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REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS AND
GREGORY OF TOURS: *CONIUGES ET REGINAE*

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE
STUDIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

BY

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OTTAWA, ONTARIO

APRIL 2000

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“Yes, I am fond of history.”

“I wish I were too. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all – it is very tiresome.” (Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey)

ABSTRACT

The modern scholarship of women has relied on anecdotal evidence from the literature of Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours to describe women's lives in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. Rarely has it been noted that the anecdotes demonstrate behaviours that are part of formulaic descriptions employed by the authors. Sidonius represented life in late fifth-century sub-Roman Gaul as still very Roman. This illustrates Sidonius' conservatism and his attempt to hold onto Roman ideals in the face of a new Germanic reality in Gaul. Sidonius references women in terms of traditional Roman virtues and images of a dutiful wife. By the late sixth century, with the descendents of Clovis established as rulers of the Frankish kingdoms, Roman Gaul was a distant memory. Gregory of Tours wrote a narrative history about the world as he saw it, from his episcopal see in Tours. This was a Germanic and Christian world and the women he wrote about exemplify these realities.

In spite of the differences there is much that is comparable between the two authors. Sidonius and Gregory had similar motivations for writing guided by a common set of rules and regulations. Their similar purpose reflects their status and role as leading men in a changing and unstable society. The validation of their own lives, choices, and traditions in the face of cultural change marks out their literature. There is a continuity between the authors that demonstrates universality in the portrayal of women found in both classical and Christian traditions. This is the belief that behind every good man is a good woman and that domestic harmony is a sign of a man's authority to rule, preach, or govern.

My purpose is to analyse the representations of women in the context of the author's literary aims and personal goals. The accounts of women are construed to fit the themes of Gregory's history or Sidonius' letter or poem, not to represent the women. It then follows that if, and when, the author's anecdotal information on women is used as evidence for social history, the author's context and his connections to each woman must first be understood. This will permit a reinterpretation and re-evaluation of the evidence on women's lives from the literature of Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to acknowledge and thank for their patience, support, and encouragement: Nancy, Sarah, and Barb, my sisters, were always ready to listen and help; my parents, Carolyn and Michael, have supported and encouraged me all through my education; Tony, who always believed in me, patiently edited with great humour and helped enormously, although any mistakes in the text are mine alone. In Ottawa, Jen, Bruce, Victoria, and Neil managed to keep me sane through friendship and humour. I particularly want to thank Keith, who has provided constant encouragement, editorial skills, and managed to live with me during the last years of this process, I can only say that you are truly appreciated. Finally, Richard Burgess, my supervisor, was endlessly patient and helpful throughout the dissertation process. This dissertation was given much needed financial support by means of a Doctoral Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

ABBREVIATIONS

- CCSL *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnhout (Belgium, 1953-)
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. (Berlin, 1862-).
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. (Vienna, 1866-).
- CTh *Codex Theodosianus*. T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (eds.) (Berlin, 1905). C. Pharr et al., (trans.). *The Theodosian Code and the Sirmundian Constitutions* (New York, 1952).
- DLH *Decem Libri Historiarum*.
- Duchesne *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule 1 et 11*. Duchesne (1894). Paris.
- ILCV *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*. Diehl (1925-1931). Berlin.
- LHF *Liber Historiae Francorum*.
- MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
- AA *Auctores Antiquissimi* (Berlin, 1877-1919)
- Chron. min. *Chronicae Minorae* (Berlin, 1877-1919)
- Epistulae *Epistulae* (Berlin, 1887-)
- Leges *Leges* (Hannover/Leipzig, 1892-).
- SRL *Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum* (Hannover, 1964).
- SRM *Scriptores Rerum Merovingiarum* (Hannover/Leipzig, 1885-1951)
- PL *Patrologia Latina*. J.-P. Migne (ed.). Turnhout (Belgium, 1844-).
- PLRE 2 *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire 2*. John Martindale (ed.). Cambridge 1980.
- PLRE 3 *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire 3a and 3b*. John Martindale (ed.). Cambridge 1992.
- PLS *Pactus Legis Salicae*. K.A. Eckhardt (ed.). MGH: *Leges* 4, 1.
- SC *Sources Chrétienne*s. (Paris, 1941-).

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The literature of Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours is frequently cited by scholars of social history as evidence for women's lives in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. These were pivotal centuries in the transformation from late Roman to early medieval society. Sidonius is one of the only contemporary authors writing about Gaul in the fifth century. His works 'mirror the conflict of traditional values with new realities and the effects on Gallic society of the Germanic presence and the declining power of Rome.'¹ Sidonius' material on women appears in some of the most recent works on women in late antiquity.² Despite the use of Sidonius' letters and poems as evidence for the status of women in the fifth century, the role of women in his writing has never been examined. Gregory of Tours' *Decem Libri Historiarum (DLH)* is the only surviving contemporary history for sixth-century Gaul.³ The *DLH* includes abundant material on women and is one of the primary sources cited in a number of survey studies on women in the early middle ages.⁴ The information on women taken from Sidonius and Gregory is often employed 'at face value' and has not always been considered in the context of the style and aims of the authors.

The nature of the evidence on women in antiquity and the early middle ages is

¹ *OCD*: 1404-1405.

² See Evans-Grubbs (1993a) and (1995), Clark (1993), Arjava (1996), Nathan (2000) and below section 3.2 for exact citations.

³ The *Decem Libri Historiarum* is also frequently called the *Historia Francorum* (*History of the Franks*), a title that is thought to have first appeared in the eighth century and is attributed to Carolingian influence, see Goffart (1988), 120, n. 39. In this work I use the form *DLH* to refer to Gregory's narrative history following Wood (1994). Goffart (1987: n. 11 and 12) argues that the simple form, *Historiae*, should be used.

⁴ See for example Wemple (1981), Stafford (1983), Ennen (1989), Affedlt and Vorweck (1990), and Lescouzères (1993).

fragmentary and anecdotal. The modern scholarship of women in late antiquity has relied on anecdotal evidence from the literature of Sidonius and Gregory to describe women's lives. Rarely has it been noted, however, that the anecdotes demonstrate behaviours that are part of the formulaic descriptions of the authors.⁵ Until a better understanding of the purpose and methods behind the representation of women in these authors is developed, the information drawn from their writings may be misunderstood. It is my intention to re-examine how the material from these important sources is interpreted in relation to women during this pivotal period.

1.1. Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours

This thesis is a study of the representation of women in Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours. The reason I have chosen to study the women represented specifically in the literature of these two men derives from their prominence as authors of primary source material from the late fifth and the late sixth centuries. In addition, Sidonius and Gregory are representative of the same rank in the societies in which they lived. The similarity in the role they played in their respective communities allows for comparison between the two men. They lived roughly a century apart (Sidonius † c. 484 and Gregory † c. 594) over a period that saw dramatic change in both the political and social structure of Gaul. Both men were bishops and community leaders who played an integral part in politics in an insecure environment. Sidonius, as son-in-law and advisor to the emperor Eparchius Avitus († 456) and urban prefect under

⁵ There are many examples of this trend and I will cite two here to illustrate my point. Nathan (2000: 122) claims that widows were the 'targets of legal harassment and extortion' citing Sidonius *Ep.* 6.2. Nathan fails to mention that Sidonius was acting as an advocate on behalf of the widow mentioned in his letter and that Sidonius makes no claim of extortion. Sidonius' purpose is to settle a dispute between two parties in a suit over inheritance in which he has a interest. Herlihy (1990: 13) states that 'the promiscuity of men led to the promiscuity of women' and cites Gregory of Tours depiction of Queen Fredegund as an example of female promiscuity without acknowledging the general biases of Gregory against the queen nor that Fredegund's behaviour cannot be extended to women in general or even queens in general.

Anthemius (468), was close to the ruling powers of Gaul and the empire. A century later Gregory, also from an illustrious Gallo-Roman family, was mediator for and advisor to the Frankish kings Sigibert and Guntram.

Sidonius and Gregory came from the same geographical region, social class, and Gallo-Roman origins. Despite the commonalities, Ian Wood has observed that the societies represented in these works could not appear to be further apart.⁶ Sidonius wrote letters and poems concerned with a world populated by Gallo-Romans and the occasional German in a style consciously reminiscent of classical Latin. Gregory wrote narrative history in what he calls 'rustic prose' (*DLH* 10.31) describing a primarily Germanic world. The women in the texts reflect the 'dislocation' of culture between the two men. These are some of the only women known from this transitional period and a more comprehensive picture will emerge from an examination of their literary representations. The goal here is to assess the representation of women in the literature while taking into account the problems that arise from the differences in the writings of the two authors.

1.2. Problems: rhetorical context and genre

The main obstacle in an analysis of the representations of women in the literature of Sidonius and Gregory arises from differences in their genre of writing. Genre in the ancient world dictated the style and content of an author's work.⁷ The perceived differences in the communities of the two men and the women they portray derive as much from the genre of their writing as from actual social and political changes that took place in the fifth and sixth centuries. While the nature of the writing is literary, both Sidonius' letters and poems and Gregory's narrative have political/social intent. The two men saw themselves as leaders of their respective

⁶ Wood speaks of the apparent 'dislocation between the culture of Sidonius and that of Gregory of Tours...' (1994: 31).

⁷ See Fontaine (1977), 430-431.

communities and their purpose in writing (and in Sidonius' case, publishing) was to reaffirm the authority of the aristocrat/bishop in a society dealing with the increasing power of Germanic kings. Ian Wood writes of Gregory that, 'his concerns are moral and religious, and in certain respects, therefore, although they appear to be out of line with the literary culture of Sidonius and his sixth-century followers, they do look back to moral concerns which met the first wave of barbarian invasions'.⁸ Despite their stylistic and thematic differences, the authors were not as far apart as they might first appear.

Our knowledge of women in the fifth and sixth century is derived from these men who tell us nothing about women without an underlying purpose. While women were one of the many *topoi* addressed by ancient authors, their representation depended upon the genre in which they were portrayed. Gillian Clark states that literary sources tell us 'the ways in which women's lives were perceived, interpreted, and (if possible) regulated in terms of leading ideas, priorities, assumptions, and interests.'⁹

An author will often mention a woman solely for the sake of rhetorical argument which restricts the information available, specific or general, about women's lives. An acknowledgment of these limitations does not necessarily detract from the value of the details about women's lives that appear in our sources. In their role as bishops and community leaders, Sidonius and Gregory were involved in the mediation of disputes over inheritance and marriage. The views they express on these aspects of life directly involve women and are reflective of attitudes in their contemporary societies, not solely their rhetorical intent. Both authors write about important social issues such as marriage, inheritance, divorce, and concubines. The goal is to clarify what the information in the sources actually says about women and about the author's relationships to them. The fact that much of the information on

⁸ Wood (1994), 32.

⁹ Clark (1993), 2.

women is rhetorical does not reduce the value of the evidence. This should, however, lead to a re-evaluation of the material in the sources that relates to women's lives.

The differences in the style and genre of the source material means that the evidence does not always seem comparable. For example, Gregory's narrative describes the history and events in the lives of the Frankish royalty and thus the representation of Germanic queens makes up a significant part of the analysis. In contrast, Germanic queens hold a much less important place among the women Sidonius represents, who are the wives and daughters of his fellow aristocrats. I would argue that since the women reflect the audience the authors were trying to reach, these two groups are comparable. The audience that the *DLH* set out to reach was the same relative audience as Sidonius' letters and poems, an educated elite of Gaul. Sidonius wrote to and for his friends who were members of aristocratic and imperial circles in Gaul. Gregory claims that he wrote his history for fellow bishops and the future kings of the Franks (*DLH* 10.31). In the century that separated their deaths, the power structure occupied by Sidonius and his colleagues had been replaced by bishops like Gregory and the Frankish kings. The women mentioned are, in both cases, the women of the ruling classes and are comparable for the different periods.

1.3. Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are to establish the context for the authors representations of women and to ascertain what their rhetorical aims are in relation to women.¹⁰ The secondary objective is to examine the way women are represented in the literature to see if, and when, the information can be employed to assess the position of women in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. In order to analyse the representations of women, the context

¹⁰ This study refers to an enormous number of people who populate the writings of both authors. In order to help clarify to whom I am referring, I have provided an alphabetical appendix that lists the names and provides a general reference for the people mentioned in this thesis. See Appendix 1.

for the literary, social, and political history of fifth and sixth century Gaul must also be established. My goal is to understand the manner in which our authors were employing women: to promote or deter behaviours, to prove an argument, or to condemn a rival. I hope to identify where the representations are stereotypical and where they are related to aspects of a greater aim in the poetry or prose.

Two recent studies look at the sources for women's history and have influenced the approach taken in this research. Cooper's *The Virgin and the Bride* (1996) examines the changing representation of the ideal woman in late Roman and early Christian literature. Kitchen's *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender* (1998) analyses the much used *vitae* of female saints within the context of *vitae* in general to appreciate the developments and practicalities of using these complex and important sources.

Cooper and Kitchen have brought to light a significant role for women in rhetorical arguments in late Latin Christian literature. Across all genres, 'narrative treatment of the actions or intentions of women did not straightforwardly represent flesh-and-blood women themselves, but rather served to symbolize aspects of the tension to be found among men'.¹¹ This was part of a literary tradition that extended back to the separate beginnings of Roman and Christian cultures. In the fourth and fifth centuries, a meeting of these traditions that shared 'an inherited interest in the social dangers which might be caused by the influence of women on men' took place.¹² The Roman women who appear in the literary evidence from Gaul were almost exclusively members of the aristocracy. They were the daughters, wives, and mothers of senatorial and episcopal families whose portrayals reflected on the character of the Gallo-Roman elites. In contrast, the majority of Germanic women described in our Latin sources are of royal blood. Their depiction is a mirror image of the authors' views of the Germanic kings

¹¹ Cooper (1992), 151.

¹² Cooper (1992: 153) cites the examples of Adam's expulsion from Eden and the Judgement of Paris.

who ruled Gaul. It is within this literary and cultural context that the representation of women will be assessed.

1.4. Methodology

The first step of this thesis is to examine the historical context for the literature of Sidonius and Gregory. Fifth- and sixth-century Gaul was a time of turmoil that saw the formation of Germanic successor kingdoms in the former provinces of the western Roman empire. The interaction between these kingdoms and the existing Roman culture created the foundation blocks of medieval society in western Europe. Chapter two is a summary of the main events in the creation of post-Roman Gaul and describes the blending of Germanic, Gallo-Roman, and Christian cultures.

Once the historical context is established, the next step will be to introduce the literary and rhetorical context for the writings of Sidonius and Gregory. This will help to clarify some of the problems that affect the portrayal of women in the texts. Both Sidonius and Gregory were conscious artists whose literary concerns need to be understood before the historical value of their literary material can be interpreted. The author's rhetorical strategies played an important role in shaping the representation of women. The portrayal of women is also directly related to limitations imposed on the author by genre. The nature of epistolography limits Sidonius' range as a source for social history to the small group of Gallo-Roman elites to whom he wrote and whose concerns he discussed. His poems were composed to suit the standards and tastes common to his late fifth-century aristocratic colleagues. Gregory's limitations are perceived as less restrictive because he wrote history. In reality, his geographical and social boundaries are also limited to the Frankish royalty and the small group of Gallo-Roman nobility who entered the church. The portrayal of women in the two authors will

naturally derive from these contexts.

The analysis of the representation of women in the works of the two authors forms the main body of the thesis. Chapter four is devoted to Sidonius' letters and poems and chapter five to Gregory of Tours' narrative history (the *DLH*). The women discussed are those chosen by the sources themselves. They are the wives, mothers, daughters, queens, and nuns mentioned in the texts. The initial task is to identify the women and their relationship to the author. Once the connection is established, the pretext for their representations will become clearer. Certain natural groupings occur in each author and the women have been divided into categories. I hope to establish where these portrayals are idealized and on that basis, discover what qualities the authors felt were essential in an ideal woman. This should tell us a great deal about the author and his influences in relation to women. An assessment of what practical information may be extracted from the sources is possible once the literary representations of the women is established. If the women in the texts are for the most part literary constructs, it must be assumed that they are real women placed into a mould to emphasize the author's purpose and to prove his point. It may not be the case that every representation is formulaic. If and when realistic aspects of women's lives appear in Sidonius and Gregory, it is important to identify the issues involved and to clarify what caution needs to be exercised.

1.5. Overview: comparative material and background to fifth- and sixth-century Gaul

A brief summary of the modern scholarship on the history of women in late antiquity and early medieval Gaul will provide a scholarly context for this research. The society of early medieval Gaul was formed from a combination of existing Gallo-Roman culture and Germanic customs brought to Gaul over the fourth to sixth centuries.¹³ This period is critical for understanding the effect of merging cultural traditions on the lives of women. Modern

¹³ See chapter two for details.

scholarship accepts, to a degree, similarity between the two cultures, as is illustrated by Geary who claims that 'Roman and Germanic tradition of patriarchal family structure differed little, and the two fused rapidly and easily in terms of control over households...'¹⁴ Generally speaking this is true but the authors contemporary with these changes did not necessarily recognize the similarities. It is legitimate to argue that between the Gallo-Roman and Germanic cultures there were fundamental differences in family structure and customs governing marriage, inheritance, and the recognition of children. These basic concepts have been studied for the periods and cultures discussed in this study. The following is an overview of the modern scholarship on late Roman and early medieval women and a brief summary of the comparative evidence that will be used in the research presented here.¹⁵

1.5.1. Late Roman and Christian women

Understanding of the status of women in late Roman culture has increased in the last decade with the publication of important studies relating to laws and the social history of the family.¹⁶ Evans-Grubbs (1995) set a high standard for methodological approaches to law and social history and provides an excellent general background for women's history in late antiquity.¹⁷ G. Clarke (1993) surveys the sources and general attitudes towards women across the empire from the third to sixth centuries. Women and ecclesiastical issues have been the focus of recent works by Cloke (1995), who analyses women in the patristic texts, and also E.A. Clarke (1979, 1983, 1986, and 1990), whose analysis of the sources for early female saints and

¹⁴ Geary (1988), 105.

¹⁵ The comparative literary material is elaborated in chapter three.

¹⁶ There is an extensive bibliography for women and the family in the Republic and Empire that includes Bradley (1991), Dixon (1988), Pomeroy (1975), Rawson (1986) and (1991), Treggiari (1991), Gardner (1986), Kertzer and Saller (eds.) (1991) and Rawson and Weaver (eds.) (1997). For social history and the family in the empire, see Veyne (1978) and (1987).

¹⁷ See also Arjava (1996) for a slightly different approach and a wider base of evidence.

monasticism in the eastern empire has broadened our perspectives on the changing position of women in Christianity. Cooper (1996) thoughtfully discusses the development of the idealized woman in late antiquity. This study analyses one of the most important aspects of the representation of women in late antiquity: the change in the literary representations of marital concord in a rhetorical argument from the epitome of the well-adjusted Roman to the development in late antiquity of a 'competing moral language, the Christian rhetoric of virginity'.¹⁸ Given the fact that almost without exception our sources for late antique women are Christian and Roman these studies have important implications for anyone trying to decipher details of women's lives in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Roman Christian culture came into its own in fifth-century Gaul bringing with it specific views on marriage, children, and celibacy.¹⁹ The existing Roman social structure in Gaul was also influenced by new Germanic settlement and the eventual Germanic domination of Gaul at the close of the fifth century.²⁰ The Germanic people who settled in Gaul practised either traditional (pagan) religions or were, if converted to Christianity, Arian. The majority of the source material for the period was written by Gallo-Roman catholic Christian bishops. As Wemple rightly points out, the social structure that emerged in early medieval France developed from this triple heritage: Germanic, traditional Gallo-Roman, and Christian.²¹

1.5.2. Women in early medieval Gaul

There is no general agreement about how or when the transition between antiquity and

¹⁸ Cooper (1996), 3 and Cloke (1995), 57-81 on virginity and Christian theology.

¹⁹ See Cooper (1996); Clark (1990); and Clarke (1993) for Roman Christian culture.

²⁰ Questions concerning how Romanized Gaul was and how Celtic the culture was in the fifth century are difficult to answer. An off-hand comment in Sidonius (*Ep.* 3.3.2) indicates that a Celtic language was still spoken in parts of Auvergne, but to what degree, at what levels, and in what places Celtic served as the first language is not, in any way, indicated in our sources.

²¹ Wemple (1985: 10-25) relates this specifically to women but it can be applied to society in general.

the middle ages occurred. There are many names used to refer to this period and a few of the most common include late antique, sub-Roman, post-Roman, early Frankish, early Merovingian, the dark ages, and simply, the early middle ages.²² Research that examines the culture in later Roman Gaul often includes material from the sixth century for continuity, as there is no clear break between the Roman and medieval worlds.²³ Other studies focus on the Carolingian period but look back to the fifth and sixth centuries as the foundation of Carolingian society.²⁴ One of the clearest portrayals of women in this period is Ennen's *The Medieval Woman*, the first chapter of which is devoted to the early middle ages.²⁵ Ennen looks critically at the sources for the status of early medieval women in a way that many other secondary authors do not.²⁶ Wemple's important book *Women in Frankish Society* provides an extensive look at the various aspects of how women functioned in the Merovingian kingdoms and the early chapters deal with the sixth century. One of the drawbacks of the book is that it fails to examine closely the evidence from the primary sources, especially Gregory of Tours, and many statements are accepted as factual without any consideration of the motivation of the author.²⁷

²² This diversity appears in other languages as well, where different terms are applied depending on what perspective is taken, this includes frühen mittelalter, Spätantike, bas empire, paleo-médiévale and antiquité tardive.

²³ For example, Mathisen (1981).

²⁴ McKitterick (1983) for example.

²⁵ This is a translation from the German publication of 1984, *Frauen im Mittelalter*.

²⁶ This is apparent from her understanding of Tacitus as unreliable as a source for early Germanic culture. See Ennen (1989), 24-25 and below n. 27.

²⁷ One example that is repeated frequently relates to the use of Tacitus' *Germania* as a source for early Germanic customs and the status of women. See Wemple (1990), 187, and (1981), 10-17. Tacitus tells us, among other things, that women were held in high esteem and that they accompanied their men into battle; he also mentions marriage rituals (see *Germania* 18). The question of Tacitus' reliability as a source for Germanic customs must be more clearly analysed in relation to women's history. The first problem is the tendency for Roman authors to lump all Germanic people under one convenient name making any specific connections difficult. The second problem is the time that had passed between Tacitus (late first century) and the Visigoth and Frankish kingdoms (fifth and sixth centuries). These three centuries make the evidence unreliable. Ennen points out that Tacitus was writing for his own particular rhetorical purposes and was not offering great insight into Germanic customs (1989: 24). Tacitus' glorification of the noble German fits his rhetorical

An article by Affeldt and Reiter (1986) on Gregory of Tours and the situation of women in the sixth century is an essential look at women's lives through one of our sources. Articles in Affeldt and Vorweck (1990) and McNamara (1985) are basic works dealing with the early medieval period. These studies recognize that the fifth and sixth centuries are important for understanding some of the fundamental aspects of the social history of medieval Europe.²⁸ General works on medieval women abound but are rarely useful in the precise context of fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. Specific and well-known examples from the early Frankish kingdoms occur but overall these studies focus on the Carolingians or other regions of Europe.²⁹ Goetz's *Frauen im frühen Mittelalter* is an exception as it looks specifically at the women in the Frankish kingdoms from a source point of view.

