

Profile of an Emperor: Reading *Vita Karoli Magni* in Light of Its Sources and Composition



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Abstract: In composing Vita Karoli Magni, Einhard borrows heavily from Suetonius's De vita Caesarum – Vita divi Augusti in particular – and Annales regni Francorum. A close reading, however, reveals that the distribution of the source materials within Vita Karoli Magni is quite uneven: when it comes to historical events, Einhard relies on the Annales; when it comes to more private matters such as appearance and habits, he turns to Suetonius for specific phrases and words. Moreover, while neither Annales nor Vita divi Augusti shies away from colourful accounts of miracles that foreground the subject's greatness, Einhard only includes ill omens in the very last part of Vita Karoli Magni, around the time of Charlemagne's death, as if to warn the readers/audience of the dark time to come.

But why is Vita Karoli Magni thus composed? The reason behind, I argue, first lies in Einhard's recognition of the similarity between Augustus and Charlemagne: both belong to the second generation of a ruling house that had no legal claim to the throne; and, by placing Charlemagne alongside Augustus, Einhard reconciles two different ideas of kingship, one derived from the Frankish tradition, the other attached to the Roman Empire. Second, Vita Karoli Magni is a text about the past as much as about the present and the future: on the one hand, Einhard's choice and arrangement of the sources reflect his anxiety caused by the unsettling events under Louis the Pious and his criticism towards the new Emperor. On the other hand, it helps to draw Louis's attention and impose Einhard's own ideology of a good ruler on him.

It has been often pointed out that, in composing his *Vita Karoli Magni* ('Life of Charlemagne the Great', hereafter VKM), Einhard borrowed heavily from Suetonius's *De vita Caesarum* ('Life of the Caesars'), especially *Vita divi Augusti* ('The Life of Deified Augustus') and the *Annales regni Francorum* ('The Royal Frankish

Annals', hereafter *ARF*).¹ A close reading of *Vita Karoli*, however, shows that, despite Einhard's dependence on both texts, their distribution within *Vita Karoli* is uneven. Nor are the ways they are applied by any means similar: when referring to historic events, Einhard tends to rely on *ARF*; yet when he focuses on more private matters, he borrows specific phrases and little details from *De vita Caesarum*. One cannot help but ask: why is *VKM* composed in the way it is? This paper aims to address this very question. To do so, it will be divided into three parts, which can be roughly summarised as 'what'/'who', 'how', and 'why'. In the first part I offer a brief introduction to each key source and its author/compiler(s), to show the readers why these two sources of Einhard's matter, and the fact that his choice of sources is by no means randomly made. Once a general picture of the compositional background of *VKM* has been painted, I will demonstrate how *VKM* is composed by offering a detailed and comparative reading of the three texts; here we shall see what Einhard has borrowed from each source and adapted into his own work. Yet what is more important is what he has decided *not* to include, for it may hold the key to the 'why' question that occupies the centre of the second part. There, I shall focus on two aspects that may have influenced Einhard's decision: first, the changing ideology of kingship under the reign of Charlemagne; and second, the unsettling events under Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's successor.

First, an introduction to the figure who features prominently in this study. Central is Einhard and his biography.² Although little biographical information is

¹ For the possible sources of Einhard, see *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: the lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer*, ed. and trans. by Thomas F. X. Noble, (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 'Einhard, Introduction', pp. 14-17; Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Evelyn Scherabon Firchow and Edwin H. Zeydel (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1972), 'Introduction', pp. 12-28, especially pp. 19-27; François-Louis Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (London: Longman, 1971), p. 3; Louis Halphen, 'Einhard, Historien de Charlemagne', in *Études critiques sur l'histoire de Charlemagne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1917), pp. 271-314, especially pp. 293-9.

² For *Vita Karoli Magni*, I use Firchow and Zeydel's bilingual edition (reference above). Halphen's edition is used here as a supplement, especially his footnotes, because, mindful of Einhard's sources,

available for as famous a biographer as Einhard himself, a basic timeline of his life can be constructed from his works. Probably born sometime between 770 and 775 into a noble family in Eastern Francia, Einhard came to Charlemagne's court around 791 or 792 on the recommendation of Alcuin and rose to eminence in the decades following.³ His fame, however, mainly rests on *VKM*, which he composed after Charlemagne's death in 814 and probably finished before 830. Granted, it is still debated when in this 29-year time span *VKM* was written, but, as I will show in the last section of this paper, the fact that it was composed under the troublesome reign of Charlemagne's successor Louis the Pious (778-840, reign 814-840) plays a significant role in understanding its composition.⁴

In composing his masterpiece, Einhard consulted many sources to obtain information and to keep his work in good linguistic form. One of these sources, *De vita Caesarum*, is a collection of the lives of twelve Caesars composed by Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, a Roman historian and official belonging to the equestrian order, probably born ca. 70 and was active between ca. 97 and 122.⁵ This is in fact an unusual choice, for when Einhard was at work with his quill and parchment, *De vita Caesarum* was not at all a widely-known text, nor was it at any rate easy to access:

he takes pains to mark out similarities with and deviation from the source materials, adding to his edition a comparative touch. Louis Halphen, *Vie de Charlemagne* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1947). For a list of publications of *Vita Karoli Magni* and its translations, see Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. by Michel Sot et al. (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2014), pp. ci-ciii.

³ For Einhard's life and career, and a summary of relevant scholarship, see Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Completed Einhard* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 1998), pp. xi-xli; David Ganz, *Einhard and Notker the Stammer: Two Lives of Charlemagne* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 3-9; Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. by Sot, 'Introduction', pp. xi-xvi.

⁴ Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, p. xx; Matthew Innes and Rosamond McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 204-6.

⁵ For *De vita Caesarum*, I use the Loeb Classical Library edition: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Volume I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Caius. Caligula*, trans. by J.C. Rolfe, intro. by K.R. Bradley. Loeb Classical Library 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914); the Latin text is based on Maximilian Ihm's 1907 edition. For a list of major editions of *De vita Caesarum*, see D. Thomas Benediktson, 'A Survey of Suetonius Scholarship, 1938-1987', *Classical World*, 86.5 (1993), 377-447 (pp. 383-4). For Suetonius's life and career, see G. B. Townend, 'Suetonius and His Influence', in *Latin Biography*, ed. by T. A. Dorey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 79-96; Ronald Mellor, *The Roman Historians* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 146-9; K. R. Bradley, 'Introduction', in Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars I*, pp. iv-xiv. Suetonius, *Life of Augustus = Vita divi Augusti*, ed. and trans. by D. Wardle, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 'Introduction', pp. 1-6.

Servatus Lupus, Abbot of Ferrières and avid reader of Einhard, had to write in 844 to Abbot Marcward of Prüm, requesting to have the Fulda manuscript of *De vita Caesarum* copied.⁶ Why, then, was Einhard so keen on such an obscure text? One may argue that he was in dire need of a model, for, as Noble argues, with only saints' lives before him, Einhard 'had no readily available models for the kind of book he wished to write'.⁷ But another way to look at it is that, Einhard could have used hagiographical models for *VKM*, just as his successors Thegan and the Astronomer drew on the *Life of St. Martin* while writing biographies of Louis the Pious.⁸ It must have been, therefore, Einhard's personal decision to turn to Suetonius's pre-Christian Caesars instead of following a more Christian and better established tradition. It follows that the choice of Suetonius as his model is vital in any attempt to understand *VKM*.

Another source is *ARF*, a series of annals covering the period between 741 and 829; its composition was, if not commissioned by Charlemagne, at least encouraged by him. After Charlemagne's death in 814, a revised version of *ARF* was commissioned, arguably by Louis the Pious, adding details more often than not critical of Charlemagne.⁹ Einhard explored *ARF* for historical details to the point that

⁶ *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières*, trans. by Greydon W. Regenos (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), Letters no. 33 and 35, p. 50 and p. 52. See also Matthew Innes, 'The Classical Tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance: Ninth-Century Encounters with Suetonius', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 3.3 (1997), 265-82 (p. 271); T. J. Tibbetts, 'Suetonius: *De vita Caesarum*', in *Texts and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics*, ed. by L. D. Reynolds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 399-404. For a summary of the *De vita Caesarum* manuscripts, see Bradley, 'Introduction', pp. 27-30.

⁷ *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, ed. and trans. by Noble, p. 14.

⁸ Innes, 'The Classical Tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance', p. 278. See also Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', p. 207, where they opine that Einhard's choice of classical material over Christian models is 'in stark contrast to Thegan or Asser'. The Astronomer's borrowing from *Life of Martin* and the heavy Christian tone are also pointed out by Noble, 'The Astronomer, Introduction', in *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, pp. 224-5.

