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Einhard: identities and silences

In his posthumously published lectures on Rembrandt the Viennese art historian Otto Pächt lamented the tendency to interpret Rembrandt's works as expressions of his personality, rather than offering an analysis of their stylistic achievements.¹ Early medieval historians are also prone to explore personality, to use it as an explanatory device, and to rejoice when they feel they are close to the identity of a ruler, or a narrator. The process is akin to divination: a familiarity with the author enables them to explain the temperament and even the crises of a figure about whom very little is known. It seems to require no knowledge of psychology: the Lacanian impulse in the study of medieval French literature has not yet found a counterpart among early medieval historians.² Their fare is less demanding: Barbara Rosenwein's *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*³ is so taciturn about any rhetorical conventions known to Merovingian authors that it risks being taken as exemplary. Nor have most Anglophone historians of the early Middle Ages been engaged in the recent explorations of the individual and his identity in the Middle Ages.⁴ I have found no references to Mauss's celebrated lecture of 1938, *Une catégorie de l'esprit humain: La notion de personne, celle de 'moi'*, which contrasts the self image of Native Americans and Aborigines, India and China with the Roman concept of *persona* and its Christian transformations.

A poem by Karl Kraus about the emperor Franz Joseph can serve as a reminder of how our constructions of personality are not without their clichés, and how even a well-documented figure can elude our understanding:

„Wie war er? War er dumm? War er gescheit?
Wie fühlt' er? Hat es wirklich ihn gefreut?
War er ein Körper? War er nur ein Kleid?
War eine Seele in dem Staatsgewand?
Formte das Land ihn? Formte er das Land?
Wer, der ihn kannte, hat ihn auch gekannt?
Trug ein Gesicht er oder einen Bart?
Von wannen kam er und von welcher Art?
Blieb nichts ihm, nur das Wesen selbst erspart?
War die Figur er oder nur das Bild?
War er so grausam, wie er altersmild?
Zählt er Gefallene wie erlegtes Wild?
Hat er's erwogen oder frisch gewagt?
Hat er auch sich, nicht nur die Welt geplagt?

¹ Otto Pächt, *Rembrandt* (München 1991) 11. Pächt recognized that the history of style was also a history of personality: "Echte Stilkunde ist eine Art Tiefenpsychologie."

² Roger Dragonetti, *La vie de la lettre au Moyen Age* (Paris 1980); Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford 2001); Simon Gaunt, *Martyrs to Love: Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature* (Oxford 2006); Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago 2005).

³ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Cornell 2006).

⁴ *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen/Andreas Speer (Miscellanea Mediaevalia. Veröffentlichungen des Thomas-Instituts der Universität zu Köln 24, Berlin/New York 1997); *Das Eigene und das Ganze. Zum Individuellen im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum*, ed. Gert Melville/Markus Schürer (Vita regularis 16, Münster 2002); *L'individu au Moyen Âge. Individuation et individualisation avant la modernité*, ed. Brigitte Bedos-Rezak/Dominique Iogna-Prat (Paris 2005); Peter von Moos, *Unverwechselbarkeit. Persönliche Identität und Identifikation in der Vormoderne* (Köln 2004); id., *Öffentliches und Privates, Gemeinsames und Eigenes* (Gesammelte Studien zum Mittelalter 3, Münster 2006). For a distinctive exception Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York 2001).

Wollt' er die Handlung oder bloß den Akt?
 Wollt' er den Krieg? Wollt' eigentlich er nur
 Soldaten und von diesen die Montur,
 Von der den Knopf nur? Hatt' er eine Spur
 Von Tod und Liebe und vom Menschenleid?
 Nie prägte mächtiger in ihre Zeit
 Jemals ihr Bild die Unpersönlichkeit.“⁵

Franz Joseph's inadequacies were not those of his Carolingian predecessors, not least because our own understanding of identity, personality and emotion is so different from theirs.

Like his Carolingian contemporaries Einhard was not interested in autobiography, any discussion of his personality and its 'crises' relies on elaborating from chance remarks. In the *Life of Charlemagne* Einhard avoided the use of the first person, except in his preface and in the two passages where he explained what sort of a work is being written.