1.5.3. Comparative material

An analysis of all of the representations of women in the literary source material from fifth- and sixth-century Gaul is required in order to better understand the effect of Christian, Gallo-Roman, and Germanic cultures on women in late antique Gaul. This would be extremely useful for further development of late antique social history but is beyond the scope of this research. The limits of this study are the source material from Sidonius and Gregory and, where necessary, relevant comparative material. As literary source material, the writings of Sidonius and Gregory do not exist in a void and other evidence can be useful in assessing the purpose rather than offering any insight to Germanic custom and the same can be said of his representation of the Germanic woman.

²⁸ See McKitterick (1983), Wemple (1981), Hen (1996), Nelson (1978) and (1991), and articles in Affeldt and Kuhn (1986) for social history of the Merovingian period. Wood (1994) is an excellent political history of this confusing period with an extensive bibliography. The sixth century is generally the starting point for many of these studies with the focus directed at the seventh to tenth centuries.

²⁹ For example see Erler and Kowaleski (1988), on women wielding power, Stuard (1987) and (1976), and Wemple (1985) on various aspects of medieval women.

value of the information. The comparative material includes the available legal evidence from Gaul in late antiquity as well as examples from other fifth- and sixth-century Gallo-Roman authors.³⁰ The material from Gallo-Roman bishops such as Ruricius of Limoges and Avitus of Vienne can help in developing the material from Sidonius Apollinaris.³¹ Venantius Fortunatus' secular poems are valuable for clarifying and comparing the evidence from his contemporary bishop, Gregory of Tours. Of Gregory of Tours' other literary works, the *Liber Vitae Patrum* is, as James has stated 'the most historical' of the hagiographical material and provides the most useful comparative evidence.³² It is important, where possible, to restrict comparative evidence to material that is contemporary and geographically compatible. Sidonius and Gregory discuss issues that relate to late antique Gaul. The regional nature of the information must be recognized and applied within the proper context.

A general understanding of the lives of women in late antiquity has increased enormously in the last two decades but the application of observations made from diverse cultural and linguistic sources to a specific group in a specific geographic region (in our case Gaul) is problematic. The importance of regional variation on the information that survives from the later Roman empire must be taken into consideration and parallels sought outside the region of Gaul may not have any significance. It has been a common practice to gather and combine evidence from a variety of regions in an attempt to produce a coherent understanding of events in the fifth and sixth centuries.³³ The present picture of the family and the role of

³⁰ The supplementary legal material is surveyed in appendix 2.

³¹ Paulinus of Nola who was born a Gallo-Roman but was bishop in Southern Italy also supplies some limited supplementary material.

³² See James (1998), 62. The other works of Gregory of Tours include: *Libri de Virtutibus Sancti Martini Episcopi*, *Liber in Gloria Confessorum*, *Liber in gloria Martyrum*, *Liber de Passione et Virtutibus Sancti Iuliani Martyris*.

³³ A good example of this regional variation is presented by Hopkins (1980) with respect to brother-sister marriage traditions in Egypt. This was certainly not a practice that took place in the rest of the Empire. Similarly eastern legal evidence has limited use since the laws promulgated in Constantinople in the fifth

women has been pieced together from sources derived from many different geographical and cultural origins.³⁴ This method tends to ignore the importance of regional variation.³⁵ For the late empire and early middle ages, we must be suspicious of inferences drawn from events or customs outside the sphere of our sources.³⁶ The representations of women in Sidonius and Gregory may be derived in general from Christian doctrine and Roman rhetoric but the information provided is specific to the fifth and sixth century in Gaul.

The limitations and complications of this study are apparent from the title. Comparing two authors who wrote a century apart in different genres is not a straightforward task. I hope to persuade other social historians that if these sources are employed as evidence for the history of women, then the genre, influences, and sources of the author must also be taken into consideration. An analysis of the literary representations of women is necessary before the changes in women's lives from the late Roman to early medieval world can be detailed. This is a preliminary study on the depiction of women in the literature of Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours. My purpose is to clarify and explain how women are represented in the context of the authors' literary aims and personal goals. These aims and goals must be established before the sources can be interpreted as evidence for social history. This will permit a reinterpretation and re-evaluation of the importance of Sidonius and Gregory as sources for social history. It is my intention to illustrate whether changes in the status and perception of women in the literary sources can be related to lives of real women from the fifth and the sixth centuries.

century may never have made it to Gaul. Certainly the legal reforms of Justinian are not applicable.

³⁴ Important and fundamental work on women in the middle ages by Herlihy (1975) and (1985) relies on source material from Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Langobard, Frankish, and Byzantine traditions.

³⁵ See Hen (1995), 5.

³⁶ This is especially true of Gregory of Tours who can be proven unreliable in his knowledge of foreign events, see below chapter 5.6.

CHAPTER 2

The Political and Social Context

The representation of women in Sidonius and Gregory takes place against the background of a society in transition. The Germanic peoples who came to rule Gaul in the late fifth century exercised significant influence on the lives and literature of our sources. Modern scholarship has come to understand that Roman and Germanic traditions 'were cultural elements that influenced and determined each other' in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul.¹ Authors contemporary to the events reflect a more separate and divisive cultural integration of barbarians and Romans.² The shift in power and influence from a predominantly Roman to a predominantly German world perceived in the literature of Sidonius and Gregory illustrates the contemporary attitudes of Romans towards barbarians. The following chapter details the historical events that led to the formation of the Germanic successor kingdoms in Gaul and provides the political context for the literature of Sidonius and Gregory.³

2.1. Roman Gaul

From the fourth century onwards, and especially after 406, the Roman provinces of Gaul were heavily influenced by Germanic peoples (including Alans, Vandals, Sueves, Visigoths, Burgundians, and Franks) who entered the region as invaders or settled as federated

¹ Amory (1997: 2) is speaking of the Ostrogoths and Romans in Italy but the same process occurred in Gaul. What is referred to here as Roman Gaul comprised two dioceses, that of the Gauls and that of the Seven Provinces.

² The Romans perceived all those peoples whose origins were from beyond the frontiers of the empire as barbarians so I use the term in that context.

³ For the history of the period see articles in Drinkwater and Elton (1992), Mathisen (1993), Wood (1994), Harries (1994), Geary (1988), Ewig (1976), Wallace Hadrill (1983), James (1988), Zöllner (1970), Van Dam (1985) and (1993), Heinzelmann (1976), Wolfram (1990), and Amory (1997).

allies.⁴ Over the course of the fifth century, the administration of the provinces of Gaul by a Roman prefect evolved into rule by Germanic kings. This transformation was part of a process that brought profound changes to the structure of both Gallo-Roman and Germanic societies. In c. 407, the administration of Gaul was transferred from Trier (the fourth century imperial capital on the Rhine frontier) to Arles, from where the imperially appointed *Praefectus Praetorio Galliarum* (Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls) governed.⁵ The Praetorian Prefecture was held by a succession of Gallo-Roman nobles and Germanic military commanders who vied for power and control over the region.

In the fifth century, Germanic peoples from inside and outside the frontier formed alliances with the imperial army and also challenged the structure of the empire. The Visigoths, Franks, and Burgundians joined forces with the Roman army of the Praetorian Prefect Aëtius to defeat the invading Huns in 451. With the death of Aëtius in 454, political factions in Gaul divided into two groups; those who had served the Roman cause in the north and those centered on the Visigoth power in the south. The inability of the Romans to organize consistent defence against Germanic expansion (with the exception of Majorian (457-461) and Anthemius (467-472)) resulted in a dramatically changed political situation in the latter half of the fifth century. At this time, independent kingdoms were forged by the ruling Visigoths, Franks, and Burgundians who had fought under Aëtius in 451.⁶ The much-diminished Roman presence was limited to the southeast and fell within the boundaries of the original Roman province of

⁴ The term *foederati* derives from *foedus* meaning treaty. The *foederati* originated as foreign troops in the service of the Roman army settled on the frontiers of the empire. The *foederati* had obligations concerning the defense of the empire, the provision of troops and occasionally additional payments. Articles in Drinkwater and Elton (1992) examine a variety of perspectives on the events of the fifth century in Gaul. Excellent introductions in Rouche (1979) and Zöllner (1970) provide insight into early fifth-century history from the perspective of the Visigoths and Franks.

⁵ Chastagnol (1973) discusses the administration of the Gauls in the period after December 406 and argues that from 407 Arles was the seat of the Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls.

⁶ The aftermath of invading nomads often left societies changed. See Geary (1999: 108-109) for the various models of ethnic formation among the barbarians.

Gallia Transalpina.⁷ The control of this region officially passed out of Roman hands in 476 when the last Roman emperor in the west was deposed.

2.2. The Germanic tribes

The settlement and origins of Germanic tribes in Gaul is documented by Roman sources whose inclination and traditions served to stereotype the Germanic people over the centuries.⁸ The reality is more complicated than our Roman sources allow. Heather points out, with reference to the formation of the Visigoths as a people, that 'identity comes in layers'.⁹ The gradual formation of the tribes known as Franks or Visigoths was the result of different, smaller tribes coming together under the leadership of one family. The identity and history of the tribe was created out of the identity and mythology of the leading family.¹⁰ As control over the western Roman empire passed into the hands of the Germanic rulers, their kingdoms shaped the political and social structure of the region. These kingdoms were fluid entities brought about from a mix of traditional Germanic culture, Roman Christianity, and Gallo-Roman conventions. The Gallo-Roman aristocracy of the fifth century viewed the Germanic peoples as barbarians but also understood that they were an integral part of the

⁷ See Werner (1984), 1-11, for an analysis of the transfer of power from Roman to Germanic leaders. He questions whether, by the fifth century, this was a conquest or just a transfer of administrative powers. For the impact of Aëtius' death, see Werner (1984), 9.

⁸ Caesar's *de bello Gallico* and Tacitus' *Germania*, provide the first records of Germanic social customs from a Roman perspective. Tacitus himself had no first-hand knowledge of the Germans and Caesar may offer a more accurate picture. Tacitus' representation of the Germans was driven by his desire to 'hold up a mirror to the metropolitan society of Rome to show it the decay of its ancestral values' (Ennen 1989: 24) and is of little use as comparative material with the fifth century. See also von Uslar (1980) for the history of the early Germanic tribes and Norden (1959) for a study on the early (pre) history of the Germanic people and Tacitus' sources.

⁹ Heather (1996), 6.

¹⁰ Geary (1999), 108. For the origins of the various germanic tribes see the introduction to the Goths in Heather (1996), 1-7 and Wolfram (1990), 7-13, for the Burgundians see Wood (1990) and the Franks see Zöllner (1970). For recent approaches to the study of the ethnogenesis of the Germanic tribes in general, see Amory (1997), 13-42; Geary, (1999); Pohl (1991); and Wolfram and Pohl (1990).

policies and politics of the time. By the time Gregory of Tours wrote his narrative history, the ruling political culture in Gaul had been exclusively Germanic for almost a century.

The Germanic tribes who had the greatest impact on Gaul were the Visigoths, the Franks, and the Burgundians. Distinctions among these groups were not as clearly defined as is portrayed by the contemporary Roman sources. Not surprisingly, the subtlety of the ethnogenesis in progress was lost upon the Romans of fifth- and sixth-century Gaul, who portrayed the various German people simply as invading barbarians. The following provides a general outline of the origins and traditions of the Germanic tribes who had the most influence on post-Roman Gaul.

2.3. The Visigoths¹¹

The Visigoths were the earliest group of barbarians to have a direct and lasting impact on Roman Gaul.¹² They played a central role in the restructuring of the balance of power in the fifth century. The formation of a Visigothic kingdom in Gaul was the end result of a 'forty-year migration'.¹³ In 376, tribes known as the Goths crossed the Danube frontier driven by pressure from the Huns to the east. Two years later, in 378, the Goths killed the emperor Valens at Adrianople and destroyed his army. In the ensuing peace, many Goths were settled as

¹¹ The name Visigoth refers to those Goths who settled in Gaul and Spain in the first half of the fifth century differentiating them from the Ostrogoths who settled in Italy in the second half of the fifth century. See Bowerstock *et al.* (1999), 475 and Wolfram (1988), 24-25 for the origins of the names Visigoth and Ostrogoth.

¹² Background and history for the Visigoths in general can be found in Thompson (1956); Wolfram (1988), 36-116; Liebeschuetz (1990); and Heather (1991) and (1996). For the Visigoths in Spain see Collins (1995). The many difficulties involved in understanding and interpreting the nature of the Gothic settlements and military activity are thoroughly discussed in these works. The development of modern anthropological and ethnographical theory as well as archaeological evidence have presented a much clearer picture of the Goths. See specifically Wolfram (1988), 1-18; Heather (1996), 1-7; and Liebeschuetz (1990), 7-88.

¹³ Wolfram (1988), 117-171.

foederati in the province of Thrace (c. 382).¹⁴ Others were incorporated directly into the army of the emperor Theodosius and fought successfully for him against Eugenius at the battle of the river Frigidus (394), where they suffered heavy losses. After the death of Theodosius in 395, the Goths under their leader Alaric roamed the empire as a military force, alternatively negotiating with the emperor for authority and when denied, pillaging and sacking cities in their path. By c. 400, the Roman population's rising hostility towards the Arian Goths led to a massacre in Constantinople.¹⁵ The Gothic invasion of Italy in c. 401/2 culminated in the sack of Rome in 410.¹⁶ In 412, under Athaulf, Alaric's successor, the Goths first appeared in Gaul (they had failed in an attempt to cross into Africa), carrying with them hostages and booty from the sack of Rome. Athaulf had negotiated an agreement with the emperor Honorius in Ravenna that provided the Goths with land in Gaul in exchange for military service (c. 413).¹⁷ The city of Narbonne became the Gothic 'capital' and Athaulf married Galla Placidia (c. 414), the sister of the emperor Honorius and one of his hostages.¹⁸ Constantius (*magister militum* of the west, 411-421) halted the Gothic success by driving them from much of Gaul into Spain and rescued Galla Placidia (whom Constantius himself married in 417). In 418, the Visigoths under their new king Wallia made a treaty with Constantius in which they were again granted land in Gaul.¹⁹

¹⁴ Wolfram (1988), 133.

¹⁵ See Cameron (1991). The Arianism of the Goths was a focal point for sources hostile to them.

¹⁶ See Liebeschuetz (1990), 48-85, for Alaric and the Gothic move west and also Rouche (1979), 20-26.

¹⁷ Rouche (1979), 20-26.

¹⁸ Heather (1991), 219.

¹⁹ For a more specific look at the Goths in Gaul and the settlement of 418, see Rouche (1979), Wolfram (1988), 150-171, Burns (1992), Nixon (1992), and Heather (1996), 221. The land given for the Gothic settlement is thought to have corresponded to the province of Aquitania Secunda, the region of the Garonne valley between Toulouse and Bordeaux. The settlement is recorded by Hydatius and Prosper. Hydatius (Chronicle 69) reports that *Gothi intermisso certamine quod agebant per Constantium ad Gallias revocati sedes in Aquitania a Tolosa usque ad Oceanum acceperunt*. Hydatius seems to be referring to the valley of

In the period following the Visigothic settlement of 418, Roman generals, especially Aëtius (*magister militum* in the west from 433-454), continued a policy of recruitment of Germanic forces to ensure the defence of Gaul. The result was a balance of power between the Romans and the various Germanic people who inhabited Gaul. The rise of Attila posed a real external threat to Gaul and to combat this, Aëtius joined forces with the Visigoths, Franks, and Burgundians against the Huns. The union of Roman and barbarian troops defeated Attila at the Catalaunian Plains in 451.²⁰ Theoderic I, the king of the Visigoths, died in that battle and was succeeded by his son Thorismodus (451-453). Thorismodus, in turn, was murdered and succeeded by his brother Theoderic II (453-466). Aëtius' murder in 454 changed the balance of power in the region and added new strength and identity to the Germanic tribes. The Visigoths maintained and increased their presence in Gaul after 454. Euric rose to power in 466 and hastened the eastward expansion of the Visigothic kingdom.

The combination of increased Germanic political power that followed the death of Aëtius and the instability in the Roman administration after the death of Majorian (461) left a power vacuum in Roman Gaul. Euric's campaigns extended Gothic power to much of southern Gaul and in treaty negotiations with Euric in c. 474-475 much of the province of Aquitanica Prima was handed over to the Goths. This territory included the city of Clermont, whose bishop was Sidonius Apollinaris.²¹ By the second half of the fifth century the Visigothic kingdom was an influential force in Gaul.²² Visigothic expansion in Gaul ended in 507 with their defeat

the Garonne river. Prosper (Chronicle 1271) is less specific when he reports *Constantius patricius pacem firmat cum Wallia data ei ad inhabitandum secunda Aquitanica et quibusdam civitatibus confinium provinciarum*. This seems to indicate that the whole province of Aquitanica Secunda and various cities on the borders of it were given over to the Goths.

²⁰ See Wolfram (1988), 177-178 for the details behind Aëtius' diplomacy and efforts to raise a force to face Attila.

²¹ See Sidonius *Epp.* 3.4.1, 3.2.4, 7.1.1 and 7.7 on the Visigothic conquest and the handover of Clermont.

²² See Elton (1992) for Roman policy and practice in fifth-century Gaul.

by the Franks at Vouillé (Vogliacum). After Vouillé, the Visigothic presence in Gaul was reduced to Septimania (modern Languedoc) and their base of power moved into Spain. The impact of the Visigoths on our sources was significant. Sidonius played an active part in imperial politics and, as the bishop of Clermont, in negotiations over land settlements.²³ To Gregory of Tours, who was the advisor to Frankish kings, the Visigoths were one of the most powerful neighbouring kingdoms and the main source of the Arian threat.²⁴

2.4. The Franks

The people called the Franks had a long history of contact with and military service in the Roman army. Despite this long history, there is little known about the Franks in Gaul before the mid-fifth century and most is preserved in legend.²⁵ No contemporary written accounts exist for the early Frankish settlement inside the frontiers of the empire and their origins were recorded only in the sixth and seventh centuries. Gregory of Tours (*DLH* 2.9) erroneously describes the geographical origins of the Franks as Pannonia. As Geary points out, Gregory may have located the origins of the Franks in Pannonia to coincide with the birthplace of St. Martin of Tours.²⁶ Trojan origins for the Franks are claimed by the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (1-4) and Wood contends that as kingship became hereditary over a

²³ For example see Sidonius *Ep.* 1.2 where he seems to be (or have been) at the court of the Gothic king Theodoric II. The letter dates to before Sidonius' ordination.

²⁴ The Visigoths had an impact on all the other contemporary Gallo-Roman sources, such as Avitus, Caesarius, Ruricius and Venantius.

²⁵ The Franks, their history, and their culture have been the focus of much study. The fascination over the baptism of Clovis and the origins of modern France serves to confuse the issue as much of what we know lies in legend. This is especially true since the 1500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis was celebrated in 1996, providing a plethora of publications dealing with the history and legend of Clovis and his Frankish kingdom, see especially articles in Rouche (1997). Some good, clear reading on the origins and background to the Franks can be found in Zöllner (1970), Ewig (1976), Werner (1984), Geary (1988), James (1988), and Wood (1994).

²⁶ Geary (1988), 78-80.

long period the Franks incorporated mythological or divine figures into their origins.²⁷

The term Frank was used first to refer to a conglomeration of Germanic tribes who made incursions across the Rhine frontier in the third century.²⁸ The Franks, or *Franci*, in origin, was a term meaning 'the free' or 'the fierce'.²⁹ By the mid-fourth century there are individual Franks referred to in the Latin sources as generals and military commanders in the Roman army.³⁰ The Franks were formed from a coalition of tribal groups and they possessed no common history.³¹ The names of some of these tribes were recorded during the campaigns of the Emperor Julian in 357-358. Ammianus Marcellinus tells us that Julian *regionem subito pervasit Francorum, quos Athuarios vocant*.³² It was the leaders of the Salian Franks (the *Salii*) who eventually become the rulers of Gaul and are identified with the word Frank.³³ Legend has it that in the early fifth century Chlodio became the king of the Frankish people. He is the earliest known king and was succeeded by his son Merovech (after whom the Merovingian dynasty took its name).³⁴ The sources provide little information about Chlodio

²⁷ This coincides with Geary (1999: 108). Wood (1977: 8) cites the example given in Fredegar (2.9) of Merovech's father being a sea monster. For the Frankish connection to the Trojan legend see Ewig (1997), 817-847.

²⁸ Zöllner (1970), 1; Geary (1988), 78; and James (1991), 35. The use of the term *Franci* to refer to a specific people first appears in Aurelius Victor (*de Caes.* 33.3) who speaks of a *gentes Francorum*.

²⁹ For the evidence for this interpretation of the term *Franci*, see Zöllner (1970), 1 and Geary (1999), 111.

³⁰ The evidence consists of brief comments in other sources: Ammianus Marcellinus describes Mallobaudes as *rex francorum* (31.10.6) which is the first mention of an actual king of the Franks. He was entrusted with fighting the Alamanni (a conglomeration of tribes from the upper Rhine) in c. 378 by the emperor Gratian. Other Franks employed in imperial military service were Bauto, Bonitus, Silvanus, and Malarichus. R. Collins (1999: 101) points out that it is unclear how consciously Frankish these men were in practice and dress. See Zöllner (1970), 22; James (1991), 38-44; and Wood (1994), 37.

³¹ Geary (1988), 78.

³² Ammianus Marcellinus (20.10.2): 'he (Julian) suddenly invaded the territory of the Franks, those whom they call the Attuarii'.

³³ See James (1988), 51 and Geary (1988), 78. See also Rivers (1986) and Drew (1991) for an introduction and translation of the laws of the Ripuarian and Salian Franks. Geary (1988), 78.

³⁴ Wood (1994: 33-54) details the early history of the Franks including their mythology. For the

and Merovech. A certain Cloio is mentioned in Sidonius Apollinaris' panegyric to the emperor Majorian (*Carm.* 5.212) and Gregory of Tours tells us that Merovech was his son (*DLH* 2.9).³⁵

As with the Visigoths and Burgundians, a more defined image of the Frankish leaders emerges in the aftermath of the death of Aëtius. This corresponds with the rise of Childeric, who ruled c. 456–482, and his son Clovis (482–511). Clovis consolidated and expanded the Frankish kingdom to include most of what had previously been Roman Gaul.³⁶ From 482, the capital of the Franks was at Paris and from there Clovis founded a dynasty that would dominate most of Gaul over the next two centuries. In 507, led by Clovis, the Franks defeated the Visigoths at the battle of Vouillé, driving them into Spain and becoming the dominant power in Gaul. At the death of Clovis in 511, the Frankish kingdom was divided among his four sons: Theuderic, Chlodomer, Childebert, and Chlothar. Throughout the sixth century Clovis' sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons fought a series of civil wars over the division of the territory of the Franks. In the seventh century Gaul was divided into three Frankish kingdoms: Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy. The actions of Clovis and his descendents had lasting repercussions on our sources and the history of their dynastic wars provides the background for eight out of the ten books of Gregory's narrative history.³⁷

2.5. The Burgundians

Like other Germanic peoples, the Burgundians crossed into the empire in 406. In 436,

origin of the Trojan myth of the Franks and a general discussion of the versions presented in Gregory, Fredegar and the *LHF* see Ewig (1997).

³⁵ See Zöllner (1970), 36–38.

