pages, I wish to respond to this anachronistic hypercorrection by arguing for a more balanced view—one that sees the actions of the Carolingians as having taken place within a dialectic between “untidy” circumstances and contingencies and a “more tidy” complex of received norms. Thus, my narrative is processual rather than judgmental, emphasizing improvisation and transformation (paradoxically in terms of reform) rather than evaluating achievement and failure, growth and decay, rise and decline.⁴³ Put another way, I wish to show that the Carolingians were, to use John J. Conreni’s felicitous phrase, “innovative despite themselves.”⁴⁴

The abandonment of Charlemagne's son, Emperor Louis the Pious, by his troops and his controversial public penance in 833 are ideal incidents with which to demonstrate the advantages provided by a narrative of process. As sole heir to the imperial throne in 814, Louis is often blamed in historical accounts for both causing and allowing the nominally unified empire established by his grandfather Pippin the Short and father Charlemagne to disintegrate into a patchwork of independent territories and autonomous lordships.⁴⁵ This process, whose point of no return is usually seen in the events of 833, is often represented as the product of a series of poor choices by Louis, themselves the result of his allegedly mercurial character, being on the one hand a weak and indecisive monarch, on the other hand a religious zealot blind to the consequences of his actions.⁴⁶ For instance, arriving at the imperial court in Aachen shortly after his father's death, Louis purged the palace of its "filth," an act that included the destruction of the old Germanic pagan tokens and texts collected by Charlemagne and the exile and enclaustration of the court's morally "dissolute," a number of whom were members of his own kindred. This abrasive "cleansing of the palace" is often taken as the new emperor's first error. In the following years of his reign, Louis is alleged to have made a long series of other mistakes, including the (unintentional) execution of his nephew King Bernard of Italy for treason in 818; his marriage in 819 to the "bad" Judith of Bavaria following the death of his "good" first wife, Ermengard; his performance of a public penance in 822 to atone for, among his other sins and those of his father, the murder of Bernard; fathering a son by Judith in 823, thereby jeopardizing the arrangement of his first three sons' patrimony (established and divinely ordained in 817); the replacement of his closest counselors with Count Bernard of Septimania, an ambitious favorite of the empress, in 829; the granting of the rich territory of Alemannia in the same year to Charles, his youngest son, thereby diminishing Lothar's inheritance and sparking a civil war with his allied elder children; and finally, emerging victorious after a momentary defeat in 830, only to show clemency to many who had rebelled against him.

These deeds are typically taken as Louis' major "errors,"⁴⁷ though his liberality in the dispensation of the lands and property of the imperial fisc is often adduced as another factor contributing to the realm's "dissolution" under his command.⁴⁸ Yet, in most narratives of Louis' reign, these past mistakes serve merely as prologue to what occurred in 833.⁴⁹ For in that year Louis met his first three sons in open rebellion once again, only this time to be deserted by his own forces in a dramatic display of greed, fear, and disfavor

toward his years of alleged misrule. To add insult to injury, Louis' sons then purportedly coerced him in secret to undertake another public penance for his many "crimes," after which he was said by the rebels to have willingly forfeited the throne for a life of penitential self-reflection and prayer. Unfortunately for the new emperor, Lothar, dispute and division among his brothers soon followed in the wake of these unsettling events, which resulted in Louis' restoration and official recovery of the throne early in 835. For the next five years, Louis would maintain possession of the realm, though he was often forced to fight with his sons to keep it. Shortly after his death from illness in June 840, the empire would erupt into full-fledged civil war.

For centuries, these dramatic events sketched above have been judged by historians,⁵⁰ and it is their stern, summary judgment that has itself often formed a critical fulcrum upon which pivot both the older decline/decay narratives and the modern narratives of pragmatism, ambition, and interest. What happens if the "pivotal" events of Louis' reign—and the events of 833, in particular—are instead seen within a continuum of process and transformation? My conviction is that they become understandable on their own terms, rather than tendentious in ours.