“I believe it would be senseless to write about his birth and infancy, or even his childhood, since nothing was ever written down and there is no one still alive who claims to have knowledge of these things. Leaving aside what is unknown I have decided to pass straight to setting forth and explaining his deeds and way of life and other aspects of his life I shall write first about his deeds inside and outside the kingdom, then his way of life and his pursuits and finally the administration of his kingdom and his death, leaving out nothing either worth knowing or necessary.”⁶

“I would relate here how difficult it was to enter Italy and what a struggle it was for the Franks to overcome unmarked mountain ridges, upthrust rocks and rugged terrain, were it not my intention in this work to record the manner of his life, rather than the events of the wars which he waged.”⁷

Einhard proclaims his authorial control of the narrative: a confirmation that his style is paramount. Paul Dutton has suggested that the silence was a strategy of self protection: “The *Life of Charlemagne* has stubbornly refused for over a thousand years the most persistent efforts to assign it and its author to a particular cause or event. Can one doubt that this was a deliberate authorial strategy adopted by ‘prudent Einhard’ in order to protect and hide himself by removing his personal voice from the biography, as best he could?”⁸

But beyond the protective strategy, we must acknowledge Hellmann's recognition of Einhard's consistent and developed sense of genre, “In den vierzig Jahren, die seit seinem Eintritt in den Hofdienst verflossen waren, hatte Einhard gelernt und sich entwickelt. Klugheit, Maßhalten, Sinn für die Form zeigt er in der Erzählungskunst wie als Theologe und Baumeister oder Bauherr in allem was wir von ihm kennen.”⁹

Einhard's personality was ably characterized by his contemporaries. Walahfrid Strabo noted his glory, prudence and goodness, and praised his remarkable and divinely inspired distance from the many disturbances in the state (*res publica*) of the Franks “*cum diversis et multis perturbationibus Francorum res publica fluctuaret ... mira quaedam et divinitus provisa libratione se ipsum Deo protegente custodierit.*”¹⁰ Hrabanus Maurus described him as “prudent by nature, wise in deed and eloquent in speech.”¹¹ The Astronomer also characterizes him as ‘prudent.’¹² This prudence must be seen in the context of early medieval schemes of virtues, it had ac-

⁵ Karl Kraus, *Franz Joseph*, Fackel 551 (1920), reprinted in Hans Wollschläger, *Karl-Kraus-Lesebuch* (Frankfurt am Main 1987) 272f.

⁶ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 4 (ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. [25], Hannover 1911) 6–7: *De cuius nativitate atque infantia vel etiam pueritia quia neque scriptis umquam aliquid declaratum est, neque quisquam modo superesse invenitur; qui / horum se dicat habere notitiam, scribere ineptum iudicans ad actus et mores ceterasque vitae illius partes explicandas ac demonstrandas, omissis incognitis, transire disposui; ita tamen, ut, primo res gestas et domi et foris, deinde mores et studia eius, tum de regni administratione et fine narrando, nihil de his quae cognitu vel digna vel necessaria sunt praetermittam.*

⁷ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 6, ed. Holder-Egger 9: *Italiam intranti quam difficilis Alpium transitus fuerit, quantoque Francorum labore invia montium iuga et eminentes in caelum scopuli atque asperae cautes superatae sint, hoc loco describerem, nisi vitae illius modum potius quam bellorum, quae gessit, eventus memoriae mandare praesenti opere animo esset propositum.*

⁸ Paul Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier. The complete Einhard* (Peterborough 1998) XXI.

⁹ Sigmund Hellmann, *Einhard's literarische Stellung*, in: *Historische Vierteljahresschrift* 27 (1932) 40–110, at 43.

¹⁰ Walahfrid Strabo, *Prologus, Vita Karoli*, ed. Holder-Egger xxviii.

¹¹ Hrabanus, *Epitaphium Einhardi* (carmen 85) (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH *Poetae latini aevi Carolini* 2, Berlin 1884) 237–238.

¹² Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris* 41 (ed. Ernst Tremp, *Astronomus, Das Leben Kaiser Ludwigs*, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. 64, Hannover 1995) 279–555, at 442.

tive components and does not simply refer to Einhard's reluctance to get involved in the politics of opposition and loyalty to Louis the Pious.¹³ For Alcuin "Prudence is the knowledge of things and of natures, its parts are Memory, Intelligence and Foresight (*providentia*) and it is a part of virtue."¹⁴ So we need to pursue Einhard's intelligence and foresight, while acknowledging that historians have not always shared the view of Einhard that his contemporaries expressed. Marie Bondonio wrote of Einhard's "neutralité prudente et équivoque ... le désir d'un homme pusillanime de se tenir à l'écart, tant que la tourmente durerait."¹⁵ Ganshof wrote of Einhard's "many-sided personality"¹⁶ suggesting that he took a range of stances rather than a single consistent core.