⁹ *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories*, ed. and trans. by Bernhard W. Scholz and Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), 'Introduction', pp. 2-21; for *ARF*'s official nature, see pp. 4-5. Another informative and insightful discussion of *ARF* and its composition is McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the *Royal Frankish Annals*', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7 (1997), 101-29. See also McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 31-43. For the revised version, see Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', p. 209. Roger Collins, 'The "Reviser" Revisited: Another Look at the Alternative Version of the *Annales Regni*

Friedrich Kurze, editor of the 1895 Hannover edition, assumed that Einhard must have been responsible for the *Annales* between 796 and 819 and named that part *Annales Q. D. Einhardi*.¹⁰ Kurze's idea has been mostly dismissed now, since, as Scholz and Rogers contend, the linguistic and stylistic difference between *Vita Karoli* and the third part of *ARF* rules out the possibility of Einhard being one of the author-revisors.¹¹ Nevertheless, there is consensus regarding two points: it is at least safe to assume that Einhard was familiar with *ARF*, both original and revised, and had used at least some of it in the writing of *VKM*.¹² Secondly, both versions of *ARF* belong to the courtly milieu and exhibit an official nature; their selectiveness in what they choose to record indicates the propagandistic purpose of their composition.¹³

A third text of note is Nithard's *Histories*.¹⁴ Postdating *VKM* by decades, Nithard's *Histories* is not a source but rather a descendent of *VKM*; it is also supplementary to *ARF*, since it covers the period between Louis the Pious's death in 840 and the treaty of Verdun in 843, providing 'the only evidence for many episodes'

Francorum', in *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, ed. by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 191-213. In this paper, I use Scholz and Rogers's translation; for the Latin text, I refer to *Annales regni Francorum, inde ab a. 741. usque ad a. 829., qui dicuntur Annales laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. by Friedrich Kurze and G. H. Pertz (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1895), as it is one of the most widely used critical editions of *ARF* on which Scholz and Rogers's translation is based. It also has the advantage of having the revised version (wherever applicable) juxtaposed with the first version.

¹⁰ 'Praefatio', in *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, pp. vi-viii.

¹¹ 'Introduction', in *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 7. Collins, 'The "Reviser" Revisited', pp. 197-207.

¹² Einhard's relationship with *ARF* – especially the revised version – is a complicated one. Both Ganshof and Halphen conclude that Einhard relied heavily on the revised version, especially for the events to the year 801. Yet Collins argues against them, on the ground of a lack of evidence. Besides, no verbal parallel is detected between *Vita Karoli* and the post-801 section of *ARF*; the last possible parallels between *VKM* and the revised *ARF* comes at 799. Therefore, Collins argues, even if Einhard did have in his possession the revised *ARF*, it is possible that he did not have the latter part. Ganshof, *The Carolingians and Frankish Monarchy*, p. 3; Halphen, 'Einhard, Historien de Charlemagne', pp. 273-9; Collins, 'The "Reviser" Revisited', pp. 207-9.

¹³ For *ARF*'s political and propagandistic nature, see McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages', pp. 115-24, where she argues that *ARF* should be read as 'a skilfully constructed, highly selective portrayal of the careers of the Carolingian rulers whose success is identified with that of the Frankish people' (p. 117).

¹⁴ For the Latin text, I use Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux*, ed. and trans. by Phillippe Lauer (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012); for the English translation, Scholz and Rogers's edition. For a summary of publication history, see 'Introduction', in Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

in between.¹⁵ Moreover, as Charlemagne's grandson (from the maternal line) and Charles the Bald's official historian, Nithard provides first-hand report of the fraternal wars among Louis the Pious's successors and the turbulent events that threatened the Frankish Empire's stability.

So Einhard borrows from *De vita Caesarum* and *ARF*, but how does he adopt and adapt his sources in *VKM*? How precisely is *VKM* composed? I will address these questions by examining (1) how Einhard uses each source and (2) how differently he approaches each source. For the relationship between *VKM* and *De vita Caesarum*, a good starting point is found in Ganz's statement that 'Einhard turned to Suetonius as a source for the structure as well as the vocabulary of biography'.¹⁶ This sentence identifies two places to look for Suetonian influence: the overall structure of *VKM* and specific expressions.

Structure-wise, Einhard mainly adopts Suetonius's 'use of a signposted *divisio*, organising different aspects of his subject's life under different headings'.¹⁷ Preference of division *per species* (by categories) over *per tempora* (by chronological order) is a defining characteristic of *De vita Caesarum*, one that sets Suetonius apart from his possible literary predecessors such as Tacitus, who follows a year-by-year narrative model, and his more immediate predecessors.¹⁸ Granted, within each *species* Suetonius still arranges his subject matter chronologically, and not all his biographies necessarily share the same set of headings. Nevertheless, this narrative mode provides the readers with a framework within which to compare the subjects

¹⁵ 'Introduction', in *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 21.

¹⁶ David Ganz, 'Einhard and the Characterisation of Greatness', in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. by Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 38-51 (p. 45).

¹⁷ Innes, 'The Classical Tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance', p. 267. Einhard's adoption of *divisio* has been widely recognised among scholars, for a few references, see 'Introduction', in *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Halphen, pp. x-xi; Ganz, 'Einhard and the Characterisation of Greatness', pp. 45-6; Townend, 'Suetonius and His Influence', p. 99.

¹⁸ Townend, 'Suetonius and His Influence', pp. 81-3, and pp. 97-8. For *De vita Caesarum*'s compositional structure and available models, see also 'Introduction', in Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars I*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, p. 14; 'Introduction', in Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, trans. by Wardle, pp. 6-18; Mellor, *The Roman Historians*, p. 149.

of each biography. In other words, Suetonius establishes a set of criteria – a checklist against which an individual might be scrutinised, assessed, and judged.¹⁹

To demonstrate how closely Einhard follows this structure, I offer a comparison between *VKM* and *Vita divi Augusti*, Einhard's main model.²⁰ According to Wardle, *Vita divi Augusti* can be divided into five parts: (1) introduction and Augustus's life before his public position – in other words, a sort of prelude; (2) Augustus's public life (which Wardle dubs as '*divisio* and *dispositio* 1'), that further includes his wars, administration within and beyond Rome, his merciful and just treatment of the others, and how the others esteem him in return; (3) personal life, including family and household, disgraceful behaviours, self-restraints, physical aspects, intellectual aspects, and personal beliefs; (4) signs of his greatness; (5) death and posthumous divinity.²¹ In comparison, *VKM* can also be roughly divided into public and personal domains, with accounts of pre-Charlemagne history and his death at the beginning and in the end.²² As in *Vita divi Augusti*, Einhard also starts with what may be called a 'prehistory' to describe the Merovingians, Charles's ancestors, and how he came to be king. Afterwards, in chapter 4, Einhard explains the layout of his biography:

De cuius nativitate atque infantia vel etiam pueritia, quia neque scriptis usquam aliquid declaratum est, neque quisquam modo superesse invenitur, qui horum se dicat habere notitiam, scribere ineptum iudicans ad actus et mores caeterasque vitae illius partes explicandas ac demonstrandas, omissis incognitis, transire disposui; ita tamen, ut primo res gestas et domi et

¹⁹ Bradley, 'Introduction', p. 18. Bradley, 'The Imperial Ideal in Suetonius' "Caesares"', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 33.5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), pp. 3701-32, especially pp. 3719-23. See also Wardle, who reads *De vita Caesarum* as a political comment, Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, ed. and trans. by Wardle, pp. 28-40.

²⁰ For the parallels between *VKM* and *Vita divi Augusti*, see Townend, 'Suetonius and His Influence', pp. 101-3; Sverre Bagge, 'The Model Emperor: Einhard's Charlemagne in Widukind and Rahewin', *Viator*, 43.2 (2012), 49-78 (pp. 51-3).

²¹ 'Introduction', in Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, ed. and trans. by Wardle, pp. 10-12.

²² Note that originally Einhard did not number his chapters; all chapter numbers referred in this paper are those added by Walafriid Strabo (ca. 808-49) who wrote the prologue to *VKM*.

foris, deined mores et studia eius, tum de regni administratione et fine narrando, nihil de his quae cognitu vel digna vel necessaria sunt praetermittam.