³⁶ Zöllner (1970), 37–43.

³⁷ *DLH* 3–10; the death of Clovis is recorded at the end of book two.

they attempted to occupy the province of *Belgica Prima* but were soundly defeated by an army led by Aëtius and composed of Romans and Huns.³⁸ After this defeat, the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* records that the Burgundians, under a king Gundioc, were settled as Roman federates by Aëtius in the mid-fifth century (c. 442) in Sapaudia (*Maxima Sequanorum*), an area that roughly corresponds to the Savoie region of France.³⁹ The Burgundians became loyal allies of the Romans and fought with them against Attila at the Catalaunian Plains (451). In the confusion following the death of Aëtius in 454, the Burgundians expanded their territory while maintaining their alliance with the Romans.⁴⁰ The Burgundian kingdom first became prominent under Gundioc who died c. 470 and was succeeded by his brother Chilperic (1). At the death of Chilperic (1) c. 480, his nephews, the four sons of Gundioc, succeeded to rule the Burgundian kingdom. The Burgundian system of succession meant that the territory was not equally divided up among the brothers but a system of king and sub-kings existed.⁴¹ Gundobad (1), Gundioc's eldest son, became the chief king and resided at the Burgundian capital of Lyon (Sidonius' birthplace).⁴² Godigisel, Chilperic (2), and Godomar, the three sub-kings, resided in Geneva, Vienne, and Valence respectively.⁴³ Gundobad and his successor Sigismund (c. 516-523) ruled the Burgundian kingdom during its most influential period. Burgundian expansion included the city of Arles, the old Roman administrative centre, until it was lost to the Ostrogoths in c. 507/509. Burgundian territory was diminished as they

³⁸ Wolfram (1997), 250-251.

³⁹ See Wood (1994), 8-10, for an overview of the source material and Klingshirn (1994), 16-18, for the background to the Burgundian settlements. See also Wolfram (1997), 248-259.

⁴⁰ Sid. *Ep.* 3.4.1. describes how the territory of Clermont (Aquitania Prima) was caught between the Visigoths and Burgundians. The Burgundians are referred to by Sidonius as *propugnantes*.

⁴¹ Wolfram (1997), 257.

⁴² From c. 472-474 Gundobad was *patricius* in Rome after the death of his uncle Ricimer. Gundobad made his way to the Burgundian kingdom in c. 474 but is not thought to have become king until c.480.

⁴³ Wolfram (1997), 253.

found themselves caught between two expanding Germanic powers, the Franks to the west and the Ostrogoths the south.⁴⁴ Some territory was lost under Sigismund and the whole kingdom was absorbed into the Frankish realm in 534 under Godomar (524-534).

The Burgundians in the fifth century stand out as Roman allies and converts to catholic Christianity. Both these aspects of the Burgundians had an impact on their representation in the sources. Sidonius Apollinaris, whose home town of Lyon became a Burgundian capital, mentions the Burgundian king Chilperic and his queen in a positive light.⁴⁵ The positive attitude towards the Burgundian royalty in Sidonius was probably a result of their position as Roman allies and the fact that they had helped to defend Roman Clermont from the Visigoths.⁴⁶ Sidonius' comments on the piety of the Burgundian queen has led to the suggestion that perhaps she was a catholic Christian.⁴⁷ Gregory of Tours claims that king Gundobad (480-516) was personally converted by Avitus, bishop of Vienne, but was not publicly a catholic Christian (*DLH* 2.34).⁴⁸ Chlotild, a Burgundian princess, was a catholic Christian by the time of her marriage (late fifth century) as Gregory tells us she was instrumental in the baptism of Clovis.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ See Wolfram (1997), 254-257 for the complex events surrounding the demise of the Burgundians. See also Wolfram (1988), 311-313. Heather (1996: 230-235) describes the Ostrogothic expansion into Gaul. Gregory of Tours, *DLH* 3.5, 3.6 and 3.11. for the Frankish defeat of the Burgundians.

⁴⁵ See Sidonius *Epp.* 5.7 and 6.12 where he is generally positive about the king and queen. The king and queen Sidonius referred to were the aunt and uncle of Chlotild (1), the wife of Clovis (1). We know for certain that some of the Burgundian royalty were catholic Christians. See *DLH* 2.28-31. In *Ep.* 5.7 Sidonius refers to Chilperic as *tetrarcham nostrum*. If this reference is interpreted literally, Sidonius must be referring Chilperic 2, the son of Gundioc who ruled with his three brothers.

⁴⁶ Harries (1994), 229 and Wolfram (1988), 185 and (1997), 254.

⁴⁷ See Harries (1994), 232, for Sidonius' comments on the piety of the queen indicating that she practised catholic Christianity and not Arianism. It was not unheard of that the king and queen might practise two different forms of religion. The most famous example from Gaul is Chlotild and Clovis.

⁴⁸ Gundobad did not ever become a catholic Christian and Gregory's portrayal of the events is perhaps wishful thinking.

⁴⁹ There are interesting questions about conversion of royalty and the religion of the subjects. Gregory of Tours describes mass baptism of the Franks, who were not turned from Arian Christianity to

Overall, in the political events of the fifth and sixth centuries the relevance of the Burgundians was somewhat peripheral. In this peripheral role, they were important in maintaining, or unsettling, the balance of power between the sons of Clovis in the early sixth century. The Burgundian royalty was actively involved in making marriage treaties and alliances with Franks, Ostrogoths, and Visigoths. This included the marriages of the Burgundian king Sigismund with the Ostrogothic princess Ostrogotho-Areagni and the Frankish king Clovis with the Burgundian princess Chlotild.⁵⁰ In the end these alliances did little to ward off the demise of the Burgundians. Their kingdom was conquered by the Franks and disappeared in 534, but Burgundy remained (*DLH* 3.6). The Burgundian influence was pervasive enough that one of the three seventh-century Frankish kingdoms was called *Burgundia* and the region still is today.

2.6. Germanic identity and our sources

The contact between Gallo-Roman society and the Germanic tribes who settled in Gaul changed both cultures significantly. The sources who recorded this process in the fifth and sixth centuries relied heavily on traditional Roman and/or Christian rhetorical devices. The fifth-century Roman perspective of the barbarians is limited to static descriptions that do not reflect the fluidity and dynamics of the period.⁵¹ The traditional image of the civilized Roman

Orthodoxy, but from traditional Germanic (pagan) religion. Gregory reports that three thousand soldiers were baptized along with Clovis (*DLH* 2.31). For Gregory's description of the idol worship of the Franks, see *DLH* 2.10. For a recent assessment of Gregory's evidence for the baptism of Clovis see Shanzer (1998).

⁵⁰ Other alliances made by marriage include the Visigothic king Alaric II with the Ostrogothic princess Thiudogotho; the Ostrogothic king Theodoric with Audofleda, the sister of Clovis; and Suavegotha, the daughter of Burgundian king Sigismund and Theuderic I, king of the Franks. See Shanzer (1997) for more on Burgundians and marriage diplomacy, and Wolfram (1997), 254.

⁵¹ See the introduction in Amory (1997: 1-12) for an excellent summary on the diversity of late antique society.

and barbaric German is preserved in writers such as Sidonius. To Sidonius the barbarians were ‘... rigid and unteachable in body and in mind equally...’.⁵² The adherence to traditional rhetoric on the Germanic people in Sidonius reflects Amory’s comment that, ‘the late Roman empire was an antiquarianizing society at its wealthiest, most educated levels’.⁵³ The end of the Roman administration in the west saw traditional Roman rhetoric inherited by the Christian church. In the opinion of a post-Roman bishop like Gregory of Tours, the catholic Christians represented civilization and heretics became the barbarians.⁵⁴ To Gregory the barbarians were clearly the Arian Visigoths whereas the Franks, as catholic Christians, were given the mantle of civilization from the Romans.⁵⁵ For example, Gregory makes the use of the Roman rhetorical *topos* of violence to associate the Visigoths with barbaric behaviour.⁵⁶ Gregory singles out the Visigoths who he claims ‘adopted this detestable practice, that if any of their kings did not please them, they assassinated him...’.⁵⁷ From our evidence the assassination of Visigothic kings was no more frequent than the assassination of Frankish kings but Gregory’s intent is to emphasize the barbaric behaviour of the Arians. It is important to be aware of these literary conventions and rhetorical *topoi* when trying to decipher who was German, who was Roman and what it meant to be either.

The topics surveyed in this chapter cannot be properly dealt with in this thesis. This

⁵² Sidonius is referring to the Burgundians specifically (*Ep.* 5.5.3): *aeque corporibus ac sensu rigidi sint indolatilesque.*

⁵³ Amory (1997), 3.

⁵⁴ See Amory (1997), 22-23 and (1994b), 440-446.

⁵⁵ Gregory does not seem fully comfortable with this role for the contemporary Franks but he looks back to Clovis as the new Constantine. See below and *DLH* 2.30-1. Wood (1985), 249-272 on Gregory of Tours and Clovis.

⁵⁶ Amory (1997: 1) discusses violence as Roman anti-barbarian rhetoric.

⁵⁷ See *DLH* 3.30: *sumpserant enim Gotthi hanc detestabilem consuetudinem. ut si quis eis de regibus non placuisset, gladio eum appeterent.*

study is focused on the representation of women by two authors whose writings are frequently used as source material for this multi-faceted period. The background to this thesis is the process of the Germanic peoples coming together with Romans and creating a new society with distinct laws and culture.⁵⁸ Sidonius and Gregory lived over a century apart but both authors preserved traditional rhetorical views and practices in describing their own times. It is important to keep in mind that these views do not necessarily represent the reality of society but do represent the authors' literary intent.

⁵⁸ For the development of Germanic legal codes see appendix 2.

CHAPTER 3

The Literary and Rhetorical Context

The letters and poems written by Sidonius Apollinaris in the late fifth century and the narrative history written by Gregory of Tours in the late sixth century are essential sources for the history of late antique and early medieval Gaul.¹ These texts have not always been read with an understanding of their rhetorical intent or how the rhetorical strategy of the author influenced his representation of gender.² The nature of the information that is drawn from the sources relies upon literary conventions implicit in the author's chosen genre of writing. Narrative history, epistolography and poetry each come with their own set of literary constructs that impose certain limitations on subjects and detail. Acknowledgement of the different genres and their limitations will allow for greater insight into the representations of women. Genre is not the only factor that can influence an author's representation of women and gender. Other aspects that need to be considered here include the influences of the contemporary literary culture, personal experiences, and the aims of the author in writing and publishing his work.³

3.1. Late Roman aristocrats⁴ and bishops

Sidonius and Gregory came from illustrious families that belonged to the Gallo-Roman

¹ There are other important sources from the period, including the letters, poems, and sermons of Ruricius of Limoges († c. 507), Avitus of Vienne († c. 518), Caesarius of Arles († c. 542), and Venantius Fortunatus († c. 600). Less voluminous works survive that include the letters of bishop Faustus of Riez (the spiritual catalyst for both Sidonius and Ruricius), Marius of Avenches, and the collected letters in the *Epistulae Austrasiacae*. As comparative evidence these authors are referred to in relevant places throughout this study.

² See Cooper (1992), 150, who points out that the closer we look at the rhetorical strategies of the authors of ancient texts, the clearer the picture will be of ancient women.

³ The political and social context for the fifth and sixth centuries was surveyed in chapter two.

⁴ For the use of the term aristocrat see Mathisen (1993), 10-13. Amory (1997: xvi) uses the term 'elites' to refer to men of similar status in sub-Roman Italy.

senatorial aristocracy. Up until the late fifth century, the Gallo-Roman aristocrat acquired his authority from the Roman empire.⁵ The demise of Roman power in the fifth century increasingly drove the aristocracy to embrace the church. The aristocrat maintained his authority through entry into the Christian church and appointment to episcopal office.⁶ In the fifth century, those who held the position of bishop were almost exclusively from the governing class of the empire and personified the authority of the empire.⁷ Sidonius and Gregory, like many other Gallo-Roman bishops from late fifth- and sixth-century Gaul, were men of influence. The bishop was a community leader, negotiator, and liaison with the ruling powers.⁸ Many bishops also took on the role as political and spiritual advisors to the new rulers of Gaul and their personal authority was significant. Sidonius was frequently at the court of the Burgundian kings of Lyon and Gregory served as advisor to the Frankish kings Sigibert and Guntram.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the influential post of bishop was fiercely sought after. The number of available episcopal chairs was far fewer than the number of disenfranchised aristocrats who sought refuge in the church.⁹ In late antiquity, many of the episcopal

⁵ For the status of the Gallo-Roman aristocrat in the fifth century, see Mathisen (1993), 17-26.

⁶ The independence of Gallic aristocrats and their alienation from the Italian-based emperors is discussed in Harries (1992), 303; Heinzelmann (1992b), 243-246; and Mathisen (1993), 17-26.

⁷ See Brown (1992a), 51, who expresses the power and authority of the bishop in the eastern empire in these terms: the bishop represented '...the voice of the governing class of the eastern empire as a whole, a class with which bishops had become identified, by birth, culture and autocratic temperament'. Although Brown is discussing the eastern empire, I believe this can be applied to Gaul as well. Stroheker (1948: 110) notes that Germanic names begin to appear among the lists of bishops from Aquitaine, Narbonne and Lyon only towards the end of the sixth century.

⁸ See Klingshirn (1985) on the bishops' role in ransom of captives. See also Avitus, *Ep.* 5, a letter written to console the Burgundian king Gundobad on the death of his daughter. The letter indicates that Avitus was negotiating her marriage at the time of her death.

⁹ See Mathisen (1988), 50, who points out that many aristocrats would have had, at least, a portion of their land confiscated in land settlements.

positions in Gaul became family monopolies and bishops groomed their successors.¹⁰ Both Sidonius and Gregory acquired their episcopates through family contacts: the bishop of Clermont before Sidonius, Eparchius, was a relative of Sidonius' wife and Gregory claims that all but five of the previous bishops of Tours were his relatives.¹¹

Regardless of their status as aristocrats and men of the church, the bishops were vulnerable in the face of the new Germanic royal power. The Visigothic king Euric regarded the bishops as a challenge to his authority since they had become a focal point of resistance to Visigothic power. The power of the bishops was such that after 474/5, Euric did not appoint new bishops to posts that became vacant.¹² Sidonius was one of a number of bishops who opposed Visigothic rule and were exiled by Euric.¹³ The fact that Euric was an Arian prompted Sidonius and others to claim there was a suppression of the catholic faith under his rule. It is more probable that the persecution and exile of bishops was driven by Euric's need to curb the power of bishops in towns where they represented opposition to his rule.¹⁴

¹⁰ This was not the approved method of selection and Klingshirn (1994: 84) describes what the official selection process was intended to be and notes that inherited episcopal sees became illegal in 614 when the Council of Paris (can. 3) banned nepotism in the episcopal selection process.

¹¹ Sidonius' son also became a bishop (*DLH* 3.2). Ruricius, the bishop of Limoges, had a son who became bishop of Tours (*DLH* 10.31). Avitus became bishop of Vienne after his father. In *Ep.* 88 Avitus seems to suggest that his brother organize the episcopal election for his succession. See Mathisen (1981), 100. Caesarius inherited the episcopal chair at Arles from his uncle Aeonius (Klingshirn (1994), 31). For Gregory's appointment see *DLH* 5.49 and see Mathisen (1984) who explores the validity of his claims. Felix of Nantes tried to have his unordained nephew Burgundio succeed him (*DLH* 6.15). See also Heinzlmann (1976), 214-232, who presents the evidence for episcopal monopolies in cities such as Vienne and Limoges. Mathisen (1993: 89-104) looks at the acquisition of higher church offices by the aristocracy.

¹² Sid., *Ep.* 7.6.7: *Burdigala, Petrogorii, Ruteni, Lemovices, Gabalitani, Helusani, Vasates, Convenae, Auscenses, multoque iam maior numerus civitatum summis sacerdotibus ipsorum morte truncatus nec ullis deinceps episcopis in defunctorum officia suffectis....* 'Bordeaux, Périgueux, Rodez, Limoges, Javols, Eauze, Bazas, Saint-Bertrand, Auch, and a far greater number of other cities have now, by the death of incumbents, lost their bishops, and no bishops have been appointed to succeed the departed...' (Loeb translation).

¹³ Mathisen (1993), 33. Euric also exiled other bishops, including Simplicius of Bourges and Faustus of Riez. The bishop of Limoges, Ruricius, was not appointed until after the death of Euric (483).

¹⁴ See Mathisen (1993), 32-35; Wolfram (1988), 197-202; and Heather (1996), 213; on the ecclesiastical policies of Euric and Alaric II.

Euric's interference in episcopal matters was the beginning of a change in the selection process of a bishop. It became necessary for a bishop's appointment be confirmed by whichever king ruled over the episcopal city.¹⁵ The result meant that royal patronage was necessary to be appointed bishop. The intensity of episcopal rivalry and politics increased as episcopal selection became mixed with royal patronage and civil strife. Consequently, we must keep in mind that our sources were involved in justifying and defending their positions as bishops. Self-defense and self-justification are important factors underlying their rhetorical strategies.¹⁶

The shift in the selection process of a bishop is significant for understanding the representation of women in our sources. Once the process of appointing a bishop depended on the king's final word, then the queen's view became more relevant. The Germanic queens had a significant interest in religious matters and over the course of the sixth century, certain queens had influence in decisions concerning the appointment of bishops and royal patronage.¹⁷

Gregory's position as bishop of Tours was an influential factor in his rhetorical representations. His appointment to the episcopal see of Tours was contested and throughout his tenure he faced challenges to his authority. The environment in the sixth century church was competitive and the evidence provided by Gregory suggests that different factions in the church battled each other for power and influence. Two significant events that directly touched Gregory provide an example of the conflicts within the church hierarchy. In c. 580, Gregory was accused of slandering the reputation of Queen Fredegund and appeared in front of King

¹⁵ Scheibelreiter (1983: 149-56) discusses the king's patronage and its influence on the selection of bishops.

¹⁶ Sidonius faced a rebellion by two priests (*DLH* 2.23) and in *DLH* 5.49 Gregory faced a challenge to his episcopal position.

¹⁷ Brunhild, the Frankish queen and wife of King Sigibert, is reported to have been instrumental in Gregory's appointment as bishop (Venantius Fortunatus *Carm.* 5.3.15-16). Certainly Sidonius indicates that the favour of the Visigothic queen was worth cultivating (*Ep.* 4.8).

Chilperic to answer the charges. Gregory claims that his accuser, the priest Riculf, was put up to the challenge by Leudast, the count of Tours, an enemy of Gregory.¹⁸ Ecclesiastical rivalries seem to be behind the accusation against and then death of Gregory's brother Peter, deacon of Langres.¹⁹ The *DLH* is replete with examples of bishops who are challenged by rivals or caught up in territorial battles between Frankish kings.²⁰ Gregory was as immersed in episcopal politics as any of the other bishops he describes and defense of his bishopric was an integral part of his narrative history.²¹ In the *DLH*, there are frequent attacks on the morality (or immorality) of priests and fellow bishops. Equally present is the condemnation of the morality of kings who interfered in church affairs.²² Gregory's overt criticism of his contemporaries serves, through comparison, to justify and defend his position and that of those he supported.

Gregory's life and times were, in some respects, quite distant from men of the same status who lived a century earlier. In the late fifth century, a man like Sidonius could hold on to, rhetorically speaking, the ideals of Rome and *romanitas*. A century later, *romanitas* was a distant concept and the rhetorical ideal had shifted from Rome to the catholic Christian

¹⁸ See *DLH* 5.48 for the background to Leudast's position as count of Tours and 5.49 for Gregory's explanation of the events including Riculf's attack. Gregory's contemporary and rival Felix, the bishop of Nantes, has a role in both events. See n. 19 below.

¹⁹ The death of Gregory's brother and his rivalry with Felix of Nantes are described in *DLH* 5.5. Felix of Nantes and his relationship with Gregory are discussed in McDermott (1975). Up until 572, it was Gregory's relatives who held the position of bishop in Langres. Episcopal politics are never far from Gregory's rhetorical intent. See Heinzelmann (1994), 49 and Mathisen (1984), 84 on Gregory's episcopal position and his presentation of it in the *DLH*.

²⁰ There is also the example of Bishop Theodore of Marseilles (*DLH* 6.24) who was thrown into prison as a result of his involvement in the affair of the pretender Gundovald and the battle between Kings Chlothar and Childebert.

²¹ His hagiographical works include the *vitae* of many of Gregory's relations and might be seen to serve the same purpose.

²² There is nothing accidental about Gregory's narrative sequence in *DLH* 4.2 where he mentions Chlothar's intention to tax church revenues and *DLH* 4.3 where Gregory describes Chlothar's many wives, children, and the incest he committed by marrying sisters. This is elaborated on further in chapter five.

church.²³ Gregory's criticism of his opponents functions as a protection of his position and a defence of the institution of the Church as a whole. The veneration of the Church, the Christian ideal, and the glorification of those whose actions supported this are a repeated theme in Gregory's literature.

3.2. Sidonius Apollinaris

Sidonius is perhaps the best known of the late Roman bishops in Gaul and certainly one of the most prolific authors: 'the most blue-blooded aristocrat in Gaul, who served as Prefect of Rome in 468 and then as bishop of Clermont and wrote letters that provide an invaluable firsthand glimpse into Gallic aristocratic life'.²⁴ There is general agreement in the secondary literature about the importance of Sidonius Apollinaris as a source for late fifth-century Gaul.²⁵ There is not, however, agreement on how to interpret the information presented in his letters. The questions of '...how far, and in what ways, we can use Sidonius' letters as a source of detailed information...' have been explored recently by Percival, who expresses the need to examine carefully the literary context of the information.²⁶ Evidence from Sidonius' letters and poems appears in almost every study that deals with Gaul in this period.²⁷ This includes recent studies of women in the late Roman empire whose authors make use of Sidonius' evidence.²⁸ In his study of woman and law in the late empire, Arjava acknowledges Sidonius

²³ See James (1998) who argues that Gregory did not consider himself a Roman at all.

²⁴ Mathisen (1993), xiv.

²⁵ Sidonius' letters provide 'a unique perspective on the aristocratic, literary, and Christian society of late Roman Gaul'. Bowerstock *et al.* (1999), 694.

²⁶ Percival (1997)

²⁷ For Sidonius and fifth-century Gaul see Mathisen (1979) and (1993) and articles in Drinkwater and Elton (1992). For Sidonius' importance as a source for the Germanic successor kingdoms, see Wolfram (1997), 149-51, 258-59, and Heather (1998), 190ff. See also Reydellet (1981) on the representation of royalty in Sidonius.

²⁸ See Clark (1993), 52, 61, 97; Evans-Grubbs (1993a) and (1995); Arjava (1996) and Nathan (2000)

as one of the few late fifth-century sources.²⁹

The material is employed to provide confirmation of female behaviours or attitudes towards women. Sidonius does not, in general, provide descriptive evidence about women's lives and the rhetorical and stylistic basis for his representations must be recognized. For example, Coon uses Sidonius as evidence for the preservation of the aristocratic ideal in the fifth century of men philosophizing and women spinning.³⁰ To generalize here is dangerous because this portrayal comes from an *epithalamium* written for a specific couple with a very specific mythological context which is, in fact, outside of Sidonius' general representations of women.