In exploring Einhard I want to consider when and how he is silent, and to suggest what such silences may reveal.¹⁷

Einhard has left us no writings which address the political crisis of 830–833, except for a letter to the emperor Lothar expressing his continual desire for the well-being of Lothar and his father and urging him to remain obedient.¹⁸ In the *Vita Karoli* he had recorded rivalries among rulers, and conspiracies against Charlemagne, so he was well aware of the dangers of opposition and rebellion. In the *Translatio* he describes how a book of *capitula* was presented to Louis the Pious but he states firmly that "... of the things he was ordered or urged to do by this small book he (Louis) took the trouble to fulfil very few. But what the edicts said, either what was to be done or what was to be left undone, should be told in another place rather than here."¹⁹ Unless we have lost a work of Einhard that telling never happened. Immediately after the account of that book, dictated by the angel Gabriel, comes the account of the demon Wiggo who with eleven companions from Hell has been attacking the kingdom of the Franks, because of the wickedness of this people and because of the various sins of those set over them. Wiggo's intervention is particularly appropriate, for saint Peter, whose relics with those of Marcellinus are the subject of Einhard's work, was an exorcist, and among the miracles recorded in the *Translatio* are two further exorcisms.²⁰ But though he conveys a strong sense of crisis, he does not reveal the remedy. He must have been present at the assemblies of 828 and 829 but he has left little trace of his stance.

In a letter generally dated to 833 Einhard affirmed that he was troubled "... the changing nature of things that has recently occurred in this kingdom has shaken me to such an extent that I am almost entirely unsure what I should do except, in the words of Jehoshaphat, 'to turn our eyes to the Lord' and, in Philo's words, 'to ask for divine assistance, since human assistance fails.'"²¹

To explain this stance we can turn to the *Translatio*, which opened with Einhard's desire for retirement from the court: "When I was resident at the palace and occupied with worldly affairs I used to give much thought to the retirement I hoped one day to enjoy."²² Einhard's Latin term, *otium* is the freedom from duties which, from

¹³ For these events see the forthcoming book by Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State*.

¹⁴ Alcuin, *De rhetorica et virtutibus* (ed. Wilbur Howell, Princeton 1941) 146.

¹⁵ Marguerite Bondonio, *La translation des saints Marcellin et Pierre. Étude sur Einhard et sa vie politique de 827 à 834* (Paris 1907) 105.

¹⁶ François Louis Ganshof, Einhard, biographer of Charlemagne, in: id., *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy. Studies in Carolingian History* (London/Ithaca 1971) 1–16, at 1.

¹⁷ The article by Johannes Fried, *Papst Leo III. besucht Karl den Grossen in Paderborn oder Einhards Schweigen*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 272 (2001) 281–326, raises the issue of Einhard's silence about one important episode, but does not explain it. His arguments require a reconsideration of Einhard's report that Charlemagne said that, had he known of the pope's plan he would not have entered St Peter's on the day of his coronation.

¹⁸ Einhard, *Epistola* 11 (ed. Karl Hampe, MGH EE 5, Berlin 1899) 105–145, at 114–115.

¹⁹ *Translatio et miracula sanctorum Marcellini et Petri III*, 13 (ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 15, 1, Hannover 1888) 238–264, at 252: *Sed de his quae per hunc libellum facere iussus vel admonitus fuerat perpauca adimplere curavit. Quid autem illa capitula continerent, aut quid ab eo factum quidve dimissum sit, alio potius in loco quam in isto commemorandum est.*

²⁰ In the *Translatio* there are stories of a demon (*immundo spiritu*) expelled by the power of the relics at Valenciennes: Einhard, *Translatio* IV, 10, ed. Waitz 260, and another exorcism of a demon *ibid.* IV, 16, ed. Waitz 263.

²¹ Einhard, *Epistola* 31, ed. Hampe 125: *De his tamen causis, unde se certi aliquid a[d vos] allaturum existimavit, nihil vobis certi significare aut per illum indicare possum, quoniam mutatio rerum, quae nuper in hoc regno facta est, in tantum nos conturbavit, ut penitus ignoremus, quid agere debeamus, nisi ut secundum verba Iosaphat oculos nostros ad Dominum dirigamus, et iuxta verba Filonis impleretur divinum, quando humanum cessat auxilium.* Cf. Eusebius/Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 5; Freculph of Lisieux, *Historiae* II, 1, 11; Defensor, *Liber Scintillarum* 67, 14; Beda Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica* I, 14 and *Vita Felicis*; Sedulius Scottus, *Collectaneum*.

²² Einhard, *Translatio* I, 1, ed. Waitz 239: *Cum adhuc in palatio positus ac negotiis saecularibus occupatus, otium, quo aliquando perfrui cupiebam, multimoda cogitatione meditarer, ...*

Cicero onward, had been considered the ideal and essential state for the composition of works of literature, though in the Bible, and in the Rule of St Benedict, *otium* had negative resonances. Notker presented Charlemagne impatient of *otium*,²³ he did not want to waste time in *otium*.²⁴ It is a good example of the slippage between the classical and some Carolingian connotations of terminology which is a constant feature of any investigation of Carolingian texts.