One major theme of this study is the shift in the interpretation and representation of historical events, moving from the evaluation and judgment of competing narratives of the past, to the isolation and historicization of the narratives' rhetorical elements, to the understanding of the historical beliefs and value systems that justified and informed them. It is a shift from the despair born of a vain search for truth amid a tangle of conflicting narratives, to the hope arising from the discernment of common threads woven throughout the narratives themselves.⁵¹

Another prominent theme is the complex relationships among experience, memory, and identity. To what extent does the remembrance of an experience contribute to one's identity? To what extent do the demands of identity shape the remembrance of one's experience?⁵² The ways in which a worldly king with his changing needs (Charles the Bald) and an ecclesiastical advisor with his hardening convictions (Hincmar of Reims) each remembered and remembered again the events of 833 are only two of the many examples that will attend to these questions.

A third theme that emerges regularly is the idea of foresight and acting proactively. A great variety of means for coping with change (believed to be detrimental) were adopted during the ninth century. Yet the reliance

on any one or combination of such means was in most cases prudently ad hoc and conservative in character, rather than impudently premeditated and transformative.⁵³ While the Carolingians may appear at times to have been a superficially Christian people, rarely did they forget Christ's teaching to forsake anxiety about the future. Whether viewed with optimism or (more often) with pessimism, with hope or with fear, the morrow would look after itself.⁵⁴ One did not have to be a saint to take this sentiment seriously. When they did attempt a concerted, creative plan for the future—and ironically, it would take a fortuitous, nearly fatal fall by the emperor to prompt such forward thinking—their inexperience and the considerable force of custom would together prove to be their own undoing.⁵⁵

A final theme is neatly summed up in an aphorism by the Roman satirist Juvenal: "Who will guard the guardians themselves?"⁵⁶ A line well known during the Middle Ages, the sentiment it expressed was pervasive and deep. Methods and techniques were constantly sought by which those in positions of power and responsibility might govern their own actions in accordance with truth, justice, and equity and keep from going astray. How could one penetrate the dense fog of self-delusion and know oneself truly?⁵⁷ One way was to submit oneself to external scrutiny and seek the advice of trusted counselors and critics. Yet, as Saint Paul had warned, this method always ran the risk of having one's itching ears scratched by the flattery of fawning courtiers (2 Tim. 4:3). Another way was to allow one's inner tribunal of justice and equity, one's conscience, to render corrective judgment in accordance with a strict scale of comparison.⁵⁸ Models, both typological and historical, were perpetually desired, exalted, and emulated as guides: Charlemagne was said to have listened to Saint Augustine's *City of God* read aloud each night, while his son Louis the Pious was known to meditate daily on scripture and exegesis.⁵⁹ Codes of conduct and self-correction were also frequently adopted, such as Saint Benedict's Rule for abbots, Pope Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care* and Saint Peter's standard of equity for bishops, and the numerous edifying "mirrors of princes" for secular rulers. Such models and codes served to goad one's conscience through their constant and explicit reminders that to whom more is entrusted by God, more is expected. Anxiety and dread over the final account that must be rendered on the day of reckoning both for oneself and for one's stewardship of others were expected to make the careful consideration of behavior a ceaseless, imperative task.

As privileged guardians of the past and speakers for the dead, historians have an equally grave responsibility.⁶⁰ How do we keep from going astray,

from misleading not only others but even—but especially—ourselves? It is not enough to offer self-conscious, belated caveats about the subjectivity of our intervention in the ordering and reordering of the historical record.⁶¹ A more proactive approach is necessary. As in the Middle Ages, one way is to rely on models as guides. In the following pages, it should become rather clear who my guides have been. Submitting one's work to the counsel and criticism of others is likewise of vital importance. In this respect, I have been fortunate to receive scrupulous and candid comments from numerous—though by no means mutually exclusive—counselors, critics, and friends. None have been afraid to speak freely, and for that they have my warmest and lasting gratitude. In the end, or, rather, to begin, I can only echo what Augustine once wrote to Jerome: “I find it hard to judge properly what I have written, because I am either excessively diffident or more partial than I should be. I do also sometimes see my own faults but I prefer to be told of them by someone better in case, after having rightly taken myself to task, I should delude myself again and think that I have been pedantic rather than fair in my judgment.”⁶²

NOTES

PART EPIGRAPH PHRASES are taken from Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. L. Alexander (1938; New York, 1964), 57.