(Because nothing has been recorded in writing about Charles' birth, infancy, or even boyhood, and because no survivor has been found who claims to know of these matters, I consider it foolish to write about them. So I have decided to skip what we know nothing about and proceed to recount and describe Charles' exploits, habits, and other facts of his life. First I want to tell of his deeds at home and abroad, then describe his habits and interests, his rulership and finally his death, omitting nothing that is worth mentioning or necessary to know.)²³

This paragraph is quoted not only for what Einhard makes clear he includes but also for what he excludes. It is easy to recognise the similarity between *Vita divi Augusti* and the content of Einhard's chapters after chapter 4: on conquests by war (VKM 5 to 15, and by negation 16), on public works (17), family and children (18-20), reception of foreigners (83), personal appearances and habits (22-27), coronation and the consequent reforms (28-29), death and aftermath (30-33).²⁴ The things that Einhard decides to exclude partly cover what Suetonius includes in the 'prelude' to *Vita divi Augusti*. The fact that Einhard pointed out these omissions indicates that he was fully aware of Suetonius's structure and felt the obligation to explain his deviation from his model. His statement also gives the reader the impression that, had Einhard obtained any reliable information, he would have included it as Suetonius did. Moreover, when turning from one *species* to another, Einhard also adopts a language of signposting similar to Suetonius's. The quotation above has already given a taste of this. Immediately after chapter 4, Einhard begins chapter 5

²³ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 4, p. 41.

²⁴ Within this categorisation, VKM 15 and 20 are in fact more of a transitional nature: chapter 15 summarises Charlemagne's conquests by war, not only smoothing the narrative into his peaceful conquests (by negotiation or by voluntary submission) but also foregrounding Charlemagne's clemency, which is an important virtue in *De vita Caesarum*. Chapter 20 deals with conspiracies, but it starts with the rebellion of Charlemagne's son Pepin the Hunchback in 792 and ends with a conspiracy in Germania in 785-86, for which Einhard blames Charlemagne's third wife Fastrada, therefore both can be read as having grown out of chapters on his family.

with 'Omnium bellorum, quae gessit' ('Of all the wars Charles waged').²⁵ Likewise, in *Vita divi Augusti*, after the 'prelude', Suetonius turns to Augustus's wars with the phrases 'Proposita vitae eius velut summa' ('Having given as it were a summary of his life'), and 'Bella civilia quinque gessit' ('The civil wars which he waged were five').²⁶

By contrast, instances of direct borrowings of specific phrases are concentrated in the chapters on the personal domains, in particular, Charlemagne's physical appearance and habits. There is no need to enumerate all of these instances – just how frequently Halphen in his edition of *VKM* refers to *Vita divi Augusti* in the footnotes in these chapters demonstrates quite sufficiently that Einhard was not shy in bestowing these little words and phrases lavishly on Charlemagne. Innes also points out that, at least on one occasion, Einhard uses *conditorium*, a word that is rare 'even in Classical Latin' and is most likely to have its source in 'Suetonius, who uses it twice, both times to describe Alexander the Great's tomb'.²⁷ Not only Augustus but also other Caesars have lent some personal traits to Einhard's Charlemagne: the robust body and the large and lively eyes are from Tiberius; the nose from Augustus; the grey hair and face are Claudius'; the slightly protruding belly comes from Nero; excellent health with occasional illness is from Caesar, just to name a few.²⁸ Either Charlemagne really happened to look like a mixture of the Julio-Claudian Emperors or Einhard made him so for a purpose, but before we jump into the 'why' question, we need to examine Einhard's use of his second major source.

²⁵ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 5, pp. 42-3.

²⁶ Suetonius, *Vita divi Augusti*, in *Lives of the Caesars*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 9, pp. 160-1.

²⁷ Innes, 'The Classical Tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance', p. 276. For *conditorium*, see Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Halphen, p. 88; for its usage in Suetonius, see Suetonius, *Vita divi Augusti*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 18, pp. 174-5: 'Per idem tempus conditorium et corpus Magni Alexandri' ('About this time [...] the sarcophagus and the body of Alexander the Great') and *Vita divi Caligula*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 52, pp. 494-5: 'Triumphalem quidem ornatum etiam ante expeditionem assidue gestavit, interdum et Magni Alexandri thoracem repetitum e conditorio eius' ('He frequently wore the dress of a triumphing general, even before his campaign, and sometimes the breastplate of Alexander the Great, which he had taken from his sarcophagus').

²⁸ Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Halphen, pp. 66-7, especially Halphen's footnotes on these pages.

For historic events (especially in the chapters on wars), it is *ARF* that Einhard mainly relies on. This can be seen from the frequent reference to *ARF* in Halphen's footnotes.²⁹ Reference to Suetonius, on the other hand, is at best implicit. In contrast to chapters 22 to 33, it is notable that Halphen only refers to Suetonius four times in his footnotes for chapters 4 to 17; among them, three concern structural borrowing, whereas only one instance shows direct borrowing of expressions.³⁰

Despite his reliance on *ARF* in these chapters, Einhard does not necessarily remain loyal to his source. According to her study on Charlemagne's involvement in the East, Latowsky notices one particular discrepancy in *VKM* 16: whereas the annalist(s) tells in detail about the blessings and relics sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, leading to Charlemagne's sending of a gift to the Holy Sepulchre in 800, Einhard only mentions the emperor's gift exchange with Harun al-Rashid, *rex Persarum* (King of Persia), an event that is nowhere to be found in *ARF*, original or revised.³¹ In addition to the omission of the Patriarch, another major omission is direct divine interference and omens. In *ARF*, not only are ablative absolute phrases such as *deo adiuvante* (with God's help), *deo volente* (by God's will), *auxiliante Domino* (with the Lord's help), *deo largiente* (by God's grace), and *deo donante* (granted by God) found throughout and closely tied to actions, God also works miracles for Charlemagne, foreshadowing his rise to power in Christendom and sanctioning his actions. Take for instance Charlemagne's Saxon campaigns that were resumed in 772. In *ARF*, the relevant entries are filled with miraculous events: *sub anno 772*, Charlemagne's army suffers from a great drought at the Ermensul:

²⁹ Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Halphen, pp. 16-54.

³⁰ Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Halphen, fn. 3 for chapter 4, p. 17; fn. 5 for chapter 16, p. 45; fn. 4 for chapter 16, p. 49; and fn. 2 for chapter 17, p. 51. Only in the last one there is direct borrowing from Suetonius.

³¹ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno 799*, p. 108; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 78; Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 16, pp. 68-71. For Latowsky's analysis see Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 33-4.

Et fuit siccitas magna, ita ut aqua deficeret in supradicto loco, ubi Ermensul stabat; et dum voluit ibi duos aut tres praedictus gloriosus rex stare dies fanum ipsum ad perdestruendum et aquam non haberent, tunc subito divina largiente gratia media die cuncto exercitu quiescente in quodam torrente omnibus hominibus ignorantibus aquae effusae sunt largissimae, ita ut cunctus exercitus sufficienter haberet.

(A great drought occurred so that there was no water in the place where the Irminsul stood. The glorious king wished to remain there two or three days in order to destroy the temple completely, but they had no water. Suddenly at noon, through the grace of God, while the army rested and nobody knew what was happening, so much water poured forth in a stream that the whole army had enough.)³²

This enables Charlemagne to destroy the Saxons' heathen temple thoroughly. Then, again in 773, when the Saxons attacked a church at Fritzlar, they saw 'duo iuvenes in albis, qui ipsam basilicam ab igne protegebant' ('two young men on white horses who protected the church from fire'); as a result, the Saxons fled 'nutu divinae maiestatis pavore perterriti' ('terror-stricken by the intervention of divine might').³³ In 776, God turned the Saxons' catapults against themselves and made two flaming shields appear in order to scare off the Saxons:

[E]t Deo volente petrarias, quas praeparaverunt, plus illis damnum fecerunt quam illis, qui infra castrum residebant [...] [E]t quadam die, cum bellum praeparassent adversus christianos, qui in ipso castro residebant, apparuit manifeste gloria Dei supra domum ecclesiae, quae est infra ipsum castrum, videntibus multis tam aforis quam etiam et deintus, ex quibus multi manent usque adhuc; et dicunt vidisse instar duorum scutorum colore rubeo flammantes et agitantes supra ipsam ecclesiam.

³² *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, sub anno 772, p. 34; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 48-9.

³³ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, sub anno 773, p. 38; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 50.

(Since God willed it, the catapults which they [the Saxons] had prepared did more damage to them than to those inside [...] One day, while they prepared for battle against the Christians in the castle, God's glory was made manifest over the castle church in the sight of a great number outside as well as inside, many of whom are still with us. They reportedly saw the likeness of two shields red with flame wheeling over the church.)³⁴

When Charlemagne heard the miracle, he assembled his army and defeated the Saxons.