In his letter to Louis the German of 834 Einhard asked for assistance in the construction of his church "... so that the blessed martyrs should intercede for you so that your kingdom may always be blessed, strengthened and remain safe and defended against the intrigues and the attacks of malignant spirits and malicious men."²⁵ Malignant spirits like Wiggo and his companions represented a continual threat, a part of any explanation of political disorder. But in the *Vita Karoli* such demonic forces have no place. Though the Saxons worshipped demons, and that worship seems to offer some justification both for their perfidy and for Charlemagne's wars against them, the demons are not active participants in Einhard's biography. Instead he mentions pride, foolishness, stubbornness, jealousy, cruelty, animosity presented as the characteristics both of individuals and of peoples, and in two passages "falsely smiling fortune" (*falso blandienti fortunae*)²⁶ and the hostility of fortune *Ac propter hoc, licet alias felix, adversae fortunae malignitatem expertus est.*²⁷

Are we to consider the arrival of the demons as the record of Einhard's uncertainty as to what to do, a shift from the world of Charlemagne? To answer this question, and to look for other corollaries of the uncertainty, we need to consider what else Einhard does not reveal.

Einhard prided himself on his perpetual friendship with Charlemagne, but his biography lacks any clear trace of that friendship, unless it is the record of Charlemagne's protest that if he had known in advance of the pope's plan (*consilium*), he would never have entered St Peter's on Christmas day, even though it was a great feast day.²⁸ Einhard is silent about most of his encounters: the boy arriving at Fulda, the first encounter with Charlemagne (perhaps on the king's visit to Fulda in 791), the meeting with Alcuin, his mission to Pope Leo III.²⁹ Though he records the coronation of Louis in 813, he says nothing about his own role in that ceremony. Louis the Pious came to visit him in Seligenstadt in 836, but we know of this only from the *Annals of Fulda* which notes *Inde ad sanctos Marcellinum et Petrum*.³⁰ There are no accounts of his meetings with Lothar or Louis the German, even though he claimed a faithful commitment (*voluntas fidelis*) to Lothar. And yet we cannot doubt how important his contact with Charlemagne was: in Dutton's words "It would not be unfair to characterize Einhard's contact with Charles the Great as the defining experience of his life."³¹

In the *Translatio* Einhard supplied his one detailed description of a meeting:

"Quite a few days later after arriving at court, I went to the palace early one morning, since it was the habit of courtiers to rise very early. After entering, I found Hilduin there, of whom I had spoken in the previous book. He was sitting before the doors of the royal bedchamber waiting for the ruler to come out. After greeting him in the usual way, I asked him to get up and come over to a certain window from which one could look into the lower parts of the palace. Standing side by side while leaning on the window, we spoke with great wonder about the translation of the holy martyrs Marcellinus and Peter and also about the miracle revealed by the stream of blood with which, as I recorded, their reliquary sweated for seven days."³²

²³ Notker, *Gesta Karoli magni* II, 8 (ed. Hans F. Haefele, MGH SS rer. Germ., N.S. 12, München 1980) 60.

²⁴ Notker, *Gesta Karoli magni* I, 28, ed. Haefele 38.

²⁵ Einhard, *Epistola* 33, ed. Hampe 126: ... *et beati martyres pro vobis intercedant, ut regnum vestrum semper augeatur atque firmetur et tutum ac defensum maneat ab insidiis atque infestatione malignorum spirituum et malivolorum hominum.*

²⁶ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 8, ed. Holder-Egger 11.

²⁷ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 19, ed. Holder-Egger 25.

²⁸ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 28, ed. Holder-Egger 32.

²⁹ For Einhard's biography Hermann Schefers, *Einhard. Ein Lebensbild aus karolingischer Zeit* (Michelstadt 1993), and the contributions: Wilhelm Störmer, *Einhard's Herkunft: Überlegungen und Beobachtungen zu Einhard's Erbesitz und familiärem Umfeld*, in: *Einhard. Studien zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Hermann Schefers (Darmstadt 1997) 15–39; Martin Heinzlmann, *Einhard's Translatio Marcellini et Petri. Eine hagiographische Reformschrift von 830*, in: *ibid.* 269–298; Martina Stratmann, *Einhard's letzte Lebensjahre (830–840) im Spiegel seiner Briefe*, in: *ibid.* 323–339.

³⁰ *Annales Fuldenses* (ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. [7], Hannover 1891) 27.

³¹ Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier* VII.

³² Einhard, *Translatio* II, 1, ed. Waitz 245f.: *Transactis admodum paucis postquam ad comitatum veneram diebus, ego secundum consuetudinem aulicorum maturius surgens, primo mane palatium petii. Ibi cum ingressus Hildoinum, cuius libro superiore men-*

The precision of Einhard's text may relate to what will follow: Hilduin's agents had stolen some of Einhard's relics and at this meeting he acknowledged this to Einhard.