3.3. Sidonius Apollinaris: biographical sketch³¹

Sidonius was born in the early 430s to a prominent family from Lyon. He married the daughter of Eparchius Avitus, a praetorian prefect of the Gauls and then emperor in 455. Sidonius accompanied Avitus to Rome, but in 456 the emperor was killed and we lose track of Sidonius until he reappears in 458 at Lyon. There he delivered a verse panegyric on behalf of the city to the new emperor Majorian.³² After the elevation of Anthemius to imperial power in 467, Sidonius again delivered a panegyric to the emperor (468) and was appointed prefect of the city of Rome.³³ Sidonius' activities after 468 are unclear but we know that he soon returned

who all employ Sidonius' evidence.

²⁹ Arjava (1994), 31.

³⁰ See Coon (1997), 42 who referring to Sid., *Carm.* 15. and below 4.3.3.

³¹ For a full background and history of Sidonius' life, see Harries (1992) and (1994); Stevens (1933); as well as Mathisen (1979), (1981), and (1993); and Loyen (1943). See Duchesne (1894) vol 2, 31-39. for the history of the bishops of Clermont. Sidonius was the eleventh known bishop of Clermont.

³² See Harries (1994), 84 and Mathisen (1993), 19.

³³ Sidonius was one of the most politically active of his generation and he urged his colleagues to partake in imperial government, see Mathisen (1993), 20-21.

to Gaul where he was ordained as a priest and became bishop of Clermont in c. 470/1. Sidonius' career as the bishop of Clermont lasted until his death (c. 483).³⁴

Sidonius, like other Roman aristocrats in the fifth century, was a married man with children when he was ordained bishop. When a married senator joined the clergy he and his wife were required to take a vow of celibacy. As Peter Brown states, 'such celibacy tended to take the form of postmarital abstinence from sexual relations. It was not a spectacular renunciation. Sexuality was considered by ancient men to be a volatile substance, rapidly used up in the "heats" of youth.'³⁵ To a man like Sidonius one of the most attractive aspects of this transition was that he could continue to play an important role in public life after the Roman administration in Gaul ceased to function.³⁶ In 475 the city of Clermont was handed over to Euric, the king of the Visigoths, in a treaty negotiated by bishops from Provence.³⁷ Sidonius felt quite strongly that Roman Clermont had been betrayed and saw himself as the defender of Roman interests in Clermont and its territory. Eventually, after some time in exile for these anti-Visigothic sentiments, Sidonius accepted Gothic rule and worked within the new Germanic kingdom as bishop and statesman for the church, his parish, and Gallo-Roman aristocratic interests.³⁸

3.4. Sidonius' literary work as an historical source

Sidonius led a distinguished political career and was known throughout Gaul as an author of both poetry and letters. He ceased to write poetry after he became bishop of

³⁴ We do not know exactly when Sidonius died, the date is generally given as after c. 481.

³⁵ Brown (1987), 269.

³⁶ Mathisen (1993), 32.

³⁷ The emperor Julius Nepos appointed four bishops from Provence to negotiate with Euric. See Sid., *Ep.* 7.7.1; Wolfram (1984), 184-188; Rouche (1979), 41-42; and Heather (1994), 194.

³⁸ See Reydellet (1981), on Sidonius and the Germanic royalty. Sidonius praises the power of the Gothic king in *Ep.* 8.9.5., a letter written while he was in exile.

Clermont, believing it unseemly for a Christian bishop, but continued as an epistolographer. Consideration of the context in which Sidonius wrote his letters and poems is an essential factor in understanding what he says about women. Sidonius' letters and poems were self-published. His surviving work comprises twenty-four poems and nine books of letters. Book one and most of book two were written prior to 469, before Sidonius entered the church.³⁹ Further books of Sidonius' letters were published in instalments at various points after 476. The ninth and last book of letters was completed after 481.⁴⁰

Sidonius was involved in the tumultuous politics of the late fifth century and his perspectives on these events are some of the only contemporary evidence for this period.⁴¹ The correspondence between Sidonius and his aristocratic colleagues makes up an intrinsic part of the evidence for the literary culture of late Roman Gaul.⁴² Mathisen has pointed out that to Sidonius and his colleagues, the letters were a means of upholding their status as educated Gallo-Roman senatorial aristocrats.⁴³ The style and purpose of Sidonius' letter-writing follows the tradition of Latin epistolographers such as Cicero, Pliny, and, closer to his own time, Symmachus.⁴⁴ Sidonius lived in a predominantly Christian environment, but his writing looks back to the traditions of Roman literature. His prose is highly rhetorical and his veneration of Rome and Roman ideals is a constant theme.⁴⁵

Jill Harries has pointed out that Sidonius was born into a world that could be considered post-Roman in many ways.⁴⁶ Sidonius' literary style, however, was in keeping with late

³⁹ Harries (1992), 299 and Harries (1994), 7.

⁴⁰ For the overall organization of the letters see Harries (1994), 8-10.

⁴¹ See Percival (1997), 279-280.

⁴² Mathisen (1981) analyses of the family ties between this very close circle of correspondents.

⁴³ Mathisen (1988), 51 and also Mathisen (1993), 105-118.

⁴⁴ Harries (1994), 7.

⁴⁵ Harries (1992), 300.

⁴⁶ Harries (1994), 24.

Roman traditions. His published book of poetry includes panegyrics, epithalamia, and 'everyday' poems written to friends and colleagues. In his poetry as in his prose his debts were to earlier models '... his panegyrics of the emperors Avitus, Majorian, and Anthemius owed much to the panegyrics of Claudian, the panegyricist of Stilicho and Honorius.'⁴⁷ Sidonius wrote three panegyrics for three emperors. The first was written for the accession of his father-in-law Avitus and the last in honour of the accession of Anthemius to the imperial purple in 468.⁴⁸ The panegyrics are poems of flattery, written to praise and celebrate the person, deeds and family of the emperor. For our purposes, the panegyrics, as poems of power and patronage, provide little information, rhetorical or not, on women outside of references to goddesses of war and the deifications of Roma and other cities. Exceptions to this are discussed in more detail in chapter four, especially Sidonius' implication in *Carm.* 5 that Aëtius' wife, Pelagia, was a motivating factor in the dismissal of Majorian.⁴⁹

The two *epithalamia* written by Sidonius, unlike the panegyrics, have a great deal to say about women. The *epithalamia* focus specifically on the mythological ideals of marriage and are dedicated to the bridal couple. The *epithalamium* was a wedding poem that experienced a revival in Latin poetry of the fourth and fifth centuries.⁵⁰ The origins of the revival of this genre in Latin are traced back to the Flavian poet Statius.⁵¹ Closer to Sidonius' time it was the

⁴⁷ Harries (1994), 2.

⁴⁸ Watson (1998), 180-184 on Sidonius' panegyric to Avitus. On Sidonius and Avitus see Mathisen (1979). The panegyric to Majorian was written in honour of the emperor's *adventus* to Lyon (*Carm.* 5).

⁴⁹ See *Ep.* 5.126-139 where Sidonius compares her to Medea.

⁵⁰ An *epithalamium* was a poem traditionally sung in front of the wedding chamber to block out the sounds of the bride on her wedding night. This form of poetry first appears in the Latin tradition in Catullus (*Carm.* 61) but was based on Greek precedents and went through a revival in the Hellenistic age. See Thomson (1997), 347-350 for an analysis of Catullus 61 and the use of the *epithalamium* in Latin tradition.

⁵¹ Roberts (1989a), 321. Pavlovskis (1965), 165, refers to Statius as the 'founder of the later Latin epithalamium'. For the complete history of epithalamia in Latin literature see Morelli (1910) and Keydell (1962).

late fourth/early fifth century poet Claudian who wrote perhaps the most famous Latin *epithalamium*. Written as a form of panegyric for the imperial family, Claudian's *epithalamium* was written in honour of the marriage of the emperor Honorius and his bride Maria, the daughter of the *magister militum* Stilicho.⁵² Mythological images employed by Statius and Claudian are taken up by Sidonius in his *epithalamia*. Despite the fact that he drew on earlier examples, Sidonius' *epithalamia* are very original and employ what Roberts refers to as a 'creative use of myth'.⁵³ One of the qualities of all the late Latin *epithalamia* is their originality. The authors adapted the poems to fit the couples they praise and/or the style of the occasion.⁵⁴ The originality of the *epithalamia* gives greater scope for insight into the representations of women. The variety of brides illustrated by mythological amplification presents a changing picture of the ideal and also indicates individualization. To what degree this

⁵² See Cameron (1970), 98-102, for the political overtones in Claudian's *epithalamium*. Watson (1998: 181) claims Statius as the main stylistic influence for Sidonius' poetry although the influence of Claudian is more direct and that of Ausonius was also important. In *Ep.* 4.14.2. Sidonius praises the poetry of Ausonius explicitly.

⁵³ Roberts (1989a), 343. Sidonius' adaptations have not always been appreciated, his stylistic developments are referred to as 'tiresome amplification' by Pavlovskis (1965), 170.

⁵⁴ Other late Latin authors wrote wedding poems although there is a debate whether they can be called *epithalamia*. Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola wrote wedding poems that are generally considered outside the genre described here. Paulinus of Nola's wedding poem is written exclusively within the context of a Christian wedding and whether or not it should be considered within the context of other *epithalamia* or in a genre of its own is in question. See Roberts (1989a), 337-338 for an analysis of this issue. Ausonius' wedding poem, called the *Cento Nuptialis* (*Carm.* XVIII), may have been written for the wedding of the young emperor Gratian c. 374. Neither Morelli (1910: 337) nor Roberts (1989a: 321 n.2) consider it in the same genre as the Statius/Claudian inspired *epithalamia* written by Sidonius. For Ausonius' *epithalamium* see also Green (1991), 518 and Keydell (1962), 937-938. The wedding poems written by Ennodius and Venantius Fortunatus, however, are considered to be in the Statian/ Claudian and Sidonian tradition. In c. 510, Ennodius wrote an *epithalamium* (*Carm.* 1.4) and in c. 566 Venantius Fortunatus celebrated the marriage of Sigibert and Brunhild with a poem (*Carm.* 6.1) that is discussed in chapter five. For the *epithalamia* of Ennodius and Venantius see Morelli (1910), 394-401; Keydell (1962), 939-942; Pavlovskis (1965), 172-176; and Roberts (1989a), 344-348.

individualization relates to the different personalities of the brides or to the different tastes of the grooms, is further discussed in chapter four.

3.5. The literary culture of Sidonius

Understanding to and for whom Sidonius wrote is ultimately essential in any interpretation of his representations of women. The literary circle of Sidonius Apollinaris was a small one. Mathisen notes that in late antique Gaul, 'close literary ties tended to be with one's relatives, whether by blood or by marriage, and that literary and family circles tended to overlap'.⁵⁵ In Sidonius' world of post-Roman Gaul, displaying one's literary abilities and connections to the Roman past were part of the battle against the changes occurring all around. The shared literary culture of Sidonius and his friends defined them as a class, as a group, and as Romans, in a world where allegiances changed rapidly.⁵⁶

Sidonius wrote while a Roman senator and a Christian bishop. This tends to give his work two similar but different voices. One voice speaks with the moral tones of a Christian bishop and the other with the political and social language of a Roman aristocrat. Sidonius was conscious of the different roles he played and this results in a change in voice depending on to whom he wrote. Certain letters portray Bishop Sidonius looking after his parish while other letters illustrate the aristocratic Sidonius displaying his knowledge and rhetorical skill.⁵⁷ The fact that Sidonius adapted his writing to fit the occasion is not a revelation but it means that we must consider the occasion each time we look at his representation of women.

⁵⁵ Mathisen (1981), 95.

⁵⁶ See Roberts (1989a), 338 and Mathisen (1988) and (1981), on the theme of literary decline and on the literary culture of Sidonius and his friends, see also Percival (1997) for how consciousness of change Sidonius may have been.

⁵⁷ Compare for example *Ep.* 8.9, written to the poet and rhetor Lampridius with *Ep.* 8.14 written to Principius, the bishop of Soissons. The letter to the rhetor is appropriately filled with mythological references and that written to the bishop contains mostly biblical references.

Through the publication of his letters and poems, one of Sidonius' primary aims was to present an image of himself and his views. Sidonius wrote to his friends, relatives, fellow-bishops, and aristocrats. He wrote to those with whom he shared values, education, and mutual support. The context for the information drawn from his letters and poems is restricted to the boundaries of Sidonius' literary circle. The information from his letters cannot be applied beyond this group. His own world was small although he himself travelled in Gaul and to Italy.⁵⁸ The women mentioned by Sidonius come from this small circle of aristocrats. They often appear as only a name, or are identified by their role as a wife, daughter, or mother.

As discussed above, the representations of women in Sidonius' literature are a product of many factors: genre, culture, traditions, personal history, and rhetorical aims all influenced the way women appear in his writing. From this background it is my intention to examine the identity and the context of the women in the literature of Sidonius. This will allow for further understanding of the rhetorical standards set by the author and once established may allow us to further clarify Sidonius' value as source for social history in the late fifth century.

3.6. Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours is a controversial figure for modern historians and his surviving writings have generated an enormous variation in scholarly opinion.⁵⁹ There is little agreement on the nature and purpose of his writing. The opinions range from Gregory as a man of his time who reported on his world with little artifice, to Gregory as the author of a clever rhetorical history about the demise of civilization.⁶⁰ One reason for the controversy is that Gregory

⁵⁸ For the travels of the fifth-century Gauls in general, see Mathisen (1992), 228-38.

⁵⁹ Goffart (1988: 112-127) presents a thorough account of how opinions have changed towards Gregory over the centuries.

⁶⁰ See for example Vetere (1979: 5) who declares that Gregory 'fu soprattutto l'uomo de VI secolo, colui che visse con esatta misura e lucida intuizione il significato del suo tempo, la crisi di crescita che si celava

wrote his narrative history in a style and language unique and distant from his immediate predecessors. Gregory's narrative history is of great importance for our understanding of the formation of the early medieval world as it is the only surviving narrative history for fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. In order to understand how women are portrayed in Gregory's narrative history we must first examine Gregory's place as a Latin source for fifth- and sixth-century history. The specific aspects of Gregory's narrative considered here had a direct effect on the representation of women. They include his personal biography, the rhetorical aims of his history, his sources, and the influences on his writing.

3.7. Gregory: biographical sketch

Georgius Florentius Gregorius was born in Clermont (c. 539) and died in Tours (c. 594). As a young man, he went to study with his uncle Nicetius, the bishop of Lyons, and was ordained as a deacon in c. 563. A decade after his ordination, Gregory was appointed the bishop of Tours (c. 573). Both his father Florentius and his mother Armentaria were from distinguished senatorial and episcopal families. On his maternal side, his relatives included Tetricus and Gregory, who succeeded each other as bishops of Langres from 507-572.⁶¹ Gregory's extended family held episcopates all over Gaul and he implies that his position as the bishop of Tours was basically inherited.⁶² Tours was one of the eleven metropolitan cities in

dietro le ombre della decadenza'. For the opposite view see Goffart (1988: 199), who claims that Gregory '...painted a distorted verbal picture of the Gaul he lived in so as to show its true moral nature'.

⁶¹ See Verdon (1989) for a biographical assessment of Gregory's life.

⁶² *DLH 5.49: ignorans miser: quod praeter quinque episcopos, reliqui omnes, qui sacerdotium Turonicum susceperunt, parentum nostrorum prosapiae sunt coniuncti* 'poor fellow, he was unaware that but for five bishops, all the rest of the bishops of Tours were related to my family' (Translation Mathisen (1984), 84). The validity of this claim is investigated by Mathisen (1984) and has generally been accepted by most modern scholars. See also Stroheker (1948), 239 and Heinzlmann (1976), 213-254, for Gregory's family ties to the episcopal aristocracy through his mother. Gregory does not mention his actual appointment as bishop in his history but he records the event in the *Liber de virtutibus sancti Martini* (2.1).

Gaul in the late sixth century and as bishop, Gregory was a powerful man.⁶³

As the bishop of Tours from c. 573-594, Gregory lived and worked first and briefly under King Sigibert and Queen Brunhild. It was during Sigibert's reign that Gregory was appointed bishop of Tours. After the death of Sigibert (c. 575), his son Childebert (2), who was only a boy of five at the time, inherited the throne but Tours itself was under the rule of Chilperic until his death in c. 584 (*DLH* 6.46).⁶⁴ Gregory portrays Chilperic as the antithesis of everything he believed a king should be and refers to him as *Nero nostris temporis et Herodis* (*DLH* 6.46).⁶⁵ With the death of Chilperic, Tours came under the rule of Gregory's favourite contemporary king, Guntram.

3.8. *Decem Libri Historiarum*

The *DLH* is the predominant literary source for the history of fifth- and sixth-century Gaul.⁶⁶ It is unique among the surviving contemporary literary material. A variety of problems exist with the *DLH* including, where it fits into the historiography of late antique Gaul, how we should evaluate the information provided, and what it can bring to light.⁶⁷

⁶³ The other metropolitan cities were Arles, Lyons, Vienne, Rouen, Sens, Trier, Rheims, Bourges, Bordeaux, and Narbonne (Thorpe (1974), 12, n. 31).

⁶⁴ See *DLH* 4.51 and 5.1 for Sigibert's death and Childebert's accession to the throne respectively.

⁶⁵ As Wood (1993b: 256) points out the *DLH* was posthumously published.

⁶⁶ The secondary scholarship is vast. For an interpretation of Gregory as an historical source see Heinzelmann (1994), Breukelaar (1994), Weidemann (1982), Thurlmann (1974), Reydellet (1981), 345-437, Goffart (1988), de Nie (1987), Verdon (1989) and Wood (1993b). There is also an influential chapter on Gregory in Auerbach (1953). These studies have made significant advances in the attempt to understand a complex figure who is of utmost importance to our perception of fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. Almost all historical scholarship on the fifth and sixth centuries in Gaul have used Gregory to some degree and general histories of early medieval Europe as well. Some of the most recent and also those used in this study include Collins (1999), Wood (1994), Goffart (1987) and (1988), Van Dam (1993), Geary (1988), James (1988), and Wallace Hadrill (1962) and (1975).

⁶⁷ See for example Breukelaar (1994: 16) who states that the *DLH* 'seems a series of unconnected

Further analysis of the representations of women must begin with an examination of the influences on Gregory and his sources for and aims in writing the *DLH*.

The organization of the *DLH* is such that it sprints through a few thousand years of world history and slows to a crawl through the twenty years of Gregory's episcopacy at the end of the sixth century.⁶⁸ Book one includes selected events from Creation and Adam and Eve up to the death of St. Martin, bishop of Tours, in 397. Books two through four cover from 397 down to 575, where the events and characters relevant to our study begin. In book five the *DLH* begins to focus on events contemporary to Gregory's tenure as bishop of Tours. Books five to ten are basically contemporary history (575 - 591) viewed through the eyes of Gregory, the bishop.⁶⁹

3.8.1. The *DLH*: a Christian or personal history?

The format of the *DLH* suggests that Gregory placed his history within the context of a Christian world. One can argue that Gregory wanted the contemporary part of his history to be considered within this same continuum. Goffart suggests that we should look to Sulpicius Severus' chronicle for the contextual framework of the *DLH* because the structure of Severus' chronicle, like the *DLH*, begins at Creation and then narrows the focus to Gaul.⁷⁰ A more

highlights and too often awkward, exotic topics, isolated strange moments of Dark Age life, for which the euphemisms 'episodic' and 'anecdotal' rank as the most flattering descriptions' and also Heinzlmann (1992), 537 on the genre '...tantôt on a assimilé les *Histoires* au genre des mémoires, tantôt on a préféré souligner leur caractère 'national' (*historia Francorum*), ecclésiastique, ou de chronique universelle.'

⁶⁸ Gregory gives the total number of years from Creation to his present as five thousand seven hundred and ninety-two (*DLH* 10.31).

⁶⁹ The dates covered by each book according to Heinzlmann (1994: 42-78): book five covers 575-580, book six 581-584, book seven 584-585, books eight and nine 585-589 and book ten 589-591.

⁷⁰ Other than the frame-work, there is little resemblance between Severus' Chronicle and the *DLH*. Severus was much more interested in biblical history than Gregory.

conclusive link may be Sulpicius Severus' connection to St. Martin of Tours, Gregory's patron saint and inspiration.⁷¹ Gregory makes direct reference to Sulpicius Severus' Chronicle in the *DLH* and also declares that he had read the *de vita Beati Martini* (*DLH* 1.7 and 2. *pref.*, and 10.31).⁷²

Heinzelmann places the *DLH* within the context of Christian historiography. He claims that the *DLH* 'relate les événements historiques en fonction de l'action permanente de Dieu dans l'histoire'.⁷³ In Gregory's narrative the miraculous events that occur, the actions of kings, queens, holy men, and holy women are guided by the will of God or the forces of the devil. The narrative recounts the pious or impious actions of Frankish kings and queens interspersed with the miracles and wonders performed by saintly bishops and nuns.⁷⁴ In the preface of book two, Gregory sets out his intentions and alludes to some of his influences. *Sic et Eusebius, Severus Hieronymusque in Chronicis, atque Orosius, et bella regum et virtutes martyrum pariter texuerunt. Ita et nos idcirco sic scripsimus quo facilius saeculorum ordo, vel annorum ratio usque ad nostra tempora tota reperiatur* (*DLH* 2. *prefatio*).⁷⁵ It is

⁷¹ Mitchell (1987: 82-83) suggests that Gregory modelled the depiction of himself as bishop after that of St. Martin. See also Goffart (1988), 157-158. Severus' Chronicle presents a larger historical perspective that is missing in Gregory.

⁷² Sulpicius Severus' *vita* is the earliest saint's life written in Gaul (c. 397) and serves as the model for others that came later.

⁷³ Heinzelmann (1992), 539. See also Werner (1990), 137.

⁷⁴ See Ruggini (1977) on the construction of ecclesiastical histories. Ruggini's study is based on Eusebius and although Gregory may have been aware of Eusebius' ecclesiastical history through the Latin translation by Rufinus, we cannot prove this. Gregory claims to have reference to Eusebius' chronicle, available to Gregory in the Latin version translated by Jerome, but there is no direct evidence that he had a copy of Rufinus. Werner (1990: 137), in studying Orosius, declares that his intent was to reveal 'la véritable histoire du monde dirigé par Dieu seul' and applies this to the Latin tradition of Christian history in general. See also Werner (1987) for Gregory's place within the development of this branch of Christian historiography.

⁷⁵ 'Thus Eusebius, Severus and Jerome in chronicles and Orosius wove together equally the wars of kings and the miracles of martyrs. Thus I too have written in this way so that the succession of the centuries right up to our own time and the calculation of all the years can be more easily discovered.'

legitimate to assume that Gregory's history was inspired by the Christian chronicles he mentions and by Orosius' history.⁷⁶ The inference made from the *prefatio* is that Gregory intended to write a history of the Christian world, in relative chronological order, that displayed 'la dichotomie entre la sainteté et le fonds commun des actions humaines'.⁷⁷ Gregory sought to place his world, a world ruled by the Franks, into the greater context of Christian history. The emphasis on the role of God and the Devil, as represented by good and evil characters on the action of the narrative, has an impact on all representations in the *DLH*.⁷⁸

It is important to keep in mind that Gregory was not only writing a Christian history, he was also writing his own history. These two concepts are interlinked by Gregory who, as bishop of Tours, plays an integral role in the events he describes. The terms autobiography and memoir have been applied to this aspect of the *DLH* but these classifications are misleading. Gregory supplies information about his immediate world and he narrates events around him, but he provides little personal information.⁷⁹ Heinzelmann's analysis, that the personal aspect of the *DLH* served to illustrate the role of the bishop in society, seems a more accurate description. He claims that Gregory, by using himself as an example, sought to demonstrate how bishops should behave and how kings should listen to the advice of bishops.⁸⁰

In this context the *DLH* is a vehicle for Gregory to express his opinions on rivals and royalty. Gregory's moral judgement, while Christian in its language, stems from his personal

⁷⁶ Werner (1990: 136) suggests that 'on peut présumer que pratiquement chaque église en Occident possédant des livres avait son exemplaire d'Orose'.