INTRODUCTION

1. J.-B.-F. Descuret, *La médecine des passions, ou Les passions considérées dans leurs rapports avec les maladies, les lois et la religion* (Paris, 1841), 717–18; trans. M. S. Roth, “Dying of the Past: Medical Studies of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France,” *History and Memory* 3 (1991): 6–7.

2. Roth, “Dying of the Past,” 7.

3. For additional studies on nostalgia, see M. S. Roth, “The Time of Nostalgia: Medicine, History and Normality in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Time and Society* 1 (1992): 271–86; J. Starobinski, “The Idea of Nostalgia,” *Diogenes* 54 (1966): 81–103; S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001); K. Brunnert, *Nostalgie in der Geschichte der Medizin* (Düsseldorf, 1984).

4. A. Momigliano, “History Between Medicine and Rhetoric,” in idem, *Ottavo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, trans. R. Di Donato (Rome, 1987), 13–25.

5. P. E. Dutton, “Beyond the Topos of Senescence: The Political Problems of Aged Carolingian Rulers,” in *Aging and the Aged in Medieval Europe*, ed. M. M. Sheehan (Toronto, 1990), 75; revised as “A World Grown Old with Poets and Kings,” in Dutton, *Mustache*, 153. See also V. W. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974), 24–29; J. E. Schlanger, *Les métaphores de l'organisme* (Paris, 1971), 175–89; R. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (Oxford, 1969), 3–11.

6. R. Starn, “Historians and ‘Crisis,’” *PP* 52 (1971): 3–22; J. B. Shank, “Crisis: A Useful Category of Post-Social Scientific Historical Analysis?” *AHR* 113 (2008): 1090–99; and for the early twentieth-century origin of the term “homeostasis,” D. Fleming, “Walter B. Cannon and Homeostasis,” *Social Research* 51 (1984): 609–40.

7. Starn, “Historians and ‘Crisis,’” 4; R. Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlighten-*

ment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society (1959; Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 167 n. 31; and Hippocrates, *On Affections*, 8, ed. and trans. P. Potter, *LCL* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 5:16–17.

8. P. E. Dutton, “Awareness of Historical Decline in the Carolingian Empire, 800–887” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1981), 19–64; S. F. Wemple, “Claudius of Turin’s Organic Metaphor or the Carolingian Doctrine of Incorporations,” *Speculum* 49 (1974): 222–37; J. L. Nelson, “On the Limits of the Carolingian Renaissance,” in eadem, *Politics*, 49–67.

9. Agobard, *Liber apologeticus* I, 3, ed. Van Acker, 310.

10. Ermentarius, *Miracula sancti Philiberti*, 2, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH*, *SS* 15(1):302.

11. Regino, *Chronicon*, s.a. 888, ed. Kurze, 129; trans. Dutton, *Carolingian Civ.*, 541. Cf. Dutton, “Beyond the Topos,” 76 n. 8.

12. J. W. Thompson, *The Dissolution of the Carolingian Fisc in the Ninth Century* (Berkeley, Calif., 1935), 57–58; M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L. A. Manyon (1939–40; Chicago, 1961), 109; L. Halphen, *Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire*, trans. G. de Nie (1947; Amsterdam, 1977), 213; J. Dhondt, *Le haut moyen âge (VIII^e–XI^e siècles)*, rev. ed. M. Rouche (Paris, 1968), 73.

13. H. Fichtenau, *Das karolingische Imperium: Soziale und geistige Problematik eines Grossreiches* (Zürich, 1949), 287; see also 184, 296. See Dutton, “Awareness of Historical Decline,” 56–62; K. Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen im Karolingerreich* (Vienna, 1979), 117.

14. G. Simons, *Barbarian Europe* (New York, 1968), 112.

15. F. L. Ganshof, “Charlemagne’s Failure,” in idem, *Carolingians*, 257–58. An early critic of the biological metaphor applied to the Carolingians was P. E. Schramm, *Kaiser, Könige, und Päpste: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1968), 1:336–39.