In *VKM*, by contrast, Einhard simply says '[p]ost cuius finem Saxonicum [...] repetitum est' ('[t]hen the Saxon war [...] was taken up again') and moves on with the Saxons' perfidy and Charlemagne's victory. Both Halphen, and Firchow and Zeydel, confirm that 'this Saxon war' refers to the campaign that started in 772, but Einhard mentioned not a single word about the miracles.³⁵

This absence of divine revelation also extends into *VKM* 18 to 33, those chapters dealing with Charlemagne's *mores* and personal matters. Here, though traces of reference to *ARF* are still found from time to time, Einhard mainly turns to *De vita Caesarum* for very specific phrases and words. This extensive borrowing, however, does not include the chapters concerning miracles. In both *Vita divi Iuli* and *Vita divi Augusti*, Suetonius devotes sections to omens and prophecies of the subjects' pre-ordained greatness. For instance, he assigns to Caesar a dream showing that it is his destiny to conquer the earth ('quando mater, quam subiectam sibi uidisset, non alia esset quam terra'); and to Augustus a series of omens dated back from before his birth, including a prophecy that nature was 'regem populo Romano [...] parturire'

³⁴ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno 776*, pp. 44-6; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 53-5.

³⁵ Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Halphen, fn. 1 to Chapter 7, p. 22; Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 7, pp. 46-7, also see fn. 1, p. 125.

('pregnant with a king for the Roman people').³⁶ In *VKM*, on the contrary, there is no special chapter or section devoted to miracles pointing towards Charlemagne's rise to power.

Therefore, despite Einhard's reliance on *De vita Caesarum* and *ARF*, how he uses each one and how they are distributed within *VKM* are different; and this difference is by no means random. Two conclusions can be summarised from the analysis above, one regarding what Einhard includes and the other, what he chooses not to. On the one hand, Einhard moulds his Charlemagne into a profile of Suetonius's Caesars – especially of Augustus – through direct borrowing of words and phrases and through modelling *VKM* on the same structure. On the other hand, he consistently excises divine interventions, miracles, and omens, despite many being included in both of his sources.

This reluctance to give credit to divine powers is all very strange, for Charlemagne is only a second-generation ruler in a line that has no hereditary rights to the throne. When he succeeded to the throne, the memory of Childeric III's deposition and Pepin the Short's seizing of power had probably not yet faded. Both *ARF* and Einhard's *VKM* still feel the need to whitewash Pepin's 'usurpation' in their works. Both emphasise the idea of 'election' and the Pope's intervention: *ARF* reports that Pepin 'secundum morem Francorum electus est ad regem et unctus per manum sanctae memoriae Bonifacii archiepiscopi' ('was elected king according to the custom of the Franks, anointed by the hand of Archbishop Boniface of saintly memory'), whereas Childeric III, 'qui false rex vocabatur' ('who was falsely called

³⁶ For the quotations see Suetonius, *Vita divi Iuli*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 7, pp. 42-5 and Suetonius, *Vita divi Augusti*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 94, pp. 286-7. For other omens and miracles, see *Vita divi Iuli*, 81, pp. 136-9, where Suetonius tells about omens to warn him against the Ides of March; *Vita divi Augusti* 6, pp. 156-7, miracles associated with Augustus's alleged birthplace, and the entire section of 94, which deals with omens and miracles from before his birth.

king'), is forced to enter a monastery.³⁷ The revised version elaborates the events even further, adding that 'secundum Romani pontificis sanctionem' ('according to the consecration of the pope of Rome') in the beginning, bringing the pope into the scene to strengthen Pepin's ascension to the throne.³⁸ Similarly, Einhard emphasises the pope's role in Childeric's deposition; Pepin, on the other hand, is portrayed as a somehow reluctant king who agrees to take over the throne only 'cum Hildricus deponeretur' ('when Childeric was deposed') and 'per auctoritatem Romani pontificis' ('by the authority of the Pope of Rome').³⁹ Would it not have been more convenient and effective to exalt Charlemagne's reign by representing his greatness as preordained by God, from whom Christian kingship is generally believed to be derived? What makes Einhard decide to be more silent on this particular matter?

One possible reason is the anxiety on Einhard's part about Charlemagne's newly acquired title and, more importantly, the ideology it implies. We must bear in mind that the formation of ideas – any ideas – is never carried out overnight, not to speak of the fact that Charlemagne's reign was a turning point as far as Carolingian kingship is concerned. Garipzanov, drawing on both numismatic and written evidence, has identified three main royal titles borne by the Carolingian kings: *rex Francorum* (king of the Franks), *Imperator Augustus* (Emperor Augustus), and *gratia Dei rex* (king by the grace of God).⁴⁰ All three titles can be found during Charlemagne's reign: the first one he inherited from his father and the Merovingian

³⁷ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno 750*, p. 8 and p. 10; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 39.

³⁸ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno 750 (Rev.)*, p. 9 and p. 11. Scholz and Rogers, however, offer no translation of the revised version; the translation here is mine.

³⁹ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 2 and 3, pp. 36-9.

⁴⁰ Ildar H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751-877)* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 39-41. Garipzanov, 'Communication of Authority in Carolingian Titles', *Viator*, 36 (2005), 41-82 (pp. 43-52). For the value of numismatic evidence in conveying ideology, see Simon Coupland, 'Charlemagne's Coinage: Ideology and Economy', in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, pp. 211-29; Janet L. Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World', in *Carolingian Culture*, pp. 52-87 (p. 65). The numismatic evidence can be further strengthened by the usage of royal titles in Carolingian charters. A list summarising the usage of royal titles in Carolingian charters as well as letters can be found in Garipzanov, 'Communication of Authority in Carolingian Titles', pp. 69-82 (especially pp. 81-2). The charters can be found in *Capitularia regnum Francorum*, ed. by G. H. Pertz (Hannoverae: Impensis Bibliopolii Aulici Hahniani, 1835).

kings before them; the second came under the spotlight after Christmas 800, when the Frankish kings became 'legitimate heirs of Roman and early Byzantine Emperors'.⁴¹ As for the third title, though it did not come into predominance until Louis the Pious' reign, the Christianisation of Frankish kingship can be traced back to as early as the Merovingian era, and the phrase *gratia Dei* had already been added to the royal title in 768.⁴²

With new titles came the need for a new way to represent the king/emperor, because the audience that Charlemagne then had to address had increased in its variety. The promotion of Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans sanctioned by God (through the pope) probably worked well in regions outside his patrimony, notably among the Italians and the Saxons. Mayr-Harting argues that the consensus that Charlemagne should receive imperial status results from the title's potential effect on the Saxons, whose pre-conquest society had no kings but who had had dealings with Roman emperors. This view is contested by Constambeys, Innes, and Maclean, who instead argue that the coronation indicates Charlemagne's ambition with regard to his Italian subjects.⁴³ Yet could the same be said for his fellow Frankish subjects? Would they necessarily agree with the Saxons and the Italians? Probably not. Garipzanov has examined in detail the Frankish tradition, showing that kingship should be first of all associated with *gens Francorum* (the Frankish people). Both *ARF* and Einhard seem to have agreed, for both emphasised the role of the Frankish people as a collective entity at Pepin's ascension, and they put their

⁴¹ Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World*, p. 288. For Charlemagne's coronation in 800 and its significance, see also McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, pp. 54-5; Rogers Collins, 'Charlemagne's Imperial Coronation and the Annals of Lorsch', in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, pp. 52-70; Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon Maclean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 155-66.

⁴² Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World*, p. 268. For the Christianisation of Frankish kingship, see also Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire', pp. 55-6.

⁴³ Garipzanov summarises in his book three schools of theories underlying Charlemagne's decision and counts authority over the Saxons as the third one, see *ibid.*, pp. 278-9; Henry Mayr-Harting, 'Charlemagne, the Saxons, and the Imperial Coronation of 800', *The English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), 1113-33 (pp. 1125-33); Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, pp. 166-8.

consent before the pope's confirmation. The installation of Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans and the underlying Christian tone may draw Charlemagne away from that tradition, so it is not surprising at all to find Modoin, Einhard's contemporary and court poet of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, staging a discussion between a boy (*puer*) and an old man (*senex*) over Charlemagne's newly-acquired status. The boy, representing the younger generation, embraces the idea of Francia as a new Rome with praise and enthusiasm:

Rursus in antiquos mutataque secula mores.

Aurea Roma iterum renovata renascitur orbi!

(Our times are transformed into the civilisation of Antiquity.

Golden Rome is reborn and restored anew to the world!)

However, the old man checks the boy's emotion and scolds him, betraying a sense of hesitation and doubt:

Huc tibi, stulte puer, quae causa palatia tanta,

Quae fuit alta novae cernendi moenia Romae?