Such meetings were important: in a letter probably addressed to Gerward Einhard entreats him "... to intercede for my smallness with the most pious emperor, lest he be inclined to be angry with me because I did not meet him like those who were able."³³ But from Einhard's surviving letters we learn more about his avoidance of a meeting with Louis and Judith than of any meetings he was involved in. A crucial meeting with Louis the Pious in 828, when Einhard presented him with a set of capitularies is mentioned, but we have no notion of what took place. All that the *Translatio* records is that "That small book was written down and brought to me and I presented it to the king."³⁴

Given Einhard's self effacement and his silences, it is worth modifying Paul Dutton's verdict on Einhard's literary strategies as concerned with self advancement: "Einhard was, in both his formal compositions, engaged in hoarding reputation for personal advantage. In the first, he styled himself the keeper of Charlemagne's memory; and in the second, he secured and promoted his personal connection to the saints."³⁵ Though he established these personal links, his presence in the *Translatio* as witness to the activity of his saints is matched by an absence in the *Vita Karoli*, except for his remarks in the preface. He is the reliable witness who has seen what he describes.

Nevertheless Einhard did express himself in his preface to the *Vita Karoli*, in his letters to Louis the Pious, to Judith and to Vussin, and most eloquently in his letter to Lupus of Ferrières on the death of his wife Imma. And he frequently characterized himself as *Einhardus Peccator*, Einhard the sinner, both in his letters and charters, in the *Translatio*, and in the inscription on his arch shaped reliquary containing a part of the Cross.³⁶ In an earlier article I have tried to show that this was not a standard epithet, and that it brings Einhard into a world in which the language of the liturgy was paramount: a language early medieval historians are learning not to ignore.³⁷

The letter to Vussin, whom we cannot identify, urges him "... to follow an upright way of life, so as not to offend by any means that one whom I have always desired you to follow. ... chiefly however, remember to follow the upright way of life of that one, at which he excels, since grammar, rhetoric and the study of the other liberal arts are useless and indeed harmful to the servants of God, unless by means of divine grace they are thought to contribute to the formation of good habits, *bonis moribus* for 'knowledge puffs up but charity edifies.' (1 Cor 8, 1) In fact I would prefer to see you dead rather than puffed up and filled with vices. For the Saviour ordered us to learn of his gentleness and humbleness of heart, not the miracles he performed. What more can I say? You have frequently heard me lecture you on these things and others of this sort."³⁸ Einhard

tionem feci, ante fores regii cubiculi sedentem atque egressum principis opperientem invenissem, ex more salutatum surgere atque ad quandam fenestram, de qua in inferiora palatii prospectus erat, mecum accedere rogavi. Ad quam pariter stando incumbentes, de translatione sanctorum martyrum Marcellini et Petri necnon et de miraculo, quod in fluxu cruoris, quo loculum eorum septem diebus sudasse commemoravi, ostensum est, mirando multa sumus locuti.

³³ Einhard, Epistola 14, ed. Hampe 117: ... *ut pro mea parvitate apud piissimum imperatorem intercedere dignemini, ne mihi succensere velit pro eo, quod illi, sicut hii qui potuerunt, in occursum non veni.*

³⁴ Einhard, *Translatio* III, 13, ed. Waitz 253: *Et post haec tu libellum facias eumque seniori tuo, qui nunc in palatio moratur, deferas eique ex martyrum auctoritate praecipias, ut eundem quanto celerius possit imperatori offerat.*

³⁵ Dutton, Charlemagne's Courtier XXV.

³⁶ All of these documents are conveniently translated by Dutton, for the Latin originals Maastricht manumission, 7 March 821, *Formulae imperiales* no. 35 (ed. Karl Zeumer, MGH *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, Hannover 1886) 313; Mont Blandin charters of 21 January 830 and 7 September 839, *Diplomata Belgica ante annum millesimum centesimum scripta* (ed. Maurits Gysseling/Anton C.F. Koch, Bruxelles 1950) 139, 141; 'Einhardus Peccator', Einhard, Epistola 10, ed. Hampe 113: ... *apud me peccatorem hospitari dignati sunt* ... ("they deigned to stay with me, a sinner"), and in Epistola 53, ed. Hampe 136 (dated 834–840) to the monks of Seligenstadt. *Peccator* is used in the address formulae of Letters 42, 43, 45, 49, 53, 54, and 64. The reliquary is lost, but a seventeenth century drawing of it survives reproduced by Dutton, Charlemagne's Courtier 64–65.

³⁷ David Ganz, *Einhardus Peccator*, in: Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World, ed. Patrick Wormald/Janet Nelson (Cambridge 2007) 37–50.