⁷⁷ Heinzelmann (1992a), 538.

⁷⁸ Werner (1990), 137.

⁷⁹ I agree with Heinzelmann (1992: 549) when he says that 'Il est impropre de les appeler "autobiographiques" '. Also see Goffart (1988), 183-197 and Auerbach (1965), 74 who refers to the *DLH* as closer to a personal memoir.

⁸⁰ See Heinzelmann (1992), 549-550. The ideal practical working relationship between bishop and king is demonstrated by the interaction between Gregory and King Guntram.

and political views. As mentioned above, the precarious and uncertain political situation in Gaul made self-defense necessary.⁸¹ Gregory employed a moral language to defend those he supported and to condemn his enemies. It has been noted that the use of moral language is not unique or limited to Christian historians and is found in Roman historians from earlier centuries. Reydellet, for example, places the *DLH* 'beaucoup plus proche de la grande tradition historiographique romaine qui savait allier le récit des événements et le jugement morale'.⁸²

The personal nature of the *DLH* is embodied in Gregory's claims to have been an eye-witness to many events.⁸³ To best understand Gregory as a source for social history, we must assess the information in respect to his 'conception of the event'.⁸⁴ As a witness Gregory reports miracles, saintly acts, and natural disasters. Gregory's testimony forms an integral part of the events he recounts.⁸⁵ The Christian nature of Gregory's education meant that he would have been heavily influenced by the rhetoric of proclamation and testimony. The rhetoric of Christianity was different from classical rhetoric in that 'Christian preaching ... is thus not persuasion but proclamation, and is based on authority and grace, not on proof.'⁸⁶ Gregory's authority derived from his position as the bishop of Tours and guardian of the shrine of St. Martin. A man in his position need not prove his claims to the audience, his authority and testimony were proof enough. By placing himself in the narrative as a witness Gregory lends

⁸¹ Goffart (1988: 197) views the 'insistent evocation of himself' as a substitute for a plot in the history.

⁸² Reydellet (1981), 435. He goes on to point out that similar moral criticism can be found in Tacitus and Ammianus and that we can be almost certain that Gregory had never read either. See Kurth (1919), 1-29 for Gregory's knowledge of classical texts.

⁸³ As an example see *DLH* 8.43 where the prophecy of a woman is retold.

⁸⁴ Collins (1981: 105) is referring to Venantius Fortunatus but this also applies to Gregory and history in general.

⁸⁵ De Nie (1987), 135. Goffart (1988: 119) refers to it as 'eye-witness' history and also makes the important point that this is different from a memoir or autobiography (1988: 191).

⁸⁶ Kennedy (1999), 146. See Goffart (1988), 150, on the personal authority of Gregory.

authority to his version of events, be it religious miracles or the political machinations of the Frankish royalty. Gregory establishes a credibility with his first-hand reporting of the motivations and behaviours of those around him. This credibility enhances his ability as a judge of the morality of his contemporaries.

The moral perspective of the *DLH* is an integral factor in the representations of women. Gregory frequently employs the traditional Roman rhetorical construct of the good (or, more often, bad) woman who reflects the character of the man she married and therefore his ability to rule, govern, or preach. Cooper has recently explained that the 'rhetoric of conjugal unity in antiquity served primarily as a means by which aristocratic families could broadcast the moral character of their menfolk'.⁸⁷ The portrayal of the opposite, i.e. conjugal disunity or sexual indulgence, reflects a lack of self-control in a man and therefore questions his suitability for public or episcopal office. There are various examples of this kind of moral judgement in the *DLH* as Gregory claimed to have personal knowledge of the private behaviours of the characters in his narrative. The obvious example is the juxtaposition of the representations of Fredegund and Brunhild, the wives of kings Chilperic and Sigibert. Chilperic was the antithesis of everything Gregory believed a king should be and Chilperic's wife, Fredegund, is portrayed as immoral at every opportunity. In contrast, Brunhild, the wife of Sigibert and supporter of Gregory's episcopacy, is presented with the attributes of an ideal queen.⁸⁸

One method by which Gregory establishes his credibility is the use of dialogue. He repeats the conversations, speeches and comments made by a king, queen, nun, or priest.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See Cooper (1992), 151.

⁸⁸ Venantius Fortunatus tells us that Brunhild was instrumental in securing the office of bishop for Gregory, see Fortunatus *Carm.* 5.3.15-16. For Fredegund and Brunhild compared, see *DLH* 4.27 and 4.28. This is simplified here to make a point and the representations of Brunhild and Fredegund are dealt with in detail in chapter five.

⁸⁹ See Heinzelmann (1992), 542 and Thurlmann (1974), 77. See *DLH* 7.2, where Gregory's

These passages occur throughout the text and are especially useful when Gregory wants to convince his audience. There is a tendency to use dialogue when Gregory wants to draw a negative picture of an event or person.⁹⁰ One reason for this could be to soften the impact of Gregory's unflattering portrayal of the ruling families. Gregory declares his opinions in rumour and innuendo often placed into the mouths of another character.⁹¹ Given the contemporaneity of Gregory's history this may have been wise. Using dialogue to explain events distances the author from the views presented. Since criticism of living monarchs was risky, it is, for example, the words of King Guntram, not Gregory, that criticize Theudechild, the widow of King Charibert (*DLH* 4.26).⁹² It is my intention to show that moral judgement and criticism in the *DLH* is often directed at the king's wife (or wives) or at the king's relations with women and that this is reported indirectly by Gregory.

3.8.2. The *DLH*: influences and sources

The Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, must be considered first and foremost when discussing important influences on Gregory's writing. Goffart writes that 'the model for Gregory's kind of eloquence could hardly have come from elsewhere than the

swears he has heard what he reports first-hand.

⁹⁰ He puts words in the mouths of other people when attributing responsibility in a crime. See *DLH* 7.7, where a list of Fredegund's crimes is provided by messengers from Childebert. Or, for example, his use of *ut aiunt* in *DLH* 6.24 where he discusses the affair of the pretender Gundovald.

⁹¹ See Wood (1993b), 255-256.

⁹² Perhaps Gregory was aware of Sidonius' views on priest who wrote history, Sid., *Ep.* 4.22.5: *quin per homines clericalis officii temerarie nostra iactanter aliena, praeterita infructuose praesentia semiplene, turpiter falsa periculose vera discuntur...sic se illi protinus dictioni color odorque satiricus admiscet* 'For men of the clerical profession it is foolhardy to record our own affairs and arrogant to record those of the outside world: our account of things past is profitless, that of things present is only half-complete; and while it is shameful to utter falsehoods, it is dangerous to tell the truth... so inevitable does the colour and flavour of satire pervade that kind of composition'. (Loeb translation)

Bible'.⁹³ This is not a surprise as Gregory's education was based almost exclusively upon the Bible and Christian texts.⁹⁴ As we have discussed above, the impact of Christian rhetoric on Gregory's writing was fundamental. The Bible also created the foundation for the *DLH* and book 1.1 -16 is more or less a paraphrase of the highlights of the Old and New Testaments. Gregory makes obvious and frequent reference to the Bible throughout the rest of the *DLH*, mostly in the form of prophecies. In many cases Gregory consults the Bible and claims that upon randomly opening the book, the quotation that appeared was sent by God to provide him with guidance.⁹⁵ The messages are often prophetic and used to justify Gregory's actions or explanations. In other examples Gregory does not quote directly from the Bible but alludes to it with the expectation that the audience would have picked up the reference (i.e. *DLH* 1.47). It has been recently argued by Wood that Gregory's use of the Bible was not random but very precise.⁹⁶

In the *DLH*, Gregory acknowledges his use of other available narrative, chronicle, and epistolographical source material and also quotes at length from these sources. The majority of this material appears in books one and two and provides the background for the history of the fourth and fifth centuries. For reference to events earlier in the history of the fourth century discussed in book one, Gregory's stated sources include Eusebius' chronicle, via Jerome's Latin translation and continuation, and Orosius.⁹⁷ Rhenanus Profuturus Frigeridus and

⁹³ Goffart (1988), 149

⁹⁴ For Christian education in the sixth century see Riché (1962), 52-71, 210-236 and for education in late antiquity, Marrou (1965), 451-484. For Gregory specifically see Riché (1962), 236, and for Gregory and the bible see Bonnet (1890), 53-61 and Antin (1967).

⁹⁵ See *DLH* 5.14. Here Gregory describes the story of Merovech (2), the son of Chilperic and Audovera. In this passage Gregory cites Proverbs 30.17; 1 Kings 9.9; Psalms 73, 18-19; and Matthew 26.2. Heinzelmann (1994: 49-57) claims a complete biblical typology underlies the *DLH*.

⁹⁶ See Wood (1998) where he investigates Gregory's use of the Bible in relation to accusations of incest. This is explored further in chapter five.

⁹⁷ Eusebius is mentioned in *DLH* 1. *pref.*, 2. *pref.* and 9.15.; Jerome *DLH* 1. *pref.* and 1.41

Sulpicius Alexander wrote narrative histories for the fourth and fifth centuries. The only fragments of these lost sources or references to them survive in Gregory's citations.⁹⁸ Gregory accessed Frigeridus and Sulpicius Alexander directly for details about the early history of the Franks and he cites both authors at length in book two. From the quotations preserved in the text, it is clear that these histories are written in a classicizing style and are substantially different from the *DLH*. Gregory's stated reliance on narrative and chronicle sources stops in the second half of book two.⁹⁹ This is when the *DLH* narrows its focus to Gaul, the Franks, and their early history. For this period Gregory's acknowledged use of source material becomes limited to explicit references from saints' *vitae* and letters of Sidonius Apollinaris and Avitus of Vienne.¹⁰⁰

The lack of source material for the late fifth and sixth century suggests that Gregory relied on oral history, popular tradition, and perhaps other contemporary documents for the period before his own memory. The details of book two that recount the early history of the Frankish kings, the birth of Clovis, his coming to power, and eventual conquest of Gaul seem to have their origins in popular tradition.¹⁰¹ The legendary aspect reveals itself in Gregory's portrayals of Clovis and Chlotild as the ideal king and queen.¹⁰² For book three, which covers

where, at the death of Valens at Adrianople in 378, Gregory states that he had finished using Jerome and started to use Orosius: *huc usque Hieronymus: ab hoc vero tempore Orosius presbyter plus scripsit*. Gregory also makes reference to Orosius' history in *DLH* 1.*pref.*, 1.6, 1.41, 2.9 and 5. *pref.* The quotations from Orosius are related to general history rather than specifically to Gaul.

⁹⁸ *DLH* 2. 8 where he quotes Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus on Aëtius and 2.9 where he quotes both Sulpicius Alexander and Frigeridus on the early Franks.

⁹⁹ Wood (1985), 250.

¹⁰⁰ Sid., *Ep.* 7.6 is referred to in *DLH* 2. 25. For Avitus, see *DLH* 2.34, although no specific letter is referred to. The *Vita Remigii* and *Vita Maxentii* are referred to in 2.31 and 2.37 respectively. See Wood (1985), 250-251 for the problems with these sources.

¹⁰¹ Wood (1985), 252. For the epic nature of the early Frankish history and Gregory's version of events, see Kurth (1893).

¹⁰² See chapter five below for Clovis as the new Constantine and Gregory's representation of

from Clovis' death (c. 511) to the death of Theudebert (1) (c. 547) Gregory makes no mention of sources and again must have relied on popular history, oral tradition, and local legend.¹⁰³ Wood has remarked on the difficulty of assessing the reliability of oral history when there is no comparative material available.¹⁰⁴ Events contemporary to Gregory's life begin in book four and he himself becomes the main source for his history.¹⁰⁵

It is important to understand how far beyond the city of Tours and the territory of the Franks Gregory's information can be applied. From comments in the *DLH*, it is assumed that Gregory travelled widely in Gaul and could claim a direct knowledge of many areas within the Frankish kingdoms.¹⁰⁶ The coming and going of delegations from the Visigothic kings gave Gregory indirect access to Spain and the Visigothic kingdom where he had never travelled himself. Additionally, the intermarriage between the Visigothic and Frankish royalty provided Gregory with personal, if indirect, knowledge of Visigothic Spain through Queens Brunhild and Galswinth.¹⁰⁷ Beyond Frankish Gaul and Visigothic Spain, Gregory is unreliable as a source, even in southern Gaul and Italy. Gregory concerned himself primarily with the world he knew and the people whose rule directly affected his church. He lived in a society dominated by Franks and his narrative is populated by Frankish kings, queens, saints, and martyrs as well as

Chlotild.

¹⁰³ Gregory is short on detail when it comes to events in book three. This probably reflects his lack of source material and the fact that he is relying on oral history. See Wood (1994), 53-54 and James (1999), 61.

¹⁰⁴ Wood, (1985), 254. When we do have material available to compare Gregory is often wrong. For example, in the story of the life the Ostrogothic queen Amalasuintha (*DLH* 3.31) Gregory seems to have made up details to suit his anti-Arian rhetoric. For more on Amalasuintha see chapter five.

¹⁰⁵ See Wood (1993), 234. Heinzelmann (1992: 547) points out that it is in *DLH* 5.4 that Gregory himself enters the narrative.

¹⁰⁶ See Thorpe (1974), 13 for a list of all the places Gregory tells us he had travelled to.

¹⁰⁷ See *DLH* 9.1 where the envoys from Recared were sent to Kings Guntram and Childebert. The travel of envoys was common as a result of the intermarriage between Visigothic and Frankish royalty. For intermarriage between the two kingdoms see Nelson (1991).

Burgundians, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Gallo-Romans. These are the origins of the women who are discussed in the narrative.

3.9. Gregory's narrative as an historical source

Wood observes that Gregory's 'surviving writings do not belong to the rhetorical tradition which had been so fashionable in late Roman and Merovingian Gaul'.¹⁰⁸ The writings of other extant contemporary authors preserve more of the Roman tradition one would have expected from a sixth-century Gallo-Roman bishop.¹⁰⁹ Gregory's rhetoric, as discussed above, was more firmly based in the Christian tradition. Nonetheless, his narrative history displays aspects that are stylistically related to general trends in earlier fourth- and fifth-century Latin authors. In late antiquity, according to Roberts 'the impression of an organic whole, the sense of proportion, is lost, but it is compensated for by the elaboration of the individual episode'.¹¹⁰ Gregory represents a brutal, colourful, and vivid world that is based very much on series of episodes.¹¹¹ There is a visual perception of these episodes that gives an impression of 'reality' to the reader because the restraint of classical rhetoric has been lifted from his prose. This has given rise to the notion that Gregory is exceptionally candid. The appearance of being candid, however, should not be mistaken for a simplistic rhetorical strategy.

As we have discussed above, Gregory personal views and political struggles influenced his portrayals of contemporary political figures. Many scholars of the history of women have taken Gregory's evidence 'at face value' and believe, for example, that 'Grégoire de Tours est

¹⁰⁸ Wood (1994), 29.

¹⁰⁹ See Wood (1994), 28-32 for an assessment of Gregory as a literary source and his motivations for writing in the style he chose for his histories. Other writers such as Venantius Fortunatus preserve a more classical style in their writing.

¹¹⁰ Roberts (1989), 56.

¹¹¹ Auerbach's appreciation of the originality of the text and style of Gregory has been very influential. See Auerbach (1953), and Goffart (1988), 115.

un descriptif. Il s'attache aux détails et dépeint inlassablement par petites touches les situations vécues. De toute évidence, il n'est pas un théoricien.¹¹² Taking this approach to the *DLH* and women does not acknowledge Gregory's rhetorical aims that underlie the opinions expressed about the kings and queens who ruled in his own time.¹¹³ The abundant information about women available in the *DLH* cannot be separated from the rhetorical objectives Gregory set out to achieve in writing his history.

3.10. The literary culture of Gregory

The literary culture of sixth-century Gaul was Christian. Reflecting on the role of early medieval Christian orators Banniard explains that, 'Leur tâche était d'instruire, de convaincre, de plaire, et d'admonester.'¹¹⁴ The didactic nature of Christian literature and the lack of classical education in the schools of sixth-century Gaul combined to create the literary culture to which Gregory belonged.¹¹⁵ Gregory comments on his poor writing style and ability at the beginning and at the end of his narrative.¹¹⁶ This is, as Mathisen points out, partially a result of Gregory employing the literary convention of *pudor*.¹¹⁷ Gregory goes beyond the conventions of literary modesty and explains that at least his writing would be understood by a wide audience.¹¹⁸ Banniard takes this further when he comments that Gregory's modesty may relate

¹¹² Lescouzères (1993), 20.

¹¹³ These opinions are examined more carefully in chapter five below.

¹¹⁴ Banniard (1992), 35

¹¹⁵ It has been pointed out that Gregory had some knowledge of classical texts, Gregory quotes from Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 3. in *DLH* 4.13 and 7.2. and from the *Aeneid*, see *DLH* 2.29, 4.30, 4.46, 8.22, and 9.6. See Kurth (1919), 1-29 for a detailed list of Gregory's references to classical texts.

¹¹⁶ *DLH* *pref.* and 10.31

¹¹⁷ Mathisen (1988) 47. See also Banniard (1992), 50 for humility as a literary *topos*.

¹¹⁸ *De virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*, where Gregory's mother appears to him in a dream encouraging him to write: *et ait mihi: et nescis quia nobiscum propter intelligentiam populorum si quis loquitur, sicut tu loqui potens es, eo habetur magis praeclarum?* 'and she said to me: do you not know that for us if anyone speaks for the understanding of the people, just as you are able to speak, it is held as more

to the fact that 'l'évêque reconnaît, non pas qu'il a décidé d'écrire en un langue moins polie que ne l'exigeait la tradition, mais qu'il est incapable d'atteindre ce degré de perfection'.¹¹⁹ That Gregory appreciated the Latin of Sidonius Apollinaris and of Venantius Fortunatus is evident. Venantius addressed a number of verse epistles to Gregory and the two men corresponded.¹²⁰

Gregory was conscious of the audience he was trying to reach and Peter Brown comments that, 'the pronounced populist streak in late Roman Christian literature should not be dismissed as mere rhetoric'.¹²¹ Gregory says he is writing for kings and bishops but that he wrote in the language of the people. Goffart believes that he is writing for an audience of educated, Roman-descended Christians.¹²² It is also important to heed Gregory's own claim that he was writing for another literate group in Gaul, the educated Germanic royalty. Riché demonstrates that from Clovis onwards the sons of the Frankish kings were educated.¹²³ Evidence for the literacy of the Frankish royalty comes from Venantius Fortunatus who, as court poet to Frankish kings Charibert and Chilperic, flatters members of the royal family with comments on their literary ability and wisdom.¹²⁴ Gregory (*DLH* 5.44) indicates that Chilperic involved himself in disputations on the nature of God and also wrote poetry (not very good poetry, Gregory adds).

distinguished?' See also the *DLH* *pref.* where Gregory states: *quia philosophantem rhetorem intelligunt pauci, loquentem rusticum multi* 'few people understand the philosophical rhetor, while many (understand) the rustic speaker'. See Banniard (1992), Wright (1991), and Richter (1983) for the debate over what was written and what was spoken Latin in the early middle ages.

¹¹⁹ Banniard (1992), 51. The degree of perfection referred to here is that of Venantius Fortunatus.

¹²⁰ See Venantius *Carm.* 5.3, 5.4, 5.8, and 10.12.

¹²¹ Brown (1992b), 75 and Auerbach (1965), 103-111 for Gregory's efforts to write in a colloquial style. See Bonnet (1902) on Gregory's Latin. See Wood (1994), 29, on how the style of Gregory's writing may be feigned simplicity and should not necessarily be taken at face value.

¹²² Goffart (1988), 138

¹²³ Riché (1962), 220-226 on the education of the Germanic royals, men and women.

¹²⁴ See Venantius *Carm.* 9. 1.10 on Chilperic's reputation for wisdom. *DLH* 8.22 on the death of young king Childebert's (2) tutor.

The preface to each chapter provides a glimpse of Gregory's intended audience, at least rhetorically. According to Heinzelmann, Gregory 's'adresser directement a son public dans les prologues'.¹²⁵ Heinzelmann feels that the general *prefatio* to the *DLH*, the *prefationes* to books one, two, three, five, and the epilogue (*DLH* 10.31) are addressed to those whom ideally (or rhetorically) Gregory wished to reach. They were the future Frankish kings whom he hoped would learn the moral lessons of history and from the mistakes of their predecessors. In the epilogue Gregory appeals to the future bishops of Tours to preserve his history intact.¹²⁶

There is, however, a significant difference between those whom Gregory targeted rhetorically in his prologues and his actual audience. According to Goffart, the *DLH* was not published during Gregory's lifetime.¹²⁷ The dynasty of Chilperic under young Chlothar II came to power early in the seventh-century shortly after the death of Gregory.¹²⁸ It would not be exaggerating to say that the *DLH* is remarkably hostile to this side of the family and it is unlikely that it appeared while they were still in power. The text was kept in the episcopal palace of Tours where it was eventually edited and chopped down to six books by those bishops who succeeded Gregory.¹²⁹ The abridged six book version of the history is found in the earliest manuscripts and this is the version used by Fredegar and the author of the *LHF* in the seventh and eighth centuries.¹³⁰ The unabridged ten-book version of the *DLH* re-appeared in circulation by the end of the eighth century. It is certain that the history never reached the audience it was intended for or served as a behavioral guide for kings and bishops.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Heinzelmann (1992), 542.

¹²⁶ Heinzelmann (1992), 542.

¹²⁷ Goffart (1988), 112. See also Heinzelmann (1992), 550.

¹²⁸ All three kingdoms of the Franks (Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy) were united under Chlothar (2) in 613. See Wood (1985), 13 and (1994), 140-149.

¹²⁹ Goffart (1987), 55-57.

¹³⁰ Goffart (1988), 121

¹³¹ See Heinzelmann (1992), 550 and Goffart (1988), 125 and (1987) for discussion on the textual

The literary context for Gregory of Tours' narrative illustrates the fundamental role that Christian history and the Bible play in our understanding of the representation of women in the *DLH*. The *DLH* is a personal history and Gregory's authority derived from Christian tradition but his moral judgement is based on both Christian and classical rhetoric. Further insight into the representations of women will come when the personal connections and motivations (as far as they can be discovered) behind Gregory's depictions are examined. He does not, in general, randomly supply details but was motivated by a more precise rhetorical strategy. The mix of traditions found in the narrative make it necessary to look towards Christian as well as classical rhetoric to analyse in what way Gregory reports on women, their morality, and status.