16. The classic case of this resilience is the “decline and fall” or “decay” of the Roman Empire. See W. Goffart, “Zosimus, The First Historian of Rome’s Fall,” *AHR* 76 (1971): 414; P. Burke, “European Ideas of Decline and Revival, c. 1350–1500,” *Parergon* 23 (1979): 3–8; idem, “Tradition and Experience: The Idea of Decline from Bruni to Gibbon,” in *Edward Gibbon and the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, J. L. Clyde, and S. R. Graubard (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 87–102; W. Rehm, *Der Untergang Roms in abendländischen Denken: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichtsschreibung und zum Dekadenzproblem* (Leipzig, 1930).

17. Dutton, “Awareness of Historical Decline,” 6–7; D. A. Schön, “Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge, 1993), 137–63; G. Constable, “Medieval Latin Metaphors,” *Viator* 38, no. 2 (2007): 1–20. For a brilliant analysis of the ways in which metaphors served to shape the thought of the Carolingians themselves, see K. F. Morrison, “*Unum ex multis*: Hincmar of Rheims’ Medical and Aesthetic Rationales for Unification,” *SS Spoleto* 27(2): 583–718.

18. Cf. W. B. Cannon, “Relations of Biological and Social Homeostasis,” in idem, *The Wisdom of the Body* (London, 1932), 287–306; Fleming, “Walter B. Cannon and Homeostasis,” 636–39.

19. Cf. R. A. Nye, “Metaphors of Pathology in the *Belle Époque*: The Rise of a Medical Model of Cultural Crisis,” in idem, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, N.J., 1984), 132–70; M. S. Roth, “Remembering Forgetting; *Maladies de la Mémoire* in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 49–68; F. W. Coker, *Organismic Theories of the State: Nineteenth Century Interpretations of the State as Organism or as Person* (New York, 1910). But see also J. Soll, “Healing the Body Politic: French Royal Doctors, History, and the Birth of a Nation 1560–1634,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002): 1259–86.

20. J.-C.-L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des français* (Paris, 1821), 1:xx; trans. W. Bellingham in Sismondi, *The French Under the Merovingians and the Carolingians* (London, 1850), xxxvii.

21. Sismondi, *Histoire des français*, 3:4. P. C. F. Daunou, in his review of Sismondi’s book, was struck by this passage; see *Journal des savants* (September 1821): 555.

22. On the “infection” of Sismondi’s mother with nostalgia (ca. 1793), see P. Waeber, *Sismondi: Une biographie* (Geneva, 1991), 1:119–22; F. Palgrave, “Life and Works of Sismondi,” *Quarterly Review* 72 (1843): 303–4. It was long observed by doctors that the Swiss were particularly susceptible to nostalgia: Starobinski, “The Idea of Nostalgia,” 87–93.

23. Cf. P. de Lilienfeld, *La pathologie sociale* (Paris, 1896), 19; see also 53–68.

24. Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Lamentationes Jeremiae*, 4.13, ed. B. Paulus, *CCCM*, 85:282; partial trans. E. S. Duckett, *Carolingian Portraits* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1962), 189. Cf. the similar complaints by Paschasius, *Exp. in Mattheo*, 11.24, 7, ed. Paulus, 56B:1159; idem, *Epitaphium*, 2.7, ed. Dümmler, 67.

25. Nithard, 4.7, ed. Lauer, 144; trans. Dutton, *Carolingian Civ.*, 331.

26. J. L. Nelson, “Public *Histories* and Private History in the Work of Nithard,” *Speculum* 60 (1985): 281.

27. For just such a diagnosis, see B. W. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1972), 30; P. Depreux, “Nithard et la *Res Publica*: Un regard critique sur le règne de Louis le Pieux,” *Médiévales* 22–23 (1992): 161. The literature on the rhetorical skills of the Carolingians is growing quickly. See *Strategies of Writing: Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Schulte et al. (Turnhout, 2008); *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. E. M. Tyler and R. Balzaretto (Turnhout, 2006); *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. R. Corradini et al. (Vienna, 2006); *UP*, ed. Hen and Innes; M. S. Kempshall, “Some Ciceronian Models for Einhard’s Life of Charlemagne,” *Viator* 26 (1995): 11–37; P. E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln, Neb., 1994); J. M. Pizarro, *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989).