³⁸ Einhard, Epistola 57, ed. Hampe 138: *Quamobrem, mi nate, stude probos aemulari mores, et quem te semper sequi ortabar, ne ullo pacto offensum habere velis; sed professione tua memor, quantum ipse annuerit, cui te totum comisisti, eius mandatis insiste discendis. His edoctus et in opere eorum assuetus, nullo vitalis scientiae commodo carebis. Sicut te presens monui, in studio discendi te exerce; et quicquid ex ipso lucidissimo et abundantissimo magni oratoris ingenio assequi nobilis scientiae potueris, nihil intactum relinque. Maxime autem probos mores illius, quibus excellit, imitari memento, quoniam gramatica et rethorica ceteraque*

implies that he frequently spoke to Vussin about the upright way of life, and about good habits. They are what he chose to praise in characterizing Charlemagne. The emperor's good habits, his *mores et studia*, are as important as his deeds. Einhard wanted to convey the *vitae illius modum potius quam bellorum quae gessit eventus*³⁹ and he conveyed that through his virtues, *magnanimitas*⁴⁰ and *mentis constantia*,⁴¹ *prudentia*⁴² and *animi magnitudo*,⁴³ *pietas*,⁴⁴ *benignitas ac solita mansuetudo*,⁴⁵ and *patientia*⁴⁶ all of which are described as *animi dotes*.⁴⁷ Einhard's concept of personality depends on the enduring characteristics which he uses to describe Charlemagne and explain his achievements. This corresponds to rhetorical theory about how people were to be described. For Alcuin "The eloquence of rhetorical art can tackle personality, for according to that art persons have many attributes, namely *Nomen, Natura, Victus, Fortuna, Habitus, Affectio, Studia, Consilia, Facta, Casus, Orationes*."⁴⁸ We may translate these as Name, nature, way of life condition, custom, feelings, tastes, intentions, deeds, what has happened to him and what he has said. A comparable list of characteristics is found in Paschasius Radbertus' biography of Adalhard of Corbie, composed soon after his death in 826, at the same time as Einhard was writing his biography.

"If I wanted to describe the figure of his nobility from his boyhood, which in Greek is called *characterismos*, I would be incapable, for even if according to the eloquence of the art of rhetoric the person is considered, it could not find fitting praise. The quality of a perfect man is considered according to the orators in his name, his native land, his family, his rank, his fortune, his body, his rank, his way of life, his nourishment, if he governed his estate well, how he ran his household, his feelings his art."⁴⁹

The parallelism between Einhard's categories and those of Alcuin and Radbert has not previously been noted.

Einhard's letter to Lupus seems to present an authentic moment of 'Ego trouble' which is hard to replicate in our early medieval sources. The text has been described by Peter von Moos as „zweifellos ein beachtliches Zeugnis des früheren Mittelalters für die Fähigkeit, das Gefühl des Zustandes (Goethe) spontan auszudrücken“.⁵⁰

Einhard's greetings to Lupus:

"The overwhelming pain that I received from the death of she who was once my most devoted wife and most recently my dearest sister and companion has banished and driven out of me all enthusiasm and concern for my affairs or those of my friends. Nor does this seem likely to end, since memory so stubbornly dwells on the nature of her death that it cannot be completely torn away from it. On top of that, what constantly adds to that pain and makes an already sore wound worse is, without doubt, that my prayers were unable to accomplish anything and the hope I had placed in the merits and intervention of the martyrs entirely misled me in my expectations. Thus, in my case, the words of those consoling me, which normally relieve the sadness of others, instead cause the wound in my heart to become raw and

liberalium artium studia vana sunt et valde nociva servis Dei, nisi per gratiam divinam bonis moribus subesse noscantur; quia scientia inflat, caritas vero aedificat. Melius mihi quidem est, ut te mortuum videre contingat quam inflatum et scatentem vitiis. Non enim salvator a se miraculorum facta, sed mansuetudinem et cordis humilitatem discere precepit. Quid plura? Saepe haec et alia huiusmodi a me audisti. Utinam aliquando contingat is te delectari, quibus munditia cordis corporisque per Dei auxilium assequitur.

³⁹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 6, ed. Holder-Egger 9.

⁴⁰ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 7, ed. Holder-Egger 10; *ibid.* 19, ed. Holder-Egger 24; *ibid.* 28, ed. Holder-Egger 32.

⁴¹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 8, ed. Holder-Egger 11; *ibid.* 18, ed. Holder-Egger 22.

⁴² Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 8, ed. Holder-Egger 11; *ibid.* 15, ed. Holder-Egger 17.

⁴³ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 8, ed. Holder-Egger 11; *ibid.* 21, ed. Holder-Egger 26.

⁴⁴ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 19, ed. Holder-Egger 24; *cum summa pietate*: *ibid.* 26, ed. Holder-Egger 30.