(What was your reason, stupid boy, for coming here to gaze upon the mighty palaces and lofty walls of new Rome?)⁴⁴

Einhard must have felt the same anxiety; but whereas Modoin's concern about novel ideas is channelled through the mouth of an old man, Einhard's approach shows that he at least tries to find balance between the traditional and the innovative. Einhard's Charlemagne is foremost a defender of the Frankish way of life. In the chapters on Charlemagne's *actus*, we see the annual campaigns conducted under the

⁴⁴ Modoin, *Egloga*, in *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, ed. by Peter Godman (London: Duckworth, 1985), vv. 26-7, 30-1, pp. 192-3; Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, p. 35.

king's leadership which are in accordance with Frankish noblemen's expectation of their king.⁴⁵ In the chapters devoted to Charlemagne's *mores*, we are told that his sons were trained to ride according to 'more Francorum' ('in Frankish style') while he himself valued 'vestitu patrio, id est Francico' ('national dress of the Franks') above all – according to Einhard, Charlemagne only ever agreed to don foreign clothes twice, 'Hadriano pontifice petente et iterum Leone successore eius supplicante' ('at the entreaty of Pope Hadrian and the second by request of his successor Leo').⁴⁶ The choice of the verbs *petere* and *supplicare*, and their form as present participles in this phrase not only highlight Charlemagne's reluctance to yield to the Roman way, but also put the popes in a somewhat inferior position, in the sense that they seem to have to make considerable effort to talk Charlemagne into a change of attire instead of simply commanding him to do so. On the other hand, by modelling *VKM* on Suetonius, a pagan author, Einhard could draw the readers' attention to Charlemagne's more secular qualities without rejecting Charlemagne's new image as *Imperator Augustus*. The strikingly strong presence of the Roman emperors in the chapters on Charlemagne's appearance and personal habits invites the readers to view Charlemagne side by side with those emperors; the same criteria that Suetonius employed to assess the Caesars are made available to assessing Charlemagne. What they lead us to examine, however, is more physical than ideological, more personal than political, for these tiny details have almost nothing to do with politics, and the Charlemagne they represent is more like a man than a lofty ruler.

As mentioned above, among 'those emperors', Charlemagne is most often compared with Augustus. This comes as no surprise at all – after all, what can be

⁴⁵ For the importance of military campaigns, see Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority*, pp. 265-6. For the change of the tradition as one of the problems faced by Charlemagne after 800, when he chose a more sedentary mode of holding court, see Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, p. 159.

⁴⁶ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 19 and 23, p. 79 and p. 89.

more proper than a direct comparison of an *Imperator Augustus* to *the* Emperor Augustus? Besides, Augustus and Charlemagne do have much in common: both belong to the second generation of a ruling house that previously had no legal claim to rulership, both have thrived, and have, or are thought to have successfully brought their empire/kingdom to a level of greatness that is generally thought as unlikely to be surpassed. In Augustus, Einhard not only finds a valid object of comparison for Charlemagne but is also enabled to highlight Charlemagne's military and political achievements without appearing too avant-garde. Besides, associating Charlemagne with Augustus provides Einhard with new ground to explore, which, I argue, has more to do with Louis the Pious than with Charlemagne himself.

An important feature associated with Augustus's reign and fame is *pax Romana* (Roman Peace) or *pax Augusta* (Augustan Peace). It must be stated clearly that the Roman concept of peace differs greatly from ours today; it does not at all rule out the possibilities of wars or conflicts, but largely depends on the result, as Augustus himself claims in *Res gestae*: '(Ianus) Quirin(um, quem cl)aussum ess(e maiores nostri voluer)unt, | (cum p)er totum i(mperium po)puli Roma(ni terra marique es)et parta vic| (torii)s pax' ('Janus Quirinus, which our ancestors ordered to be closed whenever there was peace, secured by victory, throughout the whole domain of the Roman people on land and sea').⁴⁷ Wars and rebellions are inevitable, even under a ruler as brilliant as Augustus, but what matters is that he always won in the end. Victory is a precondition for security and stability within the structure of the Empire, therefore it comes as no surprise that peace is seen as a vital factor in judging a ruler's reign.

⁴⁷ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, in Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History. Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, trans. by Frederick W. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library 152 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), I.13, pp. 364-5. For the concept of peace in the Augustan context, see also Karl Galinsky, *Augustus: Introduction to the Life of an Emperor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 85-90.

While this idea was not unfamiliar to authors of the Carolingian era, by the time of Charlemagne, the concept of peace had changed. First, peace became more closely related with the person of the ruler and his virtues; second, it is God-given: the ruler is but God's earthly agent to ensure that the world remains under universal peace (and is Christian).⁴⁸ In other words, peace achieved by bloodshed may be great, but peace by *lack of* bloodshed is even greater, for it signifies God's sanction of the ruler's reign and foregrounds his rightfulness as God's agent on earth. Even Augustus had to be remoulded so his greatness could be relevant to a Christian audience. In *Adversus paganos historiarum libri septem*, Orosius, an author well known to the Carolingians, tells us that Octavius only became Augustus once he brought peace to the Empire by closing the Janus Gate: 'ac tunc primum ipse Iani portas sopitis finitisque omnibus bellis ciuilibus clausit. Hoc die primum Augustus consalutatus est' ('then closed the gate of Janus for the first time, now all the civil wars have died down and come to an end. This day was the first on which he was called Augustus').⁴⁹ But where did this peace come from? From Jesus Christ, apparently, who was born during Augustus's reign and who declared His coming by making a rainbow appear in the sky:

[H]ora circitur tertia repente liquido ac puro sereno circulus ad speciem coelestis arcus orbem solis ambiit, quasi eum unum ac potentissimum in hoc mundo solumque clarissimum in orbe monstraret, cuius tempore uenturus esset, qui ipsum solem solus mundumque totum et fecisset et regeret.

⁴⁸ The transformation of *pax Romana* in the post-Roman, Christian world can also be found in Eusebius's orations to Constantine the Great. Eusebius, *Eusebius Werke I: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, ed. by Friedhelm Winkelmann (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975), p. 249; Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius's Tricennial Orations*, ed. and trans. by H. A. Drake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 16.3-4, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Paulus Orosius, *Pauli Orosii presbyteri hispani Adversus paganos historiarum libri septem* (Thorunii, 1857), book 6, 20.1-2, p. 244. For the English translation, see Paulus Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by A.T. Fear (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 308. It is also noteworthy that, in writing *The Histories*, Orosius was also influenced by Suetonius. Bradley, 'Introduction', p. 27. For a summary of Orosius's views, see Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, pp. 25-6.

([A] circle of light like a rainbow surrounded the sun in a clear, serene sky as if to mark him as the one, mightiest man in this world and by himself the most glorious man on the earth in whose days would come He Who by Himself made and rules over the sun and the whole world.)⁵⁰

This miracle not only foreshadows the *pax Augusta*, but also implies a parallel between the model ruler of the worldly kingdom and that of the heavenly.

Charlemagne, too, could bring universal peace to the world just by being Charlemagne. Indeed, blood is shed, but, as Morrissey correctly points out, Einhard's Charlemagne did not often participate in the actual fighting, not even during the Saxon wars; his greatness 'mainly becomes internal'.⁵¹ This is further strengthened by VKM 16, the chapter that follows immediately upon the war chapters. Here Einhard recounts how Charlemagne won without fighting. Starting with 'auxit etiam gloriam regni sui quibusdam regibus ac gentibus per amicitiam sibi conciliates' ('Charles also increased the glory of his royal power by establishing friendly relations with many kings and peoples'), Einhard describes Charlemagne's 'conquests' by peaceful rather than military means. Thus, he not only recalls the phrase 'cognitos pellexit ad amicitiam suam populique Rom. ultro per legatos petendam' ('send envoys of their own free will and sue for his friendship and that of the Roman people') in *Vita divi Augusti* 21, but also reminds the readers of *Res Gestae* I. 26, where Augustus says:

*Gallias et Hispanias provincias, item Germaniam, qua includit Oceanus a Gadibus ad ostium
Albis fluminis pacavi. Alpes a regione ea quae proxima est Hadriano mari ad Tuscum
pacificavi nulli genti bello per iniuriam inlato*

⁵⁰ Orosius, *Adversus paganos historiarum libri septem*, book 6, 20.5, p. 245; Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by Fear, p. 309.

⁵¹ Robert Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*, trans. by Catherine Tihanyi (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p. 25.