CHAPTER 4

Representations of Women in Sidonius Apollinaris

4.1. Women in the writing of Sidonius Apollinaris

Sidonius' published letters and poems appeared during his lifetime, indicating that the women mentioned are those he wanted his audience to know. The intent of this chapter is to investigate who the women are and what relationship they have with the author. This will help to further understand the context in which the women appear and also the purpose for their portrayal. Context is important to any interpretation of the status and function of the women in the text. Whether Sidonius wrote a friend, colleague, bishop or relation influenced the portrayal of any woman mentioned. The representations of the women are divided in this chapter based on their role in the texts. Wives, mothers, sisters and daughters are presented in different letters and poems often as the extension of the man Sidonius writes to or discusses. I have analyzed the rhetorical and literary models employed by the author and hope to clarify what can be known and understood about women in the late fifth century from Sidonius' evidence.

Sidonius' letters and poems are used in the modern scholarship as evidence for women's lives in late antiquity. The material is considered to confirm aristocratic behaviours, social patterns, and legal issues that were relevant in Gaul in the late fifth century.¹ Observations made from this evidence about women's lives are often applied to the general

¹ Clark (1993: 52, 61, 97) uses specific examples from Sidonius when dealing with evidence for women's daily lives. See also Evans Grubbs (1996), 314-315 and Arjava (1994), 270, who employ Sidonius for specific examples relating to legal issues. Coon (1997: 42) makes assumptions based on Sidonius about women's social behaviours. Nathan (2000: 121-123, 126, 143, 146, 148, 149 and 178) makes extensive use of Sidonius' evidence in his recent study on the family in late antiquity. Sidonius' evidence is also used in research on social history of and the formation of laws in the early medieval west by, for instance, Rouche (1987), 488 and 453, and Wood (1993a), 171 and 176 respectively.

status of women in the late Roman empire.² Despite the use of the evidence in the secondary scholarship, there has been no systematic assessment of the women represented in the letters and poems, or of their relationship to Sidonius, to his friends, or to the community as a whole. This is partially a reflection of the limited role for women in the writings of Sidonius. One of the early specialists on Sidonius remarks that the activities of women in Sidonius were restricted: 'elle a l'écheveau de laine et le livre de piété'.³ Loyen's comment rests upon a purely descriptive interpretation of Sidonius' representations of women and do not take into account the rhetorical strategies and literary patterns for behaviour. The aim of this chapter is to understand further how Sidonius used the women in the text as rhetorical *topoi* and how traditional patterns of female representation influenced his depictions. Once Sidonius' rhetorical goals in representing women are established, a clearer picture of the historical reality underlying these depictions may be achieved.

In total, there are thirty-eight individual Gallo-Roman and Germanic women mentioned in the letters and poems of Sidonius. This does not include mythological references that are frequently found in the *Carmina*.⁴ Of the thirty-eight women, half (nineteen) are anonymous. They are mothers, daughters, wives, or sisters and are referred to only in the context of their relationship to the person whom Sidonius addresses or discusses. Exceptions to this occur when a woman is specifically addressed in a letter or a poem rather than referred to as an extension of her husband or father.⁵ Out of the thirty-eight women only a few are mentioned or referred to more than once: Papianilla (2), Sidonius' wife, in *Carm.* 23.430, *Ep.* 2.9.3, 2.12.1-2, 7.12.1 and 5.16; Papianilla (1), a relative of Sidonius' wife, in *Carm.* 24. 34-

² See Coon (1997), 42 and Nathan (2000), 121-123.

³ See Loyen (1943), 96-97, on women and Sidonius.

⁴ See appendix 1 for the identity of the women mentioned in the letters.

⁵ *Ep.* 5.16 was addressed to Papianilla, his wife. *Carm.* 9, 10, 14, and 15 are *epithalamia* dedicated to a specific bride and groom.

43, *Ep.* 2.9.3, 7.12.1; Eulalia, Sidonius' cousin, in *Carm.* 24. 94-98 and *Ep.* 4.1.1; Alypia, daughter of the emperor Anthemius, in *Carm.* 2.480-503 and *Ep.* 1.5.10; and a Burgundian queen, Anonyma 21, in *Ep.* 5.7.7 and 6.12.3.

4.2. *Familia*

Sidonius was related to a significant number of the men with whom he corresponded, either through his own family or by marriage.⁶ In order to understand Sidonius' perspective on the women it is important to first look specifically at his own family. It is legitimate to assume that the women closest to Sidonius were his wife, daughters, sisters and mother. The first step is to examine how these women are represented in the poems and letters and then analyse what this tells us about Sidonius' purpose in portraying the women in his immediate family.

4.2.1. Letters to women

The general assumption is that men did not correspond with women outside members of their immediate family. Clark goes so far to state that 'men did not usually correspond with women'.⁷ Sidonius included in his published collection only one letter written to a woman, addressed to his wife Papianilla (*Ep.* 5.16). There is evidence, however, from other Roman epistolographers that suggests some men frequently corresponded with women.⁸ Two of Sidonius' Gallic contemporaries, Ruricius and Ennodius, published letters written to women. Ruricius wrote a number of letters addressed to women jointly with their husbands and two

⁶ See Mathisen (1981), 96, who calculates that at least twenty percent of the published letters of Sidonius were written to known relatives. Sidonius usually mentions familial links with his correspondents when they existed.

⁷ Clark (1992), 134.

⁸ Pliny published four letters to his wife Calpurnia (4.19, 6.4, 6.7, and 7.5) and five to other women (1.4, 2.4, 3.3, 7.14, and 8.11). Symmachus wrote letters addressed to his daughter and son-in-law jointly and *Ep.* 9.108 to a Vestal Virgin.

addressed to a woman alone.⁹ Ceraunia, the addressee of these letters, was the mother of Ruricius' daughter-in-law. Ennodius, the Gallo-Roman bishop of Pavia, published twenty-three letters to eleven different women, seven of which are to his sister Euprepia.¹⁰ Ennodius' collection of letters is unusual for the sheer number written to women but these examples suggest that correspondence with women was an acceptable part of literary culture in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.¹¹

From the example of his contemporaries, it is possible that Sidonius wrote frequently to women: to his wife, to his sisters, perhaps to his cousin Eulalia (mentioned below 4.3.2), and to his daughters. There is no evidence for this because Sidonius chose to include only one letter to a woman in his published collection. This reflects Sidonius' goals in publishing his letters, to glorify the Gallo-Roman aristocrat and bishop. The lack of published letters written to women suggests that Sidonius did not consider these letters as contributing to his objective.

4.2.2. Sidonius' wife: Papianilla

Papianilla did not play a significant role in Sidonius' published literature although there are frequent allusions to her family.¹² Sidonius and Papianilla married in the early 450s.¹³

⁹ Ruricius *Epp.* 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 are addressed to Namatius and Ceraunia, whose daughter had married Ruricius' son. *Epp.* 2.15 and 50 are letters addressed to Ceraunia herself. For the letter to Parthenius and Papianilla, see *Ep.* 2.37 and Eudomius and Melanthia, *Ep.* 2.39. For the most recent commentary on Ruricius' letters see Mathisen (1999).

¹⁰ Ennodius *Epp.* 2.3, 5.4, 6.18, 6.24, 6.35, 6.38, 7.14, 8.16, 8.17, 8.27, 9.9, 9.15, 9.17, 9.18, 9.25 and to Euprepia *Epp.* 2.15, 3.15, 3.28, 5.7, 6.3, 6.26, 7.8.

¹¹ Women also wrote to men, although how frequently is unknown. There are a number of letters in the collection of Paulinus of Nola that were co-authored by his wife Therasia. See Paulinus *Epp.* 4, 6, 7, 24, 26, 39, 40, 43, 44, and 45. Ruricius mentions that Ceraunia had written more than one letter to him (Ruricius *Ep.* 2.15). There may well have been active correspondence on the part of senatorial women in this period although the evidence is scarce. Letters written by women to men were not, to our knowledge, kept for publication. See Clark (1992), 134-136.

¹² Papianilla is referred to in two letters, *Epp.* 2.2.3 and 2.12.2.

¹³ For the date of their marriage see Harries (1994), 31.

This important connection made Sidonius the son-in-law of Eparchius Avitus who was praetorian prefect of the Gauls in 439 and emperor in Arles and then Rome in 455-6. Sidonius, a native of Lyon, was from a prestigious family in his own right and his father held the praetorian prefecture from 448-449 (*Ep.* 8.6.5).¹⁴ It was, however, Sidonius' connection to the Aviti that took him on a career that led to positions in the Roman administration and eventually to the pinnacle of his political career, the urban prefecture of Rome under the emperor Anthemius. The same connection led to Sidonius' election as bishop of Clermont. He inherited the episcopal see from another relative of the Aviti, Eparchius.¹⁵ Harries notes that Sidonius, in his letters, seems to belong more to his wife's family than his own.¹⁶

Sidonius' mother was also related to the Aviti of Clermont meaning that Sidonius and Papiantilla were related before marriage.¹⁷ This is based on the assumption that Sidonius and one of his correspondents, Avitus (1), were cousins. A letter addressed to Avitus (1) remarks that their mothers were the closest of kin: *matribus nostris summa sanguinis iuncti necessitudo*, which might imply that they were sisters (*Ep.* 3.1.1).¹⁸ The exact blood relationship between Sidonius and his wife is unknown. According to Roman law they should have been further apart than the fourth degree, that is first cousins.¹⁹ The significant point here is that Sidonius owed his political and episcopal offices to the familial connections of his

¹⁴ See Harries (1994) for Sidonius' life and politics. Also Mathisen (1981), 97, who points out that the name of Sidonius' father is not mentioned in the letters or poems.

¹⁵ See Duchesne 2, 34, for Eparchius as the bishop of Clermont († c. 470/71).

¹⁶ Harries (1994), 174.

¹⁷ For Sidonius' family see Mathisen (1981).

¹⁸ 'our mothers are joined by the closest connection of blood'.

¹⁹ Roman law did allow marriage between first cousins although evidence suggests that such close kin marriage occurred more frequently in the Roman east. The abundant documentary evidence from Egypt reflects regional practices. See Evans Grubbs (1995), 61, Saller and Shaw (1984), and Goody (1983), who all agree that cultural preference was a deciding factor in how close a relation one could marry. *CTh* 3.12.3, from 396, banned marriage between first cousins and there is some thought that Christianity influenced this change, see Herlihy (1990), 1.

wife and mother.

The emperor Eparchius Avitus was deposed in October of 456 and Majorian, his *comes domesticorum*, eventually assumed the imperial power. From this time onwards, political prudence would dictate that Sidonius not emphasize his connection with the Aviti, although popular sentiment in Gaul would have been pro-Avitus.²⁰ Sidonius' connection with the Aviti, through his mother and wife, was a key part of his success but a certain delicacy was necessary if the family was to be celebrated in his published literature. A theme that recurs in the context of women in Sidonius' writings is the legitimacy and importance of a woman's family and the maternal family line. A late fifth-century audience would have been keenly aware of Sidonius' connections and perhaps there is a subtle attempt by Sidonius to amplify his link to the Aviti, in spite of its political inappropriateness.²¹ In *Carm.* 23.430 when Sidonius refers to Avitus as *socer mei* he does not need to use his name.²² The importance of maternal lineage is a theme in Sidonius' writings and his reaffirmation of the link and the value of the family of the wife/mother may be a method of using this connection to his advantage and appealing to local sentiment.²³

Sidonius does not provide a sense of Papianilla as a real person nor is she represented rhetorically. There is no reason to assume Sidonius was unhappily married. He claims

²⁰ See Mathisen (1979), 167, who also observes that Avitus' fall from grace would have caused political embarrassment for Sidonius. Sidonius does not mention his father-in-law by name in any of the correspondence.

²¹ See *Epp.* 7.9 and 4.21 for specific declarations of the maternal lineage. Both letters are discussed in detail below.

²² Mathisen (1979: 165-171) studies how the reign of Avitus appears in the poems and letters. Mathisen points out that there is no direct reference to Sidonius' father-in-law anywhere, but there are many subtle ways that Sidonius refers to the deposed emperor. The Gallic aristocrats of Sidonius' correspondence would have been very sympathetic towards the Aviti.

²³ See Harries (1994), 31, for a full explanation on the family and professional connections (if those two can be separated) of Sidonius, and also see Mathisen (1979) for the family circle of Sidonius. See *Ep.* 4.21 where Sidonius is expansive about the importance of a mother's family and connections.

domestic harmony in a general discourse on the life of the rural aristocrat that glorifies the property Sidonius acquired in Papianilla's dowry (*Ep.* 2.2.3).²⁴ This comes from a letter written to Domitius whom Sidonius describes elsewhere as *severus* and *ensorius* (*Carm.* 2A 10-12). The use of a literary device based upon domestic harmony as an indication of the value of a man derives from traditional Roman rhetoric and seems to fit Domitius' serious and judgemental character.²⁵

Otherwise little is known about Papianilla. She and Sidonius share concern for their daughter's ill health in a letter to his brother-in-law Agricola (*Ep.* 2.12.2). In Gregory of Tours' narrative history, Papianilla is unhappy because Sidonius had given away the family silver to the poor (*DLH* 2.22).²⁶ The purpose of the reported incident is to illustrate the generosity and virtue of the saintly Sidonius, a common device in hagiography. The impression of Papianilla is more reflective of a general disapproval for the wives of bishops in the *DLH* than any ascertainable behaviour.²⁷

Did other married bishops correspond with or allude to their wives more frequently than Sidonius? Paulinus of Nola († 431), the Gallic aristocrat who became the bishop of Nola, describes how he lived with this wife Therasia as a sister in his now celibate marriage (*Ep.* 23.42). There are also published letters to friends and colleagues that he co-authored with Therasia.²⁸ The only contemporary married bishop whose letters survive is Ruricius of Limoges. As mentioned above, there is direct correspondence with women in Ruricius'

²⁴ The family estate of the Aviti in Auvergne was Avitacum. There is an interesting reference in this letter to a *triclinium matronalis*, the ladies' dining room connected to the pantry and weaving room. (*Ep.* 2.2.9) This raises the interesting issue of separate dining for men and women, and women's participation in banquets.

²⁵ For domestic harmony as the measure of a man, see Cooper (1992), 152.

²⁶ Gregory does not provide Papianilla's name and only tells us that she was the daughter of Eparchius Avitus. As is discussed in chapters 4.3.1 and 5.9, Gregory held a dim view of the *episcopa*. See Brennan (1985), 316.

²⁷ See below chapter 5.9.

²⁸ The letters are listed above in note 11.

published letters but no letters written to his own wife, nor is she referred to directly in any letter.²⁹ The meagre evidence offered by Paulinus, Sidonius, and Ruricius, may point to an increasing subtlety around a married bishop writing about or to his own wife. Paulinus of Nola lived in the late fourth/early fifth century when Christian ideas of celibacy were still developing into a social movement. Reference to his celibate marriage does not seem to be an issue. Sidonius and Ruricius lived in a time of ecclesiastical factions and increasing resistance to married bishops. Perhaps by the late fifth/early sixth century a married bishop could elaborate on the virtues of a good wife in his literary representations but overt reference to his own wife was avoided.

4.2.3. *Filiae et filii* and the fate of Sidonius' family

Sidonius and Papianilla had four children: a son, Apollinaris, and three daughters, Roscia, Severiana, and Alchima.³⁰ Sidonius tells us very little about his daughters: Roscia is with him in Lyon along with Sidonius' mother and sisters (*Ep.* 5.16.5) and Severiana is ill in Clermont when Sidonius writes to Agricola about moving her to their country estate. Both parents are with their sick daughter and are hesitant to move her to the countryside (*Ep.* 2.12.2). These brief references to his daughters and the previously mentioned reference to domestic *concordia* are the only allusions to Sidonius as the 'family man'.

The other females in Sidonius' immediate family are only briefly acknowledged in his correspondence. These include his own mother and sisters as well as his wife's sisters.³¹ The role of the paternal aunts (*amitae*) in minding and perhaps educating Roscia (*Ep.* 5.16.5) is

²⁹ For Ruricius' correspondence with women, see above note 9.

³⁰ For Apollinaris see *Epp.* 3.13 (addressee), 5.9.4, 5.11.3, 8.6.12, 9.1.5; Roscia, *Ep.* 5.16.5; Severiana, *Ep.* 2.12.2; and Alchima, who is not mentioned by Sidonius, see *DLH* 3.2, 3.12, and *De Gloria martyrum* 64.

³¹ Papianilla's grandmother, the mother of Eparchius Avitus, is also briefly mentioned in Sidonius' panegyric on Avitus (*Carm.* 7.164) as *generosa*.

illustrative of the function and importance of the extended family in late Roman Gaul.³² Alchima, a third daughter, is not mentioned by Sidonius but is known from a reference in Gregory of Tours. Sidonius' concerns for his daughters are not included in the published letters. Sidonius discusses his son Apollinaris in more detail and these references indicate a touch of reservation and concern for the boy.³³

A glance at the fate of Sidonius' family in the next generation may provide some idea of the fortunes of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy in the Frankish world.³⁴ A line in one of Avitus' poems (*Carm.* 6. 83-85) is thought to refer to Sidonius' daughter, Severiana. If correctly identified, she lived as a dedicated virgin with the sisters of Avitus, bishop of Vienne, in their family home.³⁵ The third daughter, Alchima, is referred to by Gregory of Tours as involved in her brother's appointment to the episcopal see of Clermont.³⁶ Mathisen seems correct in the assumption that since Alchima lived in the household of her brother she was either widowed or unmarried.³⁷ Apollinaris had a son Arcadius who entered the church and did not marry. This gives the impression that the family name died out just one generation after Sidonius.³⁸ Ruricius' family offers some extended comparative material as the two families were related by

³² See Saller (1997), 7, for the extended family in Rome and Italy. The nature of ancient families and the high mortality rates in all parts of the Roman empire in antiquity meant that, depending upon the circumstances, members of the extended family had an active role to play in bringing up children.

³³ *Ep.* 3.13. is a warning to Apollinaris to avoid the company of a particularly wicked and sinful man who is described in detail and with great relish. In *Ep.* 9.1.5 Sidonius comments that fathers are often slow to see merit in their sons. Sidonius' fears for his son were warranted if the representation of Apollinaris in the *DLH* is accurate. See below chapter 5.9 and *DLH* 3.2.

³⁴ The connections and relationships described here are from Mathisen (1981) and (1999), 19-31.

³⁵ See Heinzelmann (1982), 692, for the identification of the woman in Avitus' poem with Sidonius' daughter. The poem is written as an encouragement to Avitus' sister and mentions a Severiana who lived with them as a dedicated virgin herself.

³⁶ *DLH* 3.2 and 12 mention a sister of Apollinaris.

³⁷ See Mathisen (1981), 100-101 and Stroheker (1948), 205, for the identification of Alchima.

³⁸ See *DLH* 3.12 for Arcadius.

marriage. Two of Ruricius' sons were educated by their father to enter the priesthood and he had at least one great-grandchild.³⁹ Nothing is known of this child of Parthenius and Papianilla (3) and Ruricius' family, in name, disappears from the record in the mid-sixth century.⁴⁰ As for the family of Avitus of Vienne, he relates that his mother and father took vows of celibacy and that he and his sisters were also celibate.⁴¹ Avitus writing to Apollinaris in reference to their related families speaks of Arcadius as the *spes reparandae prosapiae*.⁴²

The propensity for the Gallo-Roman nobility to enter the church and remain celibate has been suggested as the reason that very few appear in sixth- and seventh-century sources such as the narrative of Gregory of Tours.⁴³ The lack of interest in daughter's lives as shown by Sidonius needs to be taken into account here as well. It is true that where evidence exists, the families seem to disappear into the church but the evidence is limited to just few families. This analysis is based almost totally on onomastic evidence and does not, as pointed out by Amory in relation to the Romans and Ostrogoths in Italy, take into consideration changes that occurred over the fifth to seventh centuries. A few possibilities that explain why the Gallo-Roman became invisible include the passage of time, the change in names and naming that came with Christian sacraments of baptism and monastic vows, and the mixing of Germanic and Graeco-Latin names within one family.⁴⁴ Evidence for the pure Gallo-Roman aristocratic family name

³⁹ Ruricius had at least three sons and perhaps as many as five, although it is difficult to tell if the latter two are sons, grandsons, or nephews. See Mathisen (1999), 23, on Ruricius' family.

⁴⁰ Ruricius *Ep.* 2.28.3. Parthenius has been identified as Ruricius' grandson and Papianilla the daughter of Agricola, Sidonius' brother-in-law. See Ruricius *Ep.* 2.32, a letter to Agricola about his new status as a grandparent and Ruricius' as a great-grandparent. For Ruricius' family see Mathisen (1999), 19-31 including a 'fanciful' stemma of Ruricius' family. For the story of Parthenius and Papianilla, see below chapter 5.10.6

⁴¹ Avitus tells us his mother had four children (*Carm.* 6. 9-16). Avitus' brother was Apollinaris, bishop of Valence. An Avitus was bishop of Clermont from c. 572-594 whom Gr egory gives as his inspiration (*DLH* 5.11 and *Liber Vitae Patrum* 2. *pref.*). This Avitus is also mentioned by Venantius Fortunatus *Carm.* 5.5. 143-148.

⁴² Avitus *Ep.* 52: 'hope for the renewal of the family'.

⁴³ Mathisen (1981), 101.

⁴⁴ See Amory (1997), 86-91 for an analysis of this problem in Ostrogothic Italy.

disappears with the passage of the sixth-century, although these families may very well have continued, intermarried, and integrated into the Germanic culture. The contemporary literary sources that used to be centred on the Gallo-Roman aristocracy become focused on the Germanic royalty thus changing the perspective on society.

4.3. Gallo-Roman aristocratic women

The most frequently mentioned women in Sidonius' letters and poems are the wives, sisters, and mothers of the late fifth century Gallo-Roman aristocratic literary circle. These women are often the subject of flattery or rhetorical allusions made by Sidonius to glorify the men he addresses. An analysis of the representation of these aristocratic women should establish an outline of Sidonius' rhetorical ideal of a woman. This process will allow an exploration of Sidonius' influences and help to clarify how Sidonius employed individuality in his representations, if at all.

4.3.1. *Episcopa*: The bishop's wife

Brennan has shown that the bishop's wife, known as the *episcopa*, played an important and sometimes controversial role in the community in late antique Gaul.⁴⁵ There are more *episcopae* attested to in Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries than in other parts of the empire.⁴⁶ One finds two kinds of bishop in fifth-century Gaul whose traditions and origins were significantly different. There were bishops whose roots lay in the monastic tradition exemplified by St. Martin of Tours such as Faustus of Riez, Caesarius of Arles, and others from the monastery at Lérins.⁴⁷ Bishops like Sidonius, Ruricius of Limoges, and Simplicius

⁴⁵ Brennan (1985: 321-323) presents a full discussion of the role of the *episcopa*.

⁴⁶ Again see Brennan (1985) 321-323, who proposes that this is either a result of the nature (or abundance) of the sources or perhaps reflects local variation with a greater number of married clergy in Gaul.

⁴⁷ Lérins was a monastery founded by Honoratus between 400 and 410 on an island (Lerina) about four kilometers from Cannes. This was one of the most influential sources for Christian culture and learning

of Bourges came from secular life. They were senatorial aristocrats who entered the church after marriage and children as an extension of a career in the Roman administration.⁴⁸ By the mid-sixth century this group is replaced by 'career bishops' although married clergy are still known.