⁴⁵ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 20, ed. Holder-Egger 26.

⁴⁶ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 28, ed. Holder-Egger 32.

⁴⁷ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 18, ed. Holder-Egger 23.

⁴⁸ Alcuin, *De rhetorica et virtutibus* (ed. Wilbur S. Howell, *The Rhetoric of Alcuin and Charlemagne*, Princeton 1941) 104.

⁴⁹ Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita Adalhardi*, PL 120, 1536: *Si figuram nobilitatis ejus a puero describere voluero, quae Graece characterismos dicitur, inefficax, quia, etsi secundum rhetoricae artis facundiam persona consideretur, possitne laudis idoneus conprobari ... Personae quippe iuxta praefatum artis peritiam plurima sunt attributa, ex quibus optime dignoscatur. Consideretur enim perfecti viri qualitas, juxta oratores, nomine, patria, genere, dignitate, fortuna, corpore, institutione, moribus, victu; si rem bene administret, qua consuetudine domestica teneatur; affectione mentis, arte conditione habitu, vultu, incessuque, oratione, affectu. Cf. Alexandru Cizek, *Der "Characterismos" in der Vita Adalhardi des Radbert von Corbie*, in: *Rhetorica* 7 (1989) 185–204.*

⁵⁰ Peter von Moos, *Consolatio: Studien zur mittellateinischen Trostliteratur über den Tod und zum Problem der christlichen Trauer* (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 3, München 1971) 117.

open once again, since these people tell me to endure calmly misfortunes they are not experiencing themselves, and they advise me to be happy over a situation in which they cannot show me any reason for joy or happiness. For what human being full of reason and sound in mind would not weep over his fate and count himself unhappy and the most pitiful of all humans when, overcome by troubles, he learns that the one he had believed would support his prayers had turned against him and was unmoved?

Do these troubles not seem to you of the kind that could provoke sighs and tears in a small and puny man, that could force him to moaning and wailing and even cast him into an abyss of despair? And they would certainly have cast me down if I had not, propped up by the power of divine mercy, turned at once to discover what greater and better men had proclaimed ought to be believed and followed in matters and misfortunes of this sort.

I tried to lift up a heart pulled down by heavy sadness, and I purposely began to ponder how I ought to feel about the death of that dearest partner of mine, whose mortal life, rather than her life, I saw come to an end. You may well be astonished by this and say that the pain arising from an event of this sort ought not to last so long, as if it were in the power of the one suffering to say when it should end since he neither knew in advance nor had the capacity to know when the suffering would begin. Nevertheless, it seems that the size and length of one's pain and sorrow can only be measured in terms of the losses suffered. Since I am acutely aware of my loss every day, in every action, in every affair, in every matter of the house and household, and in all the necessary assignments and arrangements pertaining to divine and human duties, how can that wound which has levelled so many and such great misfortunes upon me not reopen and grow sore again, rather than heal over and become solid, when it is so often touched upon?"⁵¹

Einhard continues by expressing his regret that his saints, despite his prayers, had not spared Imma's life.

While one of the trials of bereavement is a disturbing uncertainty about what one ought to feel, Einhard is searching for a controlled response, so that his distinction between the mortal life of his wife, which has ended, and the true life is derived from an important letter of the younger Pliny, Ep. II, 1. His words about the wound that will not heal come from Jerome Ep. 39, 5, as does his view of death as the release. Death is certain, only when we die is uncertain from Jerome Ep. 127, 2. So even in grief literary models had their part to play: Einhard could not express what we may consider his most acute feelings without the proper language of the ancients. This can remind us that to read medieval texts without first determining their genre and their sense of appropriate literary models and a controlled variance from them risks serious misreading. This is not, however, to minimize the impact of such experiences, and some of Einhard's contemporaries were aware of this. Benedict of Aniane, in that remarkable text, the *Munimenta Fidei*, remarks that "An acutely sensed experience alone makes one a friend of God: it is through this wisdom that one becomes a friend of God and obeys Him".⁵²