(I brought peace to the Gallic and Spanish provinces as well as to Germany, throughout the area bordering on the Ocean from Cadiz to the mouth of the Elbe. I secured the pacification of the Alps)

and has brought into subjection the Cimbri, the Charydes, the Semnones and the other Germans through his *amicitiam*.⁵² In particular, Einhard highlights the peace and harmony brought by the Frankish empire by showing Charlemagne's cordial relationship with the East, especially with the Byzantines, who among all the peoples were probably the least happy to find a counterpart in the West. It is in this type of peace – peace acquired without war or bloodshed – that Charlemagne's greatness lies. The light of God shines within him, adding to his person an aura of divinity and authority; it is right to fear and to yield to him, as one should before God Himself. For evidence, one needs look no further than *Gesta Karoli Magni* ('The Deeds of Charlemagne') by Notker *Balbulus*, 'the Stammer' (ca. 840-912), in which he describes how Charlemagne took Pavia not by fighting but by looking very impressive and intimidating:

Tunc visus est ipse ferreus Karolus, ferrea galea cristatus, ferreis manicis armillatus, ferrea torace ferreum pectus humerosque Platonicos tutatus, hasta ferrea in altum subrecta sinistram impletus. Nam dextra ad invictum calibem semper erat extenta; coxarum exteriora, que propter faciliorem ascensum in aliis solent lorica nudari, in eo ferreis ambiebantur batteolis. [...] 'O ferrum, heu "ferrum!" clamor confusus insonuit civium. Ferro contremuit firmitas murorum et iuvenum, consilium ferro deperiit seniorum.

(Then could be seen the iron Charles, helmeted with an iron helmet, his hands clad in iron gauntlets, his iron breast and Platonic shoulders protected with an iron breastplate: an iron spear was raised on high on his left hand; his right always rested on his unconquered sword. The thighs, which with most men are uncovered so that

⁵² Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 16, p. 69; Suetonius, *Vita divi Augustus*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 21, pp. 178-9. Also see Halphen's footnote 5 for chapter 16, p. 45. *Res Gestae*, trans. by Shipley, I. 26, pp. 386-7.

they may the more easily ride on horseback, were in his case clad with plates of iron. [...] 'Oh, the iron! Woe for the iron!' was the confused cry that rose from the citizens. The strong walls shook at the sight of the iron; the resolution of young and old fell before the iron.)⁵³

Peace, however, is one of the things that the Carolingians did not have when Einhard was composing *VKM*, which suggests the second possible explanation of Einhard's choice of Suetonius, namely, that *VKM* is a response to Louis the Pious's reign.

It has been mentioned that in *VKM* the presence of divine revelation is not strongly felt in Charlemagne's career, but the work is not entirely deprived of omens. They only appear in the last part of the text, around the time of Charlemagne's death. In *Vita divi Augusti*, omens associated with Augustus's death appear in the form of an eagle and of lightning that melted the letter C on one of his statues. Both accounts are meant to enhance Augustus's glory:

[R]esponsum est, centum solos dies posthac victurum, quem numerum C littera notares, futurumque ut inter deos referretur, quod aesar, id est reliqua pars e Caesaris nomine, Etrusca linqua deus vocaretur.

([T]his was interpreted to mean that he would live only a hundred days from that time, the number inciated by the letter C, and that he would be numbered with the gods, since *aesar* (that is, the part of the name Caesar which was left) is the word for god in the Etruscan language').⁵⁴

⁵³ Notker der Stammer, *Taten Kaiser Karls des Grossen*, ed. by Hans F. Haefele, MGH (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959), II. 17, pp. 83-4. David Ganz, *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (London: Penguin, 2008), II. 17, p. 109. The mystification of Charlemagne in Notker's *Deeds* is also discussed by Morrissey, who concludes quite correctly that Charlemagne is 'a monument to be beheld'; he is 'the sun king'. Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, pp. 27-38 (p. 35).

⁵⁴ Suetonius, *Vita divi Augusti*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, 97, pp. 296-7.

Yet the imagery associated with Charlemagne's death is nothing of this sort. Rather, it is one of earthquake, darkness and destruction – a picture far from promising for the future of the Carolingian dynasty:

Per tres continuos vitaeque termino proximos annos et solis et lunae creberrima defectio et in sole macula quaedam atri coloris septem dierum spatio visa. Porticus, quam inter basilicam et regiam operosa mole construxerat, die ascensionis Domini subita ruina usque ad fundamenta conlapsa. Item pons Rheni apud Mogontiacum, quem ipse per decem annos ingenti labore et opere mirabili de ligno ita construxit, ut perenniter durare posse videretur, ita tribus horis fortuitu incendio conflagravit, ut, praeter quod aqua tegebatur, ne una quidem astula ex eo remaneret.

(During the last three years of his life there were frequent eclipses of the sun and moon, and black spots were seen on the face of the sun for seven days. On Ascension Day the portico between the cathedral and the palace which he had had built with immense effort suddenly came crashing down in complete ruin. The wooden bridge across the Rhine at Mainz, which had taken ten years of hard work to build and which was so cleverly constructed that it seemed as if it would last forever, this bridge accidentally caught fire and burnt to ashes in three hours, so that not a single plank remained except what was under water.)⁵⁵

This image bears striking resemblance to what Nithard depicts in the last paragraph in *Historiarum libri IV*, where he reports a lunar eclipse and heavy snow on a March day, killing many by 'justo Dei iudicio' ('the just judgement of God').⁵⁶ He further explains that he has decided to mention those awful signs 'quia hinc inde ubique rapinæ et omnigena mala sese inserebant' ('because rapine and wrongs of every sort were rampant on all sides') and ends his work with 'illinc aeris intemperies^a spem

⁵⁵ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 32, pp. 104-7.

⁵⁶ Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, 4.7, p. 158; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 174.

omnium^b bonorum eripiebat' ('now the unseasonable weather killed the last hope of any good to come').⁵⁷

Though their writings and dates of composition differ from each other considerably, both Einhard and Nithard were writing under the reign of Louis the Pious – in other words, they were viewing the events in retrospect, thus it is only natural that their portrayals of the past events were shaped by what had happened as much as by what was happening. What has been hinted at in Nithard's writings gives us a glimpse of some Carolingian attitudes towards Charlemagne's successor; those attitudes are not necessarily positive. Although both Einhard and the annalists claim that Louis's succession had already been accepted by the Frankish nobles in a solemn assembly, Louis the Pious' reign did not start as smoothly as it might seem.⁵⁸ Costambeys, Innes, and Maclean have analysed the tension within the imperial family; they show that Louis, having spent most of his life in Aquitaine, was in fact an outsider at court and had been or felt threatened by many powerful rivals.⁵⁹ Bernard (797-818), King of Italy and grandson of Charlemagne, was perhaps the greatest contender for the throne, therefore the greatest danger to Louis's position. In 818, after a failed conspiracy to dethrone Louis, Louis got rid of Bernard and his supporters by having Bernard's eyes put out (therefore disqualifying him to be king); Bernard died from the injury two days later.⁶⁰ The event is justified by *ARF* as the result of an attempted rebellion on Bernard's part, and his consequential death is not mentioned at all, but Louis's cruelty in the matter probably sent a sense of insecurity

⁵⁷ Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, 4.7, p. 158; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 174.

⁵⁸ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 30, p. 103; *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno* 813, p. 138; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 95-7.

⁵⁹ Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, pp. 195-8. For the trouble of Louis' reign and the criticism he faced, see also Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem Before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 15-8.

⁶⁰ Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, p. 204.

throughout the court, and within the imperial family, too, especially once Louis's younger brothers were tonsured and dispatched to monasteries to live in custody.⁶¹

Even the annalists are not always so kind towards Louis the Pious. One glance over *ARF* is more than enough to see that, as far as the annalists were concerned, Louis the Pious was not a very effective ruler. The entries for the 820s are filled with unsettling events: the revolts of Ljudevit started in as early as 818 and were not put down until 822; war against Spain was resumed in 820; famine, pestilence, unusual weather struck Francia in 820, 823 and 824, etc.⁶² To make things worse, the Franks are not always represented as on the winning side any more, or at least Louis's defeats start to emerge from literary sources. The Spanish war turned out to be a disaster and, whereas *ARF* reported God's miracle for Charlemagne in 772, the annalists later tell us that in 827 '[h]uius cladis praesagia credita sunt visae multoties⁶³ in caelo acies et ille terribilis nocturnae coruscationis in aere discursus' ('People were sure they saw battle lines and shifting lights in the sky at night and that these marvels forebode the Frankish defeat').⁶³ Yet the worst of all comes at the end of *ARF*: Lothair, calling upon his brothers, started a rebellion in 829 against Louis and ended it by holding him in custody.⁶⁴ The fact that this particular piece of information appears just one chapter after Nithard had praised the peace and

⁶¹ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub annis* 817 and 818, pp. 147-8; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 101-4; Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, 1.2, p. 8; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 130.