Married clergy were required to refrain from further sexual relations with their wives when they received major orders. The first legislation regarding married higher clergy appeared in a canon of the Council of Elvira from the early fourth century.⁴⁹ The council of Elvira was the first, but not the last, statement on the requirement for married clergy to abstain from sexual relations with their wives. The legislation continued to appear in the texts of church councils and became a common theme in the sixth century. The councils of Arles (524), Clermont (535), and Orléans (538) all contain legislation concerning marriage and the clergy.⁵⁰

From a practical perspective, the presence of an *episcopa* must have affected the running of the diocese. The wife of a Gallo-Roman aristocrat had authority and responsibility related to running the family estates, just as the *episcopa* would have had with the day-to-day activities of the diocese.⁵¹ These women had an exemplary role to play in a Christian society that placed great value on female chastity and piety. From a political point of view, a bishop's wife could be seen as an advantage or disadvantage depending on rivalries and motivation.

Wemple and Brennan present different views on these women and how they were

through the sixth century and many Gallo-Roman bishops were schooled in this tradition. Lérins was integral to the development of Gallic monasticism. See Klingshirn (1994), 23-25 and Wood (1994), 22. Other bishops, like Avitus of Vienne, came from an ascetic tradition in the secular world.

⁴⁸ Harries (1994: 174) has noted that among his episcopal contemporaries only Sidonius had held such a lofty position as the prefect of Rome.

⁴⁹ See Brennan (1985), 321. The legislation concerning the marriage of higher clergy required a vow from the husband and wife promising to live as *frater et soror*, see *Concilium Elberitanum*, canon 33.

⁵⁰ For a complete list, see Brennan (1985), 314.

⁵¹ See Brennan (1985), 318-319.

received by the community.⁵² Wemple's opinion, derived from Gregory of Tours' evidence, is that the *episcopae* were viewed negatively in the community. Brennan presents a more positive perspective on the *episcopa's* role and one that coincides with the evidence from married bishops like Sidonius. Both primary sources were written by men who were prejudiced on this issue by their marital status. Neither ancient author mentions the ecclesiastical issues involved but they employ representations of the *episcopa* to put forward their personal perspectives on the issue.

Sidonius' evidence for the *episcopa* is, at best, indirect. Sidonius does not, like his predecessor Pliny, expound on the virtues of his wife in order to glorify his own good judgement.⁵³ The one published letter addressed to Papianilla (5.16) is a letter of congratulations on the advancement of her brother Ecdicius to the patriciate.⁵⁴ Sidonius' motivation for publishing this letter to Papianilla was to glorify the honour conferred on Ecdicius who had led the local forces in defence of the Auvergne against the Visigothic conquest. The publication of a letter to honour his family's resistance to the Visigothic takeover of the Auvergne would have been well understood by the audience.⁵⁵ Within this context Papianilla is referred to as a noble and devoted sister to Ecdicius and wife to Sidonius.⁵⁶ By emphasizing Papianilla's role as a sister to Ecdicius, Sidonius may also be demonstrating her sisterly role in their now celibate marriage.

Sidonius' perspective on married bishops is not expressed in the representation of his own wife and but may occur in the text of a speech made to the people of Bourges on behalf of

⁵² The arguments are presented in Wemple (1981), 134ff and Brennan (1985).

⁵³ See Pliny *Epp.* 4.19, 6.4, 6.7, and 7.5, for his letters to Calpurnia.

⁵⁴ This letter, dated to c. 474, tells us that the emperor Anthemius had promised the patriciate to Ecdicius and after the latter's death, it was the emperor Julius Nepos who fulfilled the promise. For more see *PLRE s.v. Ecdicius I* and *Sid., Ep. 5.16.1-2*.

⁵⁵ For the Gothic conquest of the Auvergne, see Wolfram (1988), 184-188.

⁵⁶ *Ep. 5.16.3: licet sis uxor bona, soror optima es.*

the episcopal candidate Simplicius.⁵⁷ One of Simplicius' assets, according to Sidonius, is his wife. Sidonius introduces the future *episcopa* only as '*uxor illi*' but he emphasizes her important lineage and connections to an illustrious family.⁵⁸ Her family, the Paladii, had a distinguished history in Gaul and numbered among them other bishops of Bourges.⁵⁹ By utilizing the traditions of Roman rhetoric, Sidonius presents Simplicius' wife to his audience in a positive light and portrays her as an asset. Her virtues are considered valuable and reflective of Simplicius' ability to perform the duties of bishop of Bourges.⁶⁰ Sidonius presents an overwhelmingly positive view of the *episcopa* who was endowed with all the important female virtues. She was modest and chaste, a devoted wife and mother.

The speech on behalf of Simplicius is published in a letter written to Perpetuus, the bishop of Tours.⁶¹ A parallelism between Sidonius and Simplicius has been mentioned in the modern scholarship and Sidonius himself makes reference to their similarities in his speech (*Ep.* 7.9.14).⁶² Nowhere in his letters does Sidonius write of his own election as bishop and this description of Simplicius' election is thought by Harries to reflect his personal experiences.⁶³ Simplicius' qualifications in the election of the bishop of Bourges were similar to Sidonius' when he became bishop of Clermont. The two men occupied episcopal seats

⁵⁷ See Brennan (1985), 318-319 and Sidonius *Ep.* 7.9. Bourges, the provincial capital of Aquitania Prima, was a metropolitan city and Clermont, Sidonius' episcopal seat, was under its jurisdiction.

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 7.9.24: *uxor illi de Palladiorum stirpe descendit qui aut litterarum aut altarium cathedras cum sui ordinis laude tenuerunt.* 'His wife descends from the family of the Paladii who have held both scholarly and religious thrones with praise to their order.'

⁵⁹ See appendix 1 Anonyma 12 and also *PLRE* 2 s.v. Palladius 14 for her family connections.

⁶⁰ This follows the traditions of 'classical rhetoric of womanly influence' as expressed by Cooper (1997), 153-154.

⁶¹ Perpetuus was bishop from c. 458-488. Sidonius places Perpetuus as the sixth bishop after St. Martin (*Ep.* 4.18.5) whereas Gregory of Tours contradicts himself in this matter and names Perpetuus as the fifth bishop after St. Martin in *DLH* 2.14 and third after St. Martin in *DLH* 10.31.

⁶² See Harries (1994), 16 and 173. The two men were elected bishop within a short time of each other and both were later exiled by Euric (c. 475). See also Brennan (1985), 318.

⁶³ Harries (1994), 16.

inherited from their wives' families. The noble and important lineage of the Simplicius' wife can be compared to that of Sidonius' wife, Papianilla.

Sidonius implies, in the vocabulary of traditional Roman rhetoric, that the excellent virtues of the wife reflect those of her husband and these virtues make him the right choice for the bishop of Bourges. Simplicius' wife was important because of her family connections, her female virtue, and because she was a reflection of the character of Simplicius. The rhetorical context in which Sidonius places the *episcopa* is that of the Roman aristocratic wife. The speech was written by Sidonius to persuade his audience to vote for Simplicius. According to Sidonius, a virtuous wife was not a hinderance to Simplicius and she added to his appeal.

It might be useful to ask why Sidonius chose to publish this letter. It may have been purely to show off his persuasive rhetorical abilities. Another possibility relates to Euric's conquest of Aquitania Prima and the subsequent exile of bishops such as Sidonius and Simplicius. In the aftermath of the political upheaval perhaps Sidonius published this letter to elaborate on the value and importance of a bishop in society. It is also probable that, as the marriage of clergy became more and more restrictive, the presence of a wife could leave a bishop open to attack from political enemies. In the competitive world of late Roman episcopates, Sidonius portrays the wife of a bishop as an asset.⁶⁴

4.3.2 Myth and legend: the Roman wives of the Gallic aristocracy

Sidonius would naturally portray the wives of his colleagues and correspondents in a uniformly positive manner. To do otherwise would be an insult and counterproductive since many of the women were his relatives. His objectives in publishing were to glorify the Roman

⁶⁴ Sidonius describes the scene at the church for the election of the bishop of Bourges in *Ep. 7.9.2: etenim tanta erat turba competitorum, ut cathedrae unius numerosissimos candidatos nec duo recipere scamna potuissent*. 'For there was such a crowd of competitors that two benches could not receive the numerous candidates for the one throne.'

aristocratic circle in which he lived and the idealization of the women from this class would be included in his goals. The women mentioned here appear in both the *Epistulae* and *Carmina* and the accounts of women vary between the genres. Keeping this in mind, what Sidonius considers to be a positive representation of a wife in poetry and prose can be more clearly defined. This information will allow an assessment of the virtues that Sidonius' ideal wife possessed and where his representations originated. It is my intention to show in what manner the representations of his colleagues' wives furthered Sidonius' own political or poetic ends.

The family of Tonantius Ferreolus was distinguished and directly descended from Afranius Syagrius, the former consul and praetorian prefect of the Gauls (451). There are two letters and a poem where his female relations are mentioned (*Epp.* 2.9, 7.12, and *Carm.* 24). Sidonius considered the family important and he celebrates their achievements and prominence in the history of Gaul throughout the fifth century (*Ep.* 7.12). Ferreolus married a woman named Papianilla (1) who was related to Sidonius' wife. The two women share the same rare name and Sidonius' remarks on his *affinitas* (a relationship by marriage) with Ferreolus confirm the connection (*Ep.* 7.12.1). Papianilla (1) is named in a poem (*Carm.* 24) that describes the nobility of the Ferreolus family and includes a few lines on the virtues of his wife. Her *pudor* and *labor* are proclaimed and she is compared to Roman women of the legendary past (*Carm.* 24. 37-43).

The literary models employed in this poem are worth examining in closer detail. Sidonius did not choose women from mythology but from the legendary history of the early Roman republic. They represent traditional Roman values of marriage based on a wife who stands behind and lends support to her husband. Papianilla is first compared with Tanaquil who, as the wife of Tarquinius Priscus, was viewed by Roman writers as a strong, forceful woman who engineered success for her husband.⁶⁵ Sidonius' intention in utilizing Tanaquil

⁶⁵ Tanaquil appears in Livy 1.34, as well as Q. Fabius Pictor, Frag 11b; Ennius, *Ann.* 145-6; and Pliny, *NH* 8.194. Tanaquil is used again by Sidonius as a comparative figure in reference to the Burgundian

as a model was to illustrate positive traits such support of her husband and the sharing of his cares. In contrast to Sidonius, Ausonius (*Ep.* 25.31) and Paulinus of Nola (*Carm.* 10. 191-192) both employ the figure of Tanaquil to illustrate a domineering wife, a portrayal that is closer to her original appearance in Livy.

After Tanaquil, Papianilla is compared to another famous Roman *matrona*, Claudia. Sidonius alludes to an obscure version of the story of Claudia who, to prove her virtue, pulled a raft that carried the cult statue of the goddess Cybele up the Tiber to Rome with her hair. This version of the story also appears in Claudian's poem dedicated to Serena, the wife of Stilicho and sister of the emperor Honorius.⁶⁶ Claudia was a republican woman whose ambiguous reputation has not been universally praised by Roman authors. Described in Livy (29.14.12), Claudia also appears in Statius' *epithalamium* in a slightly less virtuous account of her miracle.⁶⁷ Both Tanaquil and Claudia figure in the poem in praise of Serena. As Consolino has remarked, Claudian used Tanaquil as a 'modello positivo', which was not always the case in Roman literature.⁶⁸ There is a similar uncertainty in the story of Claudia. The version where Claudia drags the statue with her hair is first recorded, to our knowledge, by Jerome.⁶⁹

In the same context as Claudia and Tanaquil, Papianilla is compared to Lucretia who is the traditional choice for a model wife from Roman legend. Lucretia was the wife of Collatinus and the paradigm of a Roman *matrona* who possessed all wifely virtues as described by Livy, including sacrificing herself for her husband's honour.⁷⁰ In contrast to Sidonius, Paulinus of

queen (*Ep.* 5.7).

⁶⁶ Claudian, *Carm.* 30. 29.

⁶⁷ See Roberts (1989a), 326-327, who argues that Statius employs Claudia as a symbol of questionable virginity.

⁶⁸ Consolino (1986), 78.

⁶⁹ Livy 29.14.12 describes Claudia meeting the statue of Cybele at Ostia. The cult statue of the goddess Cybele was brought to Rome in c. 204 BCE from Asia Minor. Jerome *Ad Iovinianum* 1.41 is the first version to portray Claudia as a vestal virgin.

⁷⁰ Livy (1. 57). See Cluett (1998), 79 for Lucretia and the image of women in the first century

Nola (*Carm.* 10. 191-192) employs Lucretia in a positive comparison in opposition to Tanaquil's negative model.

Sidonius' choice of comparing Papianilla to Tanaquil and Claudia, in the same manner as Claudian, may indicate his use of literary *formulae* rather than original construction. The use of Tanaquil as a positive role model and the story of Claudia's hair are both unique versions of Roman legends that have fourth-century origins. To claim that these comparisons illustrate Sidonius' views on wifely virtue would be erroneous. It might be more appropriate to suggest that they reflect a common poetic language for describing the virtues of women in late antique poetry. Sidonius made use of this language to describe a woman of high status that he wanted his audience to consider virtuous. The reference to women from the Roman republican past is consistent with Sidonius' adherence to traditional Roman values. It also displays Sidonius' knowledge and education as a means of connecting him, through the literary past, to the traditions of Rome.

Another portrayal of the wife of a colleague appears in the same poem. Eulalia was Sidonius' cousin and the wife of a Gallic senator named Probus. In Sidonius' published letter addressed to Probus (*Ep.* 4.1) Eulalia is described for the chaste severity of her character.⁷¹ This corresponds with the representation in *Carm.* 24 where Eulalia is equated to Minerva the virgin goddess of maidens. The image of a virgin greek goddess was a literary model that Sidonius favoured. The term *cecropiae* is also employed in *Carm.* 15.146 to refer to the virtues of Eulalia's sister-in-law Araneola in an *epithalamium*.

These mythical comparisons come from the *propempticon* of Sidonius' collection, the last poem in the published book of *Carmina*. Sidonius writes that he hopes Eulalia will read

BCE.

⁷¹ *Ep.* 4.1.1 and possibly 3.11.1-2 also refer to Eulalia indirectly, although she cannot be identified for certain.

his poem.⁷² She is addressed here as an individual rather than described for her virtue in order to flatter her husband. Sidonius expected Eulalia to appreciate and understand the classical references and flowery language prevalent throughout his poetry. Women of Eulalia's class would have been educated and literate. Sidonius' poem indicates that Eulalia was versed in classical as well as Christian literature.⁷³ If so, this is in contrast to Sidonius' description of suitable women's reading materials in the library of a country villa (*Ep.* 2.9.4). The books piled by the ladies' chair were of a *stilus religiosus* in contrast to the men's reading material which was the height of Latin eloquence.⁷⁴ As Percival has recently pointed out, this reference comes from a highly stylised account of life in the aristocratic rural villa.⁷⁵ The poetic reality of Eulalia's tastes and abilities in *Carm.* 24 are contrasted with the Christian aristocratic ideal represented in *Ep.* 2. Since Eulalia is the only woman addressed in the poem, her interests in literature seem to be the exception rather than the rule among women of her status.

The *propempticon* is the poem in which Sidonius compares Papianilla to Tanaquil, Lucretia, and Claudia. In this farewell poem, Sidonius visits the families mentioned and describes their aristocratic lifestyle. The portrayal of Papianilla as the strong supportive wife is very different from the severe, chaste, and educated Eulalia. I would argue that Sidonius, wanting to impress Ferreolus, thought Papianilla's status merited her portrayal in legendary Roman terminology. The references to Papianilla are the same as those in Claudian's poem to Serena. Sidonius may be reflecting the tastes and expectations of the husband Ferreolus by

⁷² In *Carm.* 24.95-98 she is named: *hic saepe Eulaliae meae legeris*. The farewell poem was written by Sidonius who gave up writing poetry when he joined ecclesiastical life, c. 469.

⁷³ Evidence for how women were educated in this period is lacking. Riché (1962: 220-226) touches briefly on the education of women in the post-Roman west. The assumption carried forward from the classical Roman period is that senatorial women would have been literate but to what degree is unknown. It seems that women were educated in the family home rather than at schools. For the general attitudes in late antiquity, see Clark (1993), 130-138.

⁷⁴ Reading for the men included both Christian and Latin literature and Sidonius' examples are Augustine, Varro, Horace, and Prudentius. (*Sid. Ep.* 2.9.4)

⁷⁵ See Percival (1997), 284-287 for his assessment of *Ep.* 2.9.

depicting his wife in the same style and terms previously applied to the imperial family. On the other hand, the impression from this poem is that Sidonius knew Eulalia well enough to expect her to read the poem. She is one of a list of his friends whom he imagines will peruse the volume when it is published.⁷⁶ There seems to be an individual aspect to these representations driven by status and formality.

The final idealized wife to be discussed here is eulogized by Sidonius in a letter to Desiderius (*Ep.* 2.8). The opening of the letter tells of the untimely death of a woman named Filimatia. It is assumed that Filimatia was the daughter of Filimatus (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Philomathius) who is mentioned in another letter (*Ep.* 5.17). Filimatus may be the unnamed *parens* who asked Sidonius to compose the epitaph recorded in this letter.⁷⁷ Filimatia left five children when she died at the age of thirty.⁷⁸ She is portrayed in a glowing and straightforward account of her virtues. The description of Filimatia contains the traits and virtues Sidonius considered important in a wife and mother: she was an obedient wife, a gentle mistress (*domina*), a useful mother, and a pious daughter.⁷⁹ Included in the letter is Sidonius' verse epitaph. It expresses the same sentiments as the letter but with a more poetic flair. Filimatia is described as *splendor generis*, the pride of her family, as well as wise, chaste, and gracious (*Ep.* 2.8.3).

These varied representations in both the *Carmina* and *Epistulae* portray women with

⁷⁶ The poem mentions Avitus (see also *Ep.* 3.1), Ferreolus (see also *Ep.* 9.13), Apollinaris, and other close relatives. This is Sidonius at his most flowery and flattering. There are continual references to classical myth and roman legend in his farewell poem.

⁷⁷ The assumption that the family connection is father/daughter between these two rests solely on the fact that there is no other known Filimatia or Filimatus and both appear in Sidonius' correspondence (*Ep.* 5.17.7 for Filimatus).

⁷⁸ See Garnsey (1991), 48-65, for the high death rates among children and women of child bearing years in Italy. Epigraphic evidence from Gaul suggests similar high rates for women in their twenties and thirties.

⁷⁹ *Ep.* 2.8.1: *decessit nudius tertius non absque iustitio matrona Filimatia, morigera coniunx domina clemens, utilis mater pia filia...*

the uniform virtues of an ideal Roman wife. As might be expected, more mythologizing takes place in the poems and the letters tend towards a more prosaic representation of women. The poems express the ideal of a wife in a flowery language but they do not reflect a different ideal from the letters. Papianilla was Lucretia, the pious, hard working Roman *matrona*. The chaste, severe, and educated Eulalia has the attributes of the goddess Minerva. Filimatia, who had five children and died young, possessed the same virtues as Lucretia. The variations created by the depiction of Papianilla as Claudia and Tanaquil do not contain an underlying negativity as in other Roman authors. Sidonius seems to have lifted these comparisons from a poem Claudian wrote for the sister of an emperor, and his aim was to flatter. These representations tell us that Sidonius' ideal for women derived from traditional Roman society. In late Roman literary circles, the ideal wife was modest, chaste, educated, devoted and hard-working, outside of the Christian context, she could be Livy's Lucretia.

4.3.3. *Epithalamia*: the ideal bride

In late Latin poetry there are *epithalamia* preserved in the works of Claudian, Sidonius, Ennodius, and Venantius Fortunatus.⁸⁰ In origin, *epithalamia* were written to be sung on the threshold of the wedding chamber. Over time they grew into laudatory poems addressed to the bride and groom.⁸¹ Claudian rejuvenated the *epithalamium* in c. 398 when, as court poet, he composed an *epithalamium* to celebrate the marriage of the emperor Honorius with Maria, the daughter of the *magister militum* Stilicho.⁸²

⁸⁰ For the omission of Paulinus of Nola and Ausonius from this list see chapter three, note 54.

⁸¹ See Russell (1979) for a brief summary and examination of the tradition; Keydell (1962) and Morelli (1910); for an in depth analysis of the surviving poems; and Pavlovskis (1965), 164 for general background.

⁸² *Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*. See Roberts (1989a), 328 for Claudian as the 'second founder' of the late Latin *epithalamium* after Statius. *Carm.* 30-1 are two parts of an *epithalamium* written for his friend Palladius and bride Celerina. See Cameron (1970), 98-102 for a discussion of the political

In his fundamental study on Latin *epithalamia*, Morelli demonstrates that the Latin authors of *epithalamia* built upon each other from Statius onwards.⁸³ *Epithalamia*, even when written by Christian authors, drew heavily on the imagery of classical mythology.⁸⁴ Sidonius published two *epithalamia* that were written to celebrate the nuptials of his friends and relations. In his poems Sidonius followed the structure of *epithalamia* as set out by Statius and Claudian. They begin with a short *praefatio* that consists mostly of mythological references to marriage with only a few lines mentioning the bridal couple.⁸⁵ The *epithalamium* itself is approximately two hundred lines of classical mythology, idyllic images, and references to love. The majority of the poem takes place in the mythological realm and only in the last ten lines of each poem does Sidonius deal with the reality of the wedding ceremony.

The representations of women in the *epithalamia* are created from mythical amplification and Sidonius' poetic skill. Sidonius' two *epithalamia* elevate the bridal couple to mythical status. There is, however, some individualization of the couples and the two poems present us with markedly different interests, tastes, and mythology.⁸⁶ Sidonius wrote an *epithalamium* in honour of the wedding of Hiberia, the daughter of Ommatius (1), a Gallo-Roman noble, and Ruricius, the future bishop of Limoges and senator/aristocrat from near Cahors. Sidonius and Ruricius were related through Ruricius' wife's family, although there may have been other connections that we do not know about.⁸⁷ In the *epithalamium*,

overtones of Claudian's *epithalamium*.

⁸³ See Morelli (1910), 379-393 and Pavlovskis (1965), 164.

⁸⁴ Paulinus of Nola's wedding poem is an exception as it was purely Christian in content. He modified the form by substituting Christ for the role traditionally played by Venus.

⁸⁵ In the *praefatio* Sidonius introduces Polemius and Araneola, *Carm.* 14.21-23: *sed doctus iuvenis decensque virgo, Jortu culmina Galliae tenentes/iunguntur*, 'yet a learned young man and a handsome virgin, holding by birth an exalted position in Gaul, are joined.' Polemius' learnedness sets the tone for the poem.

⁸⁶ For the individualization see Roberts (1989a), 327-328.