28. J. L. Nelson, “History-Writing at the Courts of Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald,” in *HFM*, ed. Scharer and Scheibelreiter, 440. Cf. M. de Jong, “The Empire as *Ecclesia*: Hrabanus Maurus and Biblical *Historia* for Rulers,” in *UP*, ed. Hen and Innes, 199–200.

29. As Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi, has observed, “Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future.” See also Schön, “Generative Metaphor,” 146; Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming*, 210.

30. J. L. Nelson, “Translating Images of Authority: The Christian Roman Emperors in the Carolingian World,” in eadem, *The Frankish World, 750–900* (1989; London, 1996), 97 n. 50. Such admirable willingness to question and revise her own convictions is characteristic of Nelson’s scholarly career; see *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson*, ed. P. Fouracre and D. Ganz (Manchester, 2008).

31. Note the recent attention given specifically to Carolingian historiography and to Carolingian literacy in general: *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. P. Wormald and J. L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2007); R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004); *UP*, ed. Hen and Innes; *HFM*, ed. Scharer and Scheibelreiter; *Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. U. Schaefer (Tübingen, 1993); *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990); R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989). Cf. C. F. Briggs, “Literacy, Reading, and Writing in the Medieval West,” *JMH* 26 (2000): 397–420; P. J. Geary, “Oblivion Between Orality and Textuality in the Tenth Century,” in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. G. Althoff et al. (Cambridge, 2002), 112.

32. See Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming*, 208–24, 312 nn. 42–43, on the negative connotation of the phrase “*modernum tempus*.” See also B. Stock, “Attitudes Towards Change,” in idem, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), 472–76; H. Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century: Studies in Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. P. J. Geary (1984; Chicago, 1990), 383; A. J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*, trans. G. L. Campbell (1972; London, 1985), 124–25.

33. In a medical manuscript of the tenth century (Rome, Vat. Reg. lat. 1260, fol. 177r), the Greek term “*crisin*” is glossed as “*declinatio valitudinis*.” *Corpus glossariorum Latinorum*, ed. G. Loewe and G. Goetz (Berlin, 1892), 3:599 l. 22.

34. On this point—namely, the binaries of the tyranny of custom and the freedom of agency—see N. B. Dirks, “The Policing of Tradition: Colonialism and Anthropology in Southern India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39 (1997): 182–212.

35. S. Coupland, “‘A Tale of Misfortune’: The Hardships of Life in Ninth-Century Europe,” *Medieval History* 3 (1993): 178–83.

36. On the interdependence of belief and agency, see G. Koziol, “A Father, His Son, Memory, and Hope: The Joint Diploma of Lothar and Louis V (Pentecost Monday, 979) and the Limits of Performativity,” in *Geschichtswissenschaft und “Performative Turn”*: *Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, ed. J. Martschukat and S. Patzold (Cologne, 2003), 83–86; P. E. Dutton, “Thunder and Hail over the Carolingian Countryside,” in Dutton, *Mustache*, 169–88.

37. F. S. Paxton, “*Signa Mortifera*: Death and Prognostication in Early Medieval

Monastic Medicine,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 67 (1993): 631–50; P. Riché, “La magie à l’époque carolingienne,” *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* 1 (1973): 127–38; E. Wickersheimer, “Figures medico-astrologiques des IX^e, X^e et XI^e siècles,” *Janus* 19 (1914): 157–77.

38. Of course, the ideal of just what was to be returned to through efforts of reform was itself the locus of change—and debate. Cf. the numerous reform movements during the Middle Ages seeking a return to an idealized primitive church: G. Olsen, “The Idea of the *Ecclesia Primitiva* in the Writings of the Twelfth-Century Canonists,” *Traditio* 25 (1969): 61–86; M. E. Hönicke Moore, “Carolingian Bishops and Christian Antiquity: Distance from the Past, Canon-Formation, and Imperial Power,” in *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the Greco-Roman World, and the Early Medieval West*, ed. A. A. MacDonald et al. (Leuven, 2003), 175–84; G. B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (1959; New York, 1967). For a lucid statement of this notion of change cast in terms of reform, see L. J. R. Milis, *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men: Monasticism and Its Meaning to Medieval Society* (Woodbridge, 1992), 14; and, in general, K. F. Morrison, *The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West* (Princeton, N.J., 1982); J. S. Preus, “Theological Legitimation for Innovation in the Middle Ages,” *Viator* 3 (1972): 1–26.