⁶² The start of Ljudevit's revolt is found *sub anno* 818, *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, p. 149, while the last mention is under the entry of 822, p. 158. The other entries are found on pp. 152-67. *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 106-17.

⁶³ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno* 827, p. 173; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 122.

⁶⁴ Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, 1.3, p. 14; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 133. Both Pepin the Short and Charlemagne had the luck of having sole (surviving) heirs to the throne; in contrast, Louis the Pious had three sons who threatened not only Louis' own position but also the stability of the Empire. For the fear and dismay among Carolingian historians over Louis' succession problem and the civil war, see Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire', p. 67; Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 218-9.

harmony under Charlemagne makes Louis merely a pale shadow beside his great father.⁶⁵

It is still a matter of debate whether Einhard had finished *VKM* by the time of Lothair's rebellions, but either way, the text can be read as Einhard's reaction to Louis' unsettling reign. The events of 829 cannot have happened out of the blue, and the roots of discord must have gone deep – Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean have even traced Louis's problems back to the last few years of Charlemagne's reign.⁶⁶ Whether Einhard would agree with them is not possible to know, but he must have witnessed the Empire's decline for some time before the composition of *VKM*. Facing the problems at hand, even if Einhard had been rational enough not to consider Charlemagne's reign as 'the good old days', there would have been no harm in making it appear so to spur Louis on. In this sense, Kempshall is quite right when he interprets the text as 'a work of deliberative oratory, an admonitory *exemplum maiorum* intended as implicit criticism of Louis the Pious.'⁶⁷ If the work was composed with knowledge of Lothair's rebellions (the first of which was started in 830), then Einhard would have had more reason to exalt Charlemagne's memory: it would only have dealt Louis a heavier blow. Einhard would not have been alone in so doing; Nithard concludes his *Historiarum* with

Nam temporibus bone^d recordationis Magni Karoli, qui evoluta jam pene anno xxx decessit, quoniam hic populus unam eandemque rectam ac per hoc viam Domini^e publicam incedebat, pax illis atque concordia ubique erat, at nunc econtra, quoniam quique semitam quam cupit incedit, ubique dissensiones et rixae sunt manifestae.

⁶⁵ Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, 1.1, p. 4: 'Regnavit feliciter per annos duos et xxx^{ta} imperiique gubernacula nihilominus cum omni felicitate per annos quattuordecim possedit.' *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 131: 'He ruled happily as king for thirty-two years and held the helm of the empire with no less success for fourteen years.'

⁶⁶ Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, pp. 156-8.

⁶⁷ Matthew S. Kempshall, 'Some Ciceronian Models for Einhard's Life of Charlemagne', *Viator*, 26 (1995), 11-38 (p. 30).

(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, dissention and struggle abound. Once there was abundance and happiness everywhere, now everywhere there is want and sadness.)⁶⁸

Similarly, when Louis was deposed in 833, the Frankish bishops also recalled the memory of a perfect Charlemagne in contrast to a neglecting Louis.⁶⁹

Once we have accepted that to admonish or even criticise Louis is among the purposes of *VKM*, then the choice of Suetonius appears quite logical. The stories of the Caesars have their value as educational tools. This is clearly one of the drives behind Suetonius's composition: as mentioned in the beginning, Suetonius lived between ca. 97 and at least 122. What is particularly notable about these dates is that they witness the rapid succession of Vespasian (r. 69-79), Titus (r. 79-81), Domitian (r. 81-96), Nerva (r. 96-98), Trajan (r. 98-117), and Hadrian (r. 117-138). In short, Suetonius grew up and wrote during a period of great turbulence. By the time he finished *De vita Caesarum*, he had just experienced the reigns of several 'bad' emperors and one particularly 'good' one (i.e. Trajan), and he was then living under Hadrian, Trajan's successor.⁷⁰ Although Hadrian is now considered as one of the 'Five Good Emperors', we must allow Suetonius to doubt, to hope, and to fear, considering his personal experience. It has been argued that Suetonius's inclusion of Julius Caesar may reflect Trajan's reign. If so, then a parallel can be established between Caesar-Augustus and Trajan-Hadrian, and *Vita divi Augusti* will have a

⁶⁸ Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, 4.7, p. 156; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 174.

⁶⁹ Kempshall, 'Some Ciceronian Models', p. 29.

⁷⁰ Bradley argues that, as an intimate of Pliny's, Suetonius was familiar with his patron's opinion of Trajan as the 'best'; this was probably one of the reasons why Suetonius was not deterred from pursuing a public career, despite the decline of the Empire and the uneasy government of those before Trajan. Bradley, 'Introduction', pp. 6-8.

particularly admonitory tone directed at Hadrian.⁷¹ Einhard wrote in a very similar situation: he had just witnessed the time of a great ruler but now lived under one whom he probably considered as much inferior. The educational value of *Vita Caesarum* can be handily directed at the Frankish rulers. Lupus, the same who wrote in 844, in the same year recommended the deeds of the Caesars, especially those of Trajan and Theodosius, to Charles the Bald's court, a topic that Lupus only brought up after 'lengthy advice on the exercise of kingship'.⁷² If Lupus's reaction is what Einhard had hoped for, then his borrowing of Suetonius – and, more importantly, the way he borrows from it – served its purpose well. On the one hand, the affinity between Charlemagne and Augustus not only elevates Charlemagne to a model emperor, but also foregrounds the whole idea of *pax*, something that Louis the Pious should have learned to maintain.⁷³ On the other, the presence of those more-infamous-than-famous emperors invites the readers to contemplate their failure, lending more force to the admonitory tone. Therefore, it is logical that Einhard should turn to Suetonius as a model for *VKM*.

In the same context, Einhard's reluctance to stress God's role in Charlemagne's career further promotes the contrast between Louis and his father. Louis is not called 'the Pious' for no reason. For a start, it is under his reign that we see the title *rex gratia Dei* come to dominate. This is further bolstered by the fact that Louis began his reign with two *missi* in 814 and 817 respectively, both of which have been interpreted as part of Louis's attempt to build up his own political persona as a

⁷¹ Bradley, 'The Imperial Ideal in Suetonius's *Caesares*', p. 3715.

⁷² *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières*, trans. by Regenos, letter no. 37, pp. 53-5; Innes, 'The Classical Tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance', p. 271.

⁷³ Townend, 'Suetonius and His Influence', pp. 98-101, where Townend argues that, by borrowing from Suetonius, and especially from *Vita divi Augusti*, Einhard's Charlemagne has become 'the successor of the old Caesars'. But the major difference lies in that, whereas Suetonius acknowledges Augustus's flaws, Einhard presents a more positive image of Charlemagne. In other words, for Suetonius, though Augustus may not have been perfect, he was the Caesar who best met Suetonius's standard; for Einhard, however, Charlemagne is the standard. See also Ganz, 'Einhard's Charlemagne', pp. 48-50.

'moral paragon'.⁷⁴ One of the effects of these actions is that the memory of Charlemagne became blackened. Louis led public penance in 822, not only for himself but also for his father, implying his acknowledgement of the immorality Charlemagne had been accused of, such as his (rumoured) sexual transgressions and the Massacre of Verden in 782.⁷⁵ To present Charlemagne as morally questionable undermines not only his image as a model ruler – as portrayed and praised by both Einhard and Nithard – but also as a good Christian. It can hardly be coincidence that reports of visions also appeared throughout the 820s, in all of which Charlemagne was said to have been punished in Hell or Purgatory.⁷⁶ To what extent Einhard was familiar with those visions is not clear, but the fact that he feels the need to address the court scandals evidences that he at least has been aware of criticism of Charlemagne. Dismissal of what Louis has been striving to achieve for himself also allows Einhard a way to fight back, for it not only enables him to foreground the difference between the son and the father but also to add a trace of defiance and sarcasm. It is true that Louis's problems have their roots in Charlemagne's time, but what matters to Einhard is not whether there are problems but whether these problems can be effectively dealt with. For instance, both Charlemagne and Louis were confronted with rebellions led by their son(s), but Charlemagne managed to

⁷⁴ Costambey et al., *The Carolingian World*, pp. 198-201.