⁸⁷ See Mathisen (1981), 109 and (1999), 22, for a full discussion of the possibilities. Harries

Sidonius takes the opportunity to mention Hiberia's father Ommatius (*Carm.* 11.50-54). Ommatius, a senator from Auvergne is presented as *magnorum maior avorum patriciaeque nepos gentis* (*Carm.* 11.52-53). This is a man Sidonius wanted to impress, or at least flatter, and style of the *epithalamium* may be moulded to fit his tastes.⁸⁸

Sidonius' poem written for Ruricius and Hiberia (*Carm.* 10 and 11) is, as Roberts notes, 'a reworking of the Stasian/Claudian tradition'.⁸⁹ The style of the *epithalamium* follows Statius in the mythical comparison made of the bride Hiberia. Hiberia is compared with women fought for in famous contests from Greek and Roman mythology.⁹⁰ Sidonius then compares Hiberia to Danae, Europa, Leda, and Semele, all the women to whom Jupiter/Jupiter had appeared in his different forms (*Carm.* 11.89-90). Roberts describes Sidonius' exhaustive use of mythological enumeration as decorative rather than symbolic.⁹¹ Sidonius lists heroes and heroines of Greek mythology to display his literary skill and not to signify any real comparison.

As Roberts states, 'the mythical comparisons serve only the purpose of rhetorical amplification'.⁹² I believe there is some significance in the different myths used that may

(1994: 32) gives a brief account of the relationship.

⁸⁸ Sidonius also dedicated *Carm.* 17 to Ommatius, an invitation to celebrate the sixteenth birthday of one of Sidonius' children.

⁸⁹ Roberts (1989a), 338.

⁹¹ *Carm.* 11. 86-90: *te quoque multimodis ambisset, Hiberia, ludis/ axe Pelops. cursu Hippomenes luctaque Achelous./ Aeneas bellis spectatus, Gorgone Perseus;/ nec minor haec species totiens cui Iuppiter esset / Delia, taurus, olor, Satyrus, draco, fulmen et aurum.* 'You also Hiberia would men have striven for in many ways, Pelops with his chariot, Hippomenes with his footrace, Achelous with his wrestling, distinguished Aeneas with wars, Perseus by the Gorgon; this beauty no less that those to whom Jupiter so often was a Delian goddess, a bull, a swan, a Satyr, a serpent, thunder or gold.' This passage is paralleled in *Carm.* 11. 62-71 where Ruricius is portrayed as the man who would cause many a woman of ancient mythology to act with mad passion. Aphrodite would have loved him. He would be as Jason, Odysseus, Aeneas, and Minos amongst others.

⁹¹ See Roberts (1989a), 340-341.

⁹² Roberts (1989a), 322.

relate to the status of the bridal couple in relation to the poet.⁹³ Ommatius, the father of the bride, was a man Sidonius wanted to impress and whose status was relatively elevated. In the wedding poem written for his daughter Hiberia, Sidonius chose a traditional established formula used by Claudian in his *epithalamium* for an emperor. The bridal comparisons of Hiberia are also similar to those made by Sidonius to describe Alypia, the daughter of Anthemius, and her wedding to Ricimer in *Carm.* 2. 480-503. In this poem Alypia is compared to Hippodamia, Medea, Atalanta and Deianira.⁹⁴ This type of enumerative mythical amplification is reserved for Sidonius' poetic references to women of a very high status and serve as a form of formulaic flattery. There is a certain formality about the lists of heroes and heroines.

Sidonius composed an *epithalamium* for the occasion of the wedding of Araneola and Polemius (*Carm.* 14 and 15).⁹⁵ Araneola was related to Sidonius through her brother Probus' marriage to Sidonius' kinswoman Eulalia.⁹⁶ Sidonius' letter to Polemius that accompanies the poem reveals that Sidonius crafted the poem to suit the tastes of the philosophical Polemius.⁹⁷ Sidonius portrays Polemius and Araneola as presiding over two temples (*Carm.* 15.36). One temple, the higher one, is filled with men philosophizing and the other, slightly lower, with women spinning and weaving. Araneola is transformed into the ideal bride for a thoughtful philosophical man. There is a light-hearted treatment of the subjects in the poem as has been noted by Loyen.⁹⁸ Araneola challenges the authority of the male philosophers by weaving a depiction of *Lais*, the *philosophi victrix* who cuts the cynic's

⁹³ See Roberts (1989a), 347.

⁹⁴ Sidonius also describes the wedding celebrations in Rome in *Ep.* 1.5.10.

⁹⁵ Polemius was the last appointed praetorian prefect of the Gauls (471-472). See *Sid. Ep.* 4.14.

⁹⁶ Harries (1994), 33.

⁹⁷ See *Carm.* 14.1 for the address at the beginning of the poem to Polemius. Sidonius indicates that Polemius had requested the poem or at least that they had discussed the matter before Sidonius crafted the poetic images.

⁹⁸ Loyen (1943), 12-17.

beard.⁹⁹ Sidonius' depiction of Araneola is personalized, respectful, and humorous. Marital virtue is also a theme the poem celebrates citing famous unions such as Penelope and Odysseus and Orpheus and Eurydice (*Carm.* 15. 159-174).¹⁰⁰

The *epithalamium* for Araneola and Polemius is unique because Minerva plays the role traditionally filled by Venus and philosophers replace gods and heroes. Minerva, the most chaste of all the goddesses, presides over the maidens and her virtues are the model for the bride (*Carm.* 15.148-149). As discussed above, Minerva is also used as a model for Eulalia in *Carm.* 24.95-98 where she represents purity of character.¹⁰¹ Of all the pantheon of Greek/Roman mythology, the Minerva/Athena figure is one that seems an appropriate choice for a Christian society. The virginal purity of the goddess coincides with the modest and chaste Christian woman that Sidonius idealizes.

There is a playfulness in the *epithalamium* written for Polemius and Araneola that lends a sense of individual taste and friendship. The couple were relatives of Sidonius on his father's side and this close relationship may allow for the informality in the poem that creates the playful humour. The lightness may also reflect tastes of the philosopher-groom Polemius. In this context it is difficult to agree with the use of the poem to confirm female behaviours in the late fifth century. A statements such as, 'the Gallo-Roman aristocrat Sidonius Apollinaris agrees that men philosophize and women spin' takes the context away from the language.¹⁰² The light-hearted playfulness of the poem might suggest just the opposite, but in either case, Sidonius is practising his art and not portraying his reality.

⁹⁹ According to Roberts (1989a: 342), inspiration for this depiction of Araneola derives from Ovid's depiction of Arachne in the *Metamorphoses* 6.1-160. Ovid describes how the girl Arachne boldly challenged the goddess Minerva to a weaving competition and ended up transformed into a spider. Sidonius makes a play on the name of the bride Araneola which can be translated as 'little spider'.

¹⁰⁰ See Morelli (1910), 392.

¹⁰¹ Eulalia and Araneola were sisters-in-law

¹⁰² Coon (1997), 42. This reference in Coon seems out of place in an otherwise interesting discussing on the role of weaving in female hagiography.

These wedding poems provide Sidonius an opportunity to demonstrate and embrace his knowledge of classical mythology and history.¹⁰³ Sidonius is the last of the late Latin poets to employ mythology to such a degree. The vocabulary of the poems tells us that Sidonius' audience, the aristocratic circles of the late fifth-century, although Christian, still had tastes well versed in the classical traditions. The abundant use of myth in Sidonius does not carry over into the later *epithalamia* of Ennodius or Venantius Fortunatus. In the later wedding poems the mythology, although still present, is reduced to a bucolic background symbolic of expressions of love and fidelity.¹⁰⁴

4.4. Roman imperial women and Germanic queens

With the development of the Germanic successor kingdoms in Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries, a new type of female appeared on the scene. These women were not the wives or daughters of aristocrats but queens.¹⁰⁵ Sidonius only makes brief references to the Germanic women in his community. Their unique status in society was not so distant from the women in Sidonius' family circle since his wife Papianilla was the daughter of an emperor. The Germanic queen in Gaul, however, had the influence of an empress in a smaller and more localized region and Sidonius attributes these women with influence over their husbands. In contrast there is no sense that the women of the Aviti wielded much influence.

¹⁰³ For Christian poetry written by an almost contemporary bishop, see Avitus' six extant poems. Like Sidonius, Avitus 'took great pains to demonstrate his familiarity with the classics of Greece and Rome' (Shea 1997: 4). In Avitus' case he demonstrated his knowledge and then rejected the ideas. As Ian Wood (1994: 25) points out, Avitus was more adept at using his rhetorical skills in the service of theology and asceticism. In doing so he combined ascetic religious culture and the rhetorical culture of late antiquity more successfully than Sidonius. Roberts (1989a: 341) refers to a sense of cultural prestige in the continued use of myth.

¹⁰⁴ See Morelli (1910), 393-401, for an outline of the *epithalamia* of Ennodius and Venantius Fortunatus and Roberts (1989a), 344-345, for their use of myth.

¹⁰⁵ See Reydellet (1981), 47-85, for the role that royalty played in the writing of Sidonius and Nelson (1999) on medieval 'queenship' as a concept.

Queens and empresses with influence over their husbands have always received attention from ancient authors.¹⁰⁶ Sidonius portrays the wives of the Burgundian and Visigothic kings, Chilperic (2) and Euric, in this style.¹⁰⁷ It is important to point out, as Janet Nelson aptly states, that 'queens are not typical of women in this or any other period'.¹⁰⁸ The fact that the Germanic queens wielded power in their own right was a new development in late Roman Gaul. This development coincided with an increased role for women in the patronage of the Christian church.

Ragnahilda was the Visigothic queen and the wife of Euric (reigned 466-485). She is mentioned in a letter Sidonius wrote to Evodius, a friend with whom he corresponded on a regular basis.¹⁰⁹ Evodius requested that Sidonius write a poem to inscribe on a silver basin to be presented to the Visigothic queen. The implication is that Evodius seeks to win the *regina's* influence and support by presenting a gift. The poem that Sidonius supplied is a flowery comparison of the queen with the goddess Venus and a supplication on behalf of his friend for her protection and goodwill (*Ep.* 4.8.5). This piece of courtly flattery implies that it was worth the effort to attain the queen's favour. The role of the queen in the Germanic kingdoms is one that has been much discussed although the majority of the scholarship focuses on the better documented sixth and seventh centuries.¹¹⁰ The position evolved over time and the queen could become an important and influential figure in society. She was also a focus of support or attack from rivals.¹¹¹ In the early days of Germanic 'queenship' in Gaul, Sidonius perceives the

¹⁰⁶ Examples such as Livia in Tacitus or Theodora in Procopius attribute great influence to the women behind the men.

¹⁰⁷ *Epp.* 5.7 and 4.8 respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Nelson (1978), 31.

¹⁰⁹ This letter is a reply to one Sidonius received from Evodius, see *Ep.* 4.8.1.

¹¹⁰ See Stafford (1983), Wemple (1981), and Wood (1994), 120-139 on the royal women of the early Merovingian kingdoms, and Nelson (1978 and 1991) for Visigothic princesses and queens.

¹¹¹ See Fischler (1994), 117-118 and Cooper (1996), 1-19, Stafford (1983), and below chapter 5.4 on the queens in Gregory of Tours.

Visigothic queen as an extension and reflection of her husband as was the traditional view in Roman rhetoric. There is also a sense that she held a position of influence in her own right.

Sidonius claims that the silver basin, rather than the poem inscribed on it, will be the more appreciated item at the barbarian court (*Ep.* 4.8.5). Is this a piece of false modesty or a denigration of the literary culture of the Visigothic court? There is probably an element of both within. Perhaps Sidonius is saying that Ragnahilda would have been able to read but would not appreciate the poem, or perhaps the opposite, that she could not read Latin and the bowl alone would have been appreciated. There is little information on the education level of Germanic queens in the fifth century.¹¹² It may not be legitimate to generalize here, but if we take as an example of a late fifth century queen, Chlotild, the wife of Clovis, Gregory of Tours' idealized portrayal leaves the impression that she was literate.¹¹³

The second queen Sidonius mentions is the wife of Chilperic (2), king of the Burgundians (*Anonyma* 21) (*Ep.* 5.7).¹¹⁴ Sidonius refers to the Burgundian kingdom of Chilperic (2) to as *Lugdunensis Germania* signifying that its capital was Lyon (*Ep.* 5.7.7.).¹¹⁵ This reference in a letter to Thaumastus complains about the actions of informers who whisper lies to the king. Sidonius claims that it is the clear head and counsel of his queen that keeps Chilperic from listening. The informers and the queen are described in colourful

¹¹² The sixth century is much better documented for Germanic women who were increasingly involved in the foundation of monasteries for women and religious teaching. Many of the sources who write about educated women do so about their Gallo-Roman relatives, for example Avitus' sister in his *Carm.* 6, Caesarius' sister Caesaria, and Ruricius' correspondents mentioned above. See Riché (1962), 138-139.

¹¹³ *DLH* 2.28 The representation of Chlotild may cloud the issue and is dealt with in detail in chapter 5.4.1.

¹¹⁴ Chilperic's queen is mistakenly referred to as Caretena from an inscription found at Lyon (CIL XIII 2372 = ILCV 46 Lugdunum) *PLRE* 2 s.v. Caretena and Heinzelmann (1982), 574 also make this connection although Caretena has now been identified as the wife of Gundobad by Harries (1994: 232) and Wood (1994), 45 and (1990), 58-60. Caretena was a catholic Christian indicating that not all the Burgundian royal family were Arians. One would expect, however, that this would be mentioned by Gregory of Tours. He declares that Gundobad considered conversion to the catholic Christian faith but remained an Arian (*DLH* 2.34).

¹¹⁵ See also Wood (1994), 15-16. The history of the 470s in Gaul is complex and at times unclear from a lack of direct evidence relating to historical events.

metaphor with parallels to the Roman imperial past. The queen is compared first to Tanaquil, the queen of Tarquinius Priscus, who, as mentioned above, was thought to have exerted great power behind the Roman throne (*Ep.* 5.7.7.). The use of Tanaquil corresponds to her previously discussed appearance as an example of a strong-willed woman of high status and as a positive comparative model. Sidonius goes on to compare the queen to Agrippina, wife of Germanicus, and a woman described by earlier Roman writers, like Tacitus, as the paragon of female virtue, strength, and support.¹¹⁶ It is a most flattering depiction of the Burgundian queen.

The same queen is referred to in a letter to Patiens, the bishop of Lyon, where Sidonius writes that she admired the bishop's fasting and her husband admired the bishop's feasts (*Ep.* 6.12). It is assumed from the date of the letter (early 470s) that Sidonius refers to the same queen as mentioned in *Ep.* 5.7, the wife of Chilperic, king at Lyon.¹¹⁷ The fact that the queen admired bishop Patiens' fasting indicates a quality of piety that would appeal to Sidonius the bishop. This reference and the overall flattering portrayal of the Burgundian queen also implies that she was a catholic Christian and not an Arian.¹¹⁸ The queen's religion may be the reason that Sidonius is sympathetic towards her and positive about her influence over her husband.

It is within this category that the wife of Aëtius also belongs. Aëtius' wife Pelagia was, according to Sidonius, a Gothic princess and she is referred to in the panegyric written for Majorian (*Carm.* 5.126-139, 203-207).¹¹⁹ Sidonius accuses Pelagia of influencing Aëtius'

¹¹⁶ *Ep.* 5.7.7: *si modo, quamdiu praesens potestas Lugdunensem Germaniam regit, nostrum suumque Germanicum praesens Agrippina moderetur* 'if only, as long as the present power rules Germania Lugdunensis, the present Agrippina moderates our and her Germanicus.' See Tacitus, *Annales* 1.69 for Agrippina as example of brave and noble Roman wife.

¹¹⁷ For the bishop Patiens, see Duchesne, vol 2, 163. Harries (1994), 113 give the letter a date of c. 470s making it likely that this was the same queen mentioned in *Ep.* 5.7.

¹¹⁸ Their daughter Chlotild, the Burgundian princess who married Clovis, was also a catholic. For the catholic Christianity of the Burgundian royal family see Wood (1990), 60. Shanzer (1997) covers Burgundian marriage diplomacy.

decision to dismiss his general, the future emperor Majorian. Compared in the panegyric to Medea, Pelagia is portrayed as jealous of Majorian's influence with Aëtius. Sidonius adopted this story of Aëtius' wife as the explanation for Majorian's brief retirement from the service of Aëtius in the early 450s. It is implied that a woman's influence caused her husband to make unwise decisions. Sidonius uses the classical rhetoric of womanly influence to suggest a reason for Aëtius to betray his public duty by dismissing a good man.¹²⁰ The use of Medea as a comparative model is in contrast to the reference in *Carm.* 2.493-494 where she is portrayed as a positive symbol of a marriage won by peril. When portraying Pelagia, Sidonius makes reference to Medea's negative qualities. The flexible use of Medea as both a positive and negative model indicates the impersonal aspect of Sidonius' mythological amplifications. This may be especially true when Sidonius discusses women with whom he had no contact.

The Roman women who lived close to power and influence were the wives and sisters of the emperors in Rome and Constantinople but they are not generally mentioned by Sidonius. The exception to this occurs in a letter describing Sidonius' arrival in Rome during the wedding celebrations for the marriage of Alypia, daughter of Anthemius, to Ricimer, the *magister militum* (467). Sidonius compares the bride Alypia to a list of Greek heroines and Ricimer to a list heroes in the same manner as the couples in the *epithalamia* (*Carm.* 2.480-503). Sidonius likens their marriage to that of Medea and Jason, a comparison that seems to stretch the boundaries of positive role models for a marriage. For Sidonius to insult the *magister militum* Ricimer would be risky and it may be that Medea and Jason were perceived as a flattering model for marriage. Perhaps Sidonius makes this ambiguous comparison to reveal his true feelings on the likely success of the marriage. The union of Alypia and Ricimer is

¹¹⁹ See *Carm.* 5.203-204 where Pelagia states her royal Gothic heritage with the claim that she was *exclusa sceptris Geticis*.

¹²⁰ See Cooper (1992), 153, on the positive and negative implications of womanly influence in both Roman and Christian literature.

more practically referred to in a letter to Heronius as securing *spes publicae securitatis* (*Ep.* 1.5.10).

The representation of these 'women of power' illustrates how Sidonius, as he moved from the secular to the Christian world, changed his literary *topoi* and anecdotal references with his environment. The wifely virtues ascribed to the Burgundian queen fit well with the subject and recipient of that letter, an aristocratic Gallo-Roman whose cultural background would refer back to noble Romans of the past (*Ep.* 5.7). The Roman virtues are exchanged for praise of Christian piety in *Ep.* 6.12, which was appropriate in correspondence with a respected fellow bishop. Although the role of a Germanic queen was different from that of an aristocratic wife in late Roman Gaul, Sidonius employs the same frame of reference for Germanic women. The Burgundian queen is compared to the same legendary and virtuous ancestral Roman women as the wives of his friends and colleagues. Sidonius' personal biases must be taken into account here as he was anti-Visigoth and pro-Burgundian.¹²¹ The portrayal of Ragnahilda as illiterate and Chilperic's wife as pious reflects these prejudices. It is important to note that Sidonius' attribution of influence to the Visigothic and Burgundian women is not otherwise found in his literary representations of women. I would argue that this indicates some continuity with the accounts of the influence that Germanic women held in the society of Gregory of Tours. There might be some indication as early as Sidonius that Germanic queens were perceived as having an increased influence over their men.

4.5 Single women: dedicated virgins and widows

The development of virginity and chastity as a life choice for aristocratic women had a significant long-term impact on the representation of women in late antiquity. There is a shift in rhetoric used by late antique Christian authors from the Roman ideal of the *matrona* to the

¹²¹ For the Burgundians as Roman allies see chapter 2.5.

ideal of the celibate dedicated virgin.¹²² As a Christian and a bishop, Sidonius would have been aware of these changes but there does not seem to be a distinguishable shift in rhetoric concerning his representations of women. Sidonius refers to single women and widows in a variety of letters. The status of these women is never clearly expressed although they are generally praised as *sanctae*.

A rhetorical exercise in persuasion best describes Sidonius' lament for the long absence of his friend Aper from his maternal home of Clermont (*Ep.* 4.21). Aper, like Sidonius, was connected to Clermont through the maternal line and the letter emphasizes the connection by providing details about three female relatives. Sidonius' theme of the value of the maternal line was served by discussing these women in detail. Sidonius states clearly that the lineage of the father has precedence in the family but goes on to say that the mother's origins also need to be given their due (4.21.1).¹²³

Three women from Aper's family; his grandmother, mother, and aunt are mentioned. Sidonius tells us that Aper's grandmother, Auspicia, had brought him up after his mother's death (*Ep.* 4.21.4).¹²⁴ The implication is that Aper's mother, who is not named, had been left a widow and with the death of her husband returned to live with her own family. In traditional Roman families the status of the widow varied with her status within the marriage. In later Roman society, the husband's control over his wife had declined and a daughter often remained in the control of her own family.¹²⁵ The connection to the maternal family generally remained

¹²² The development of the rhetoric of virginity in the late empire is discussed by Cooper (1996), 45-91 and Cameron (1989).

¹²³ Sidonius employs the *topos* of maternal connections as a rhetorical tool.

¹²⁴ The suggestion is that Aper was left an orphan.

¹²⁵ This is the basic difference between *manus* and *sine manus* marriage. See Treggiari (1991), 28-36, for the varied status of a wife and the decline of *manus* marriage over time. Also Nathan (2000: 126) refers to this letter as evidence for a great importance placed on the mother's family in late antiquity. I believe Sidonius has a more personal reason for glorifying the maternal family as discussed above.

intact so that after the death of a husband it would be natural for a wife to return to her own family.¹²⁶

Frontina, aunt of Aper, is described as *sanctior sanctis Frontina virginibus* (*Ep.* 4.21.4). Does this imply that aunt Frontina was a dedicated virgin? If so, Sidonius does not make much of her saintliness although she is praised. The dedicated virgins of Sidonius' circle in the late fifth- and early sixth-century would not have lived in a female monastery but in the community in their family home. Avitus of Vienne provides supplementary evidence in a poem on chastity written for his sister (*Carm.* 6). The poem tells us that Avitus' parents (his father had been bishop of Vienne) had taken vows of chastity and his mother ran a home for virgins within the family establishment. As mentioned above, Sidonius' daughter Severiana is thought to have lived as a dedicated virgin with the women of Avitus' family.¹²⁷ The implication is that female in-house monasticism included members of the extended family. The ascetic women in the Avitus/Apollinaris family lived together, not on their own separate estates.

It is difficult to ascertain how many establishments for dedicated virgins/ascetic women existed in fifth-century Gaul. There is little evidence for female monasticism in Gaul in the later fifth-century beyond those women who chose to live as virgins in their family homes. The foundation of monasteries for dedicated virgins usually occurred in conjunction with existing monasteries for men. As mentioned in the *Vita S. Romani*, the sister of St. Romanus was appointed abbess of a monastery for one hundred and five virgins.¹²⁸ The *Vita S. Romani* was written soon after the death of the saint indicating that in the early sixth century these

¹²⁶ Evans Grubbs (1995), 121. Widowhood was a complicated legal subject for late Roman jurists, though chiefly with reference to remarriage. There is no way of knowing at what age Aper's mother was widowed or whether remarriage was an option. Remarriage was a concern for family inheritance. For the view of remarriage in the patristic texts of Jerome, Augustine and Chrysostom, see Cloke (1995), 86-87.

¹²⁷ See Cooper (1996), 68-91, for a discussion of the development and motivations behind female asceticism. See also Clark (1986), 180-185, for aristocratic in-house monasticism.

¹²⁸ See *Vita S. Romani*, 266 note 1.

establishments existed and that there were plenty of women to fill them.¹²⁹ Caesaria, the sister of Caesarius of Arles, lived in a female monastic community in the early sixth century