39. S. MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003), 1–11; E. J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817–876* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2006), 4–7.

40. On such medieval “paralysis,” see J. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981), 47–48; K. F. Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, N.J., 1969), 6–8.

41. E.g., J. L. Nelson, “A Tale of Two Princes: Politics, Text and Ideology in a Carolingian Annal,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* n.s. 10 (1988): 115; P. Fouracre, “Carolingian Justice: The Rhetoric of Improvement and Contexts of Abuse,” *SS Spoleto* 42(2): 774, 778, 784, 786–87; and the debate over Carolingian military “grand strategy”: B. S. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, 2001), with reviews by C. R. Bowlus, *AHR* 107 (2002): 592–93; S. MacLean, *EME* 11 (2002): 175–76; W. Brown, *Speculum* 78 (2003): 454–56. For a masterful critique of the tendency to interpret past behavior in modern, Western terms of pragmatism and utility, see M. Sahllins, “Individual Experience and Cultural Order,” in idem, *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays* (1982; New York, 2000), 277–91.

42. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 3 (Latin trans. of Evagrius), *PL* 73, col. 128A; *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci: The Writings of Leo, Rufino and Angelo, Companions of St. Francis*, 4, ed. and trans. R. B. Brooke (Oxford, 1970), 94–95.

43. But for a historiographical survey and critique of such narratives of transformation, see now the essays in *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008).

44. J. J. Contreni, “Carolingian Biblical Culture,” in *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics*, ed. G. Van Riel et al. (Leuven, 1996), 12. Cf. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 7–8, 13.

45. R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751–987* (London, 1983), 124. Cf. MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 3, on the traditional arc of Carolingian politics, and their trajectory as plotted within modern historiography.

46. E.g., P. R. McKeon, “The Empire of Louis the Pious: Faith, Politics, and Personality,” *RB* 90 (1980): 50–62; L. K. Born, “The *Specula principis* of the Carolingian Renaissance,” *RBPB* 12 (1933): 586.

47. Cf. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, 135–36.

48. The standard narrative of Louis’ “error-ridden reign” can be found in almost any general survey of Carolingian history, the two consulted most frequently in English being Halphen, *Charlemagne*; P. Riché, *The Carolingians: A Family Who Forged Europe*, trans. M. I. Allen (1983; Philadelphia, 1993). On Louis and the fisc, the classic studies are J. Dhondt, *Études sur la naissance des principautés territoriales en France (IX^e–X^e siècle)* (Bruges, 1948); Thompson, *The Dissolution*.

49. J. L. Nelson, “The Last Years of Louis the Pious,” in *CH*, ed. Godman and Collins, 148.

50. As observed by P. Chevallard, *Saint Agobard, Archevêque de Lyon: Sa vie et ses écrits* (Lyon, 1869), 301. See also Sismondi, *Histoire des français*, 3:23–24.

51. On this approach, see G. Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines: War, Religion, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. C. Tihanyi (1973; Berkeley, Calif., 1990); A. Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (1988; Chicago, 2001); R. Darnton, “It Happened One Night,” *NYRB* 51, no. 11 (24 June 2004): 60–64; and the film *Rashomon*, directed by Akira Kurosawa, 1950, together with D. Boyd, “Positions and Perspectives: Rashomon,” in idem, *Film and the Interpretive Process* (New York, 1989), 51–73; W. D. Roth and J. D. Mehta, “The *Rashomon* Effect: Combining Positivist and Interpretivist Approaches in the Analysis of Contested Events,” *Sociological Methods & Research* 31, no. 2 (2002): 131–73.

52. See C. L. Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian,” *AHR* 37 (1932): 227: “the more of the past we drag into the specious present, the more an hypothetical, patterned future is likely to crowd into it also. Which comes first, which is cause and which effect, whether our memories construct a pattern of past events at the behest of our desires and hopes, or whether our desires and hopes spring from a pattern of past events imposed upon us by experience and knowledge, I shall not attempt to say.” Cf. P. Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, N.J., 2001), 256.

53. P. J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), 86–87, 98, 177; Dutton, “Thunder and Hail,” in idem, *Mustache*, 169–88; P. Fouracre, “Cultural Conformity and Social Conservatism in Early Medieval Europe,” *HWJ* 33 (1992): 152–61; Nelson, “On the Limits,” in eadem, *Politics*, 49–67; E. Perroy, “Carolingian Administration,” in *Early Medieval Society*, ed. S. L. Thrupp (New York, 1967), 129–46; E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W. R. Trask (1946; Princeton, N.J., 2003), 38–39, 559–61. But cf. M. Innes, “Introduction: Using the Past, Interpreting the Present, Influencing the

Future,” in *UP*, ed. Hen and Innes, 8; S. Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography c. 950–1150* (Leiden, 2002), 4.

54. See Agobard, *De spe et timore*, ed. Van Acker, 430–31; Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositio in Matthaem*, ed. B. Löfstedt, *CCCM*, 174:200–201; *Anonymi in Matthaem*, ed. B. Löfstedt, *CCCM*, 159:72. More optimistic about medieval attitudes toward transforming the future are J. Le Goff, “Merchant’s Time and Church’s Time in the Middle Ages,” in idem, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (1960; Chicago, 1980), 31; J.-C. Schmitt, “Appropriating the Future,” trans. P. Rand, in *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. A. Burrow and I. P. Wei (Woodbridge, 2000), 11–12.

55. See P. R. McKeon, “817: Une année désastreuse et presque fatale pour les Carolingiens,” *MA* 84 (1978): 5–12; F. L. Ganshof, “Some Observations on the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817,” in idem, *Carolingians*, 273–88, esp. 280 n. 73.

56. “*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*” Juvenal, 6.347–48.

57. See K. F. Morrison, “‘Know thyself’: Music in the Carolingian Renaissance,” *SS Spoleto* 39(1): 369–483.

58. E. L. Fortin, “The Political Implications of St. Augustine’s Theory of Conscience,” in idem, *Classical Christianity and the Political Order: Reflections on the Theologico-Political Problem* (Lanham, Md., 1996), 65–84; A. Firey, “Blushing Before the Judge and the Physician: Moral Arbitration in the Carolingian Empire,” in *A New History of Penance*, ed. A. Firey (Leiden, 2008), 173–200; I. van Renswoude, “The Sincerity of Fiction: Rather and the Quest for Self-Knowledge,” in *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. R. McKitterick et al. (Vienna, forthcoming).

59. Einhard, *VKM*, 24, trans. Dutton, *Courtier*, 31; Thegan, *GH*, 19–20, trans. Dutton, *Carolingian Civ.*, 164–65. See also T. F. X. Noble, “The Monastic Ideal as a Model for Empire: The Case of Louis the Pious,” *RB* 86 (1976): 235–50; E. K. Rand, “On the History of the *De Vita Caesarum* of Suetonius in the Early Middle Ages,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 37 (1926): 40–48.

60. This privilege, of course, is increasingly being challenged and contested—for better and for worse—by many groups outside the academy; see C. Kent, “History: The Discipline of Memory—and of Forgetting,” *The Structurist* 37–38 (1997–98): 38–39.

61. E.g., the concluding sentence of Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 181. But cf. idem, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 2002), 16.

62. Augustine, *Ep.* 28 (ca. 394/95), ed. A. Goldbacher, *CSEL*, 34:113; trans. C. White, *The Correspondence Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1991), 70.

CHAPTER I. TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FIELD OF LIES

Epigraphs: Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium*, 1, intro., ed. Dümmler, 21; trans. A. Cabaniss, *Charlemagne’s Cousins: Contemporary Lives of Adalard and Wala* (Syracuse, N.Y.,