⁵¹ Servatus Lupus, *Epistolae* (ed. Peter K. Marshall, Leipzig 1984) 4–6: *Omnia mihi studia omnesque curas tam ad meas quam amicorum causas pertinentes exemit et excussit dolor quem ex morte olim fidissimae conjugis, jam nunc charissimae sororis ac sociae, gravissimum cepi. Nec finiri posse videtur; quoniam extinctionis illius qualitatem adeo tenaciter memoria retinet, ut inde penitus non possit avelli. Huc accedit quod ipsum dolorem identidem accumulatur et vulnus semel acceptum exulcerat, quod vota scilicet nostra nihil valere permessa sunt, ac spes quam in martyrum meritis atque interventione collocavimus expectationem nostram ex asse frustrata est. Inde evenit ut solantium verba, quae aliorum moestitiae mederi solent, plagam cordis nostri recrudescere potius faciant atque rescindant, eum me aequanimiter ferre jubent infortunii molestias quas ipsi non sentiunt, atque in eo censent mihi gratulandum in quo nullum gaudii vel laetitiae valent demonstrare vestigium. Quis est enim mortalium cui mens constet, quique sanum sapiat, qui sortem suam non defleat, et qui se infelicem ac miserrimum non iudicet, cum in afflictione positus eum quem votis suis faurum fore crediderat aversum atque inexorabilem experitur? Haecine talia tibi videntur ut suspiria, ut lacrymas homuncioni tantillo commovere, ut ipsum ad gemitum et planctum concitare, ut etiam in desperationis barathrum dejicere potuissent? Et utique deiecissent, nisi divinae miserationis ope suffultus quid in huiusmodi causis aut casibus majores ac meliores nostri tenendum servandumque sanxissent ad inquirendum subito me convertissem. ... Tentavi etiam si possem a memetipso exigere ut id ratione apud me fieret quod longa dies solet efficere; scilicet ut vulnus quod animo nostro nondum sperata morte repentinus casus infixit cicatricem ducere ac spontaneae consolationis medicamento sanescere inciperet. Sed vulneris magnitudo facilitati resistit; et licet saluberrima sint quae a memoratis doctoribus ad mitigandum gravem dolorem velut a peritissimis idemque mitissimis medicis offeruntur, plaga quae adhuc sanguinem trahit sanandi maturitatem nondum admittit. Hic fortasse miraris ac dicis ex huiusmodi occasione natum dolorem tam longum ac diuturnum esse non debuisse, quasi in dolentis sit potestate quando id finiatur quod ille, quando inciperet, neque in potestate habuit, neque praescivit. Metiri tamen posse videtur doloris ac moeroris magnitudo sive diuturnitas de eorum quae acciderunt damnorum quantitate: quae ego cum quotidie in omni actione, in omni negotio, in tota domus ac familiae administratione, in cunctis quae vel ad divinum vel humanum officium pertinent disponendis atque ordinandis immaniter sentiam, qui fieri potest ut vulnus quod tot ac tanta incommoda intulit, cum crebro tangitur non recrudescat potius et renovetur quam sanescat aut solidetur?*

⁵² *Munimenta Fidei* (ed. Jean Leclercq, in: *Analecta Monastica* 1 [1948]) 1–74, at 63. François Dolbeau, *Sur un florilège carolingien de Septimanie, composé par Benoit d'Aniane*, in: *Revue Bénédictine* 118 (2008) 46–68.

Einhard's last surviving letter to Louis the Pious seems to respond to an enquiry about the meaning of the comet which appeared in June 837.

“Everyone who said that they saw the star that appeared recently reported that it was frightening and that its appearance was not at all pleasing, for its fiery blaze was menacing. I suspect that this supplies us with fitting signs for our just deserts and announces an approaching disaster that we deserve ... I wish that the disaster the fleet of the Northmen is said to have brought recently upon parts of this kingdom could have made complete payment for the appearance of that horrible star. But I fear that the punishment that awaits will be heavier.”⁵³

Einhard had chosen a world in which the power of the saints and the need for the redemption of sinners were the most important issues. Earthly concerns were best understood in terms of that need for redemption. Much Carolingian political language mirrors his concerns, and until we have acknowledged the preeminence of eternal concerns in this language, and the realities of those concerns, much will be lost. Since delivering this paper, I have been spurred to think more about Einhard's silences, and would want to underline his silence about the statue of Theoderic, brought from Ravenna to Aachen in 801 and a focus for some of the debates about Charlemagne's legacy. A lecture on “The Poet, the Biographer, the Statue and the Doves that would not Nest” has gained much from discussions with Helmut Reimitz, Janet Nelson and Susan Rankin.

⁵³ Einhard, Epistola 40, ed. Hampe 130: *Sed eius stellae, quae nuper apparuit, horrida et parum laeta facies ab omnibus, qui eam se vidisse testati sunt, fuisse ac minaciter flagrasse nuntiatur. Quae, ut reor, congrua meritis nostris presagia fecit et cladem, qua digni sumus, venturam indicavit. ... Et o utinam clades illa, quam nuper classis Nordmannica partibus regni huius intulisse dicitur, illam horrendi sideris apparitionem expiare potuisset. Sed vereor, ne graviore vindicta plectendum sit, quod tam ferali ostento significatum est, licet satis gravem et asperam ultionem in semetipsis ac suis omnibus experti fuissent hi, quibus illa ex oceano veniens valida tempestas tam vehementer incubuit.*