⁷⁵ These are two of the most notable stains on Charlemagne's reputation. Regarding the first, rumours had been circulated suggestive of the king's incestuous relationship with his sister and/or daughters, to the extent that Einhard felt the need to fight back, as hinted in *VKM 18* where he glossed over speculations about Charlemagne and his sister by merely stressing the 'great affection' shared between the two, and again in *VKM 19* where he expressly defended the king against accusations regarding his relationship with his daughters, whom he refused to marry. Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 18, pp. 76-7, and 19, pp. 80-1. See also Miranda Griffin, 'Writing Out the Sin: Arthur, Charlemagne and the Spectre of Incest', *Neophilologus*, 88.4 (2004), 499-519, and Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 195-219. Both Griffin and Archibald compare Arthur's incestuous relationship with his sister to Charlemagne as a literary model. The negative impact of the Massacre of Verden on Charlemagne's reputation is evidenced by Einhard's total silence and by that, though the event is recorded in *ARF*, both versions justify the Massacre as Charlemagne's angry reaction towards loss of Frankish lives – even more so in the revision, where a paragraph is added to elaborate the battle scene and the heavy loss on the Frankish side, thus shifting the focus from Charlemagne's cruelty onto his care of his own subjects. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno 782*, pp. 60-5; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 60-1.

⁷⁶ *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, ed. and trans. by Noble, p. 12.

keep the Empire under control. In VKM 20, Einhard sketches out the rebellion led by Pepin the Hunchback in 792:

Is, cum pater bello contra Hunos susceptor in Baioaria hiemaret, aegritudine simulate, cum quibusdam e primoribus Francorum, qui eum vana regni promissione inlexerant, adversus patrem coniuravit. Quem post fraudem detectam et damnationem coniuratorum detonsum in coenobio Prumia religiosae vitae iamque volentem vacare permisit.

(While his father was wintering in Bavaria during the war against the Huns, Pepin pretended to be ill and became involved with some Frankish nobles in a plot against his father. He had been lured into it by empty promises that they would make him king. But the scheme was discovered and the traitors punished. Pepin was tonsured and allowed, on his free will, to enter the monastery of Pruem, where he spent the rest of his life as a monk.)⁷⁷

Einhard's brevity gives an impression of swiftness and easiness of Charlemagne's action, and minimises the potential damage that such rebellions could have caused the Empire. Moreover, that Pepin is allowed to enter religious life 'on his free will' forms a stark contrast to the fate of the above-mentioned Bernard and Louis's younger brothers, not only inviting comparison between Charlemagne's leniency and Louis's cruelty but also highlighting the lack of security of Louis's reign. Another rebellion is mentioned in the same chapter, where, again, it is Charlemagne's efficiency and leniency that Einhard emphasises:

Cuius auctores partim luminibus orbat, partim membris incolomes, omnes tamen exilio deportati sunt; neque ullus ex eis est interfectus nisi tres tantum; qui cum se, ne comprehenderentur, strictis gladiis defenderent, aliquos etiam occidissent, quia aliter coerceri non poterant, interempti sunt.

⁷⁷ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 20, pp. 80-3.

(All of the guilty ones were exiled, some of them only after being blinded, but the others were not harmed physically. Only three were killed because they had drawn their swords and tried to resist being taken prisoners. After they had slaughtered a number of men, they were killed themselves since there was no other way to subdue them.)⁷⁸

Both rebellions, Einhard continues, result from Queen Fastrada's cruelty rather than any fault on Charlemagne's part. Apart from these two occasions, Charlemagne's reign is marked by stability: 'cum summo omnium amore atque favour et domi et foris coversatus est, ut numquam ei vel minima iniustate crudelitatis nota a quoquam fuisset obiecta' ('he was deeply loved and respected by everyone at home and abroad during all of his life, and no one ever accused him of being unnecessarily harsh').⁷⁹ However, when confronted with similar problems, whereas Charlemagne puts off the fire before it spreads, Louis lets it rage on: Lothair repeatedly rebelled against Louis during the last decade of his life, and Louis revolted in 839.⁸⁰ That his sons repeatedly rebelled against him and havocked the Empire during the last decade of his life speaks to Louis's incompetence as the head of his household and of the Empire. Although he managed to keep the throne until his death, twice did Louis face deposition – a fate shared with Childeric III, whose history Einhard briefly relates at the beginning of *VKM*. The image of Louis the Pious as inadequate in comparison to Charlemagne is further strengthened by their different beginning. Charlemagne had to carve the Empire out for himself; his story is one of unity, expansion, and concentration of power. He started with a divided kingdom and,

⁷⁸ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 20, pp. 82-3. The annalist, however, seems to have confused the two rebellions and treated them as one event. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno 792*, pp. 90-3; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 70-1.

⁷⁹ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 20, pp. 82-3.

⁸⁰ Nithard devotes the bulk of Book I of *Histoires* to these events and considers them as 'the roots' of Charles the Bald's troubles. Nithard, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. by Lauer, I. 2-8, pp. 4-43. The quote is taken from the prologue of Book II, pp. 42-3. *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, pp. 130-40, and p. 141.

though the relationship between him and his brother Carloman is unclear, Charlemagne had his share in political intrigue before becoming the sole ruler: Einhard, albeit biased, reports the ‘*simultates et invidiam*’ (‘animosity and envy’) that Carloman bore Charlemagne, while the annalists report a meeting between the brothers, mediated by their mother Bertrada.⁸¹ When Louis succeeded to the throne, however, in addition to being the sole heir, he had already been crowned Emperor by Charlemagne himself in front of all the Frankish nobles.⁸² The road has been paved; all that Louis has to do is to take and to maintain the power, but instead, ‘in the view of posterity, he blew it’.⁸³ One can feel Nithard’s bitterness when he writes that Louis was ‘*[h]eres autem tante sublimitatis*’ (‘the heir of all this excellence’) at the beginning of the lengthy account of the civil unrest to follow.⁸⁴ Likewise, as far as Einhard is concerned, the Empire’s rise under Charlemagne is as much a fact as its decline under Louis; and, despite all the piety Louis attached to himself, the situation did not improve.

To conclude, Einhard’s choice of Suetonius is a deliberate move, one that has been shaped as much by past events as by historical context of Einhard’s composition of *VKM*. It allows Einhard a way to reconcile two different ideas concerning kingship, one derived from the Frankish tradition, the other attached to the glory of the Roman Empire and a unified Christendom; or, if we use Garipzanov’s framework here, one looking to the past, the other to the future. Undoubtedly, Charlemagne’s memory is praised and exalted in *VKM* – after all, no

⁸¹ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 18, pp. 74-5; *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno* 770, pp. 30-1; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 48. The mediating role of the Queen Mother is further highlighted in the revision. It is particularly notable that she has a talk especially with Carloman, implying that it is Carloman who started the trouble and who necessitated the peace meeting. For Carloman and Charlemagne and their joined rule, see also McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, pp. 75-88.

⁸² Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. by Firchow and Zeydel, 30, pp. 102-3. See also *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze and Pertz, *sub anno* 813, p. 138; *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 95.

⁸³ Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, p. 155.

⁸⁴ Nithard, *Histories*, I. 2, p. 4. *Carolingian Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Scholz and Rogers, p. 130.

ordinary person could be so frequently compared to Augustus, whose *pax* has been interpreted so favourably even by Christian authors. Moreover, the circumstances under which Augustus seized power are not unlike Pepin's ascent to the throne: Augustus' act tends to be stressed as having been done for the greater good and with the consent of all the people; its sense of election of the best recalls the traditional idea of *rex Francorum*. Yet the image that is foregrounded in the text is an image of Charlemagne as a man rather than someone who, like Augustus, had enjoyed special divine favour and was destined to greatness from birth. Here Einhard appears to be rather selective in using his sources, and has, curiously, omitted the miracles, even though he was at least aware of those miraculous accounts as evidenced in *ARF*. The only supernatural events he includes are of a different nature, for they only come after Charlemagne's death and reveal a rather eschatological set of portents that seems to point to Louis the Pious' reign. This leads to the second effect of Einhard's use of Suetonius as a model. By modelling *VKM* on *De vita Caesarum*, Einhard does more than merely borrow the structure, words, and phrases of Suetonius: he also borrows Suetonius's *ideas* of using the biographies as a set of criteria against which an emperor/ruler can be assessed and evaluated. Therefore, on the one hand, *VKM* is a text written to reflect Einhard's dissatisfaction and criticism of Charlemagne's successor; on the other, it helps to draw Louis the Pious' attention and impose Einhard's own ideology of a good ruler on him. No matter the extent to which Einhard's depiction of Charlemagne is accurate, *VKM* cannot be read without consideration of the unsettling milieu of Louis the Pious' reign. Nor should Einhard's personal feeling be excluded, even though there is no way to know his own mind. In both Einhard and Suetonius, we find someone who has seen both the rise and fall of some of the great powers of his world, and the emotion and thought

provoked by his experience must have been reflected in his words. Einhard's choice of sources and the way he chose to use them must be read in the same light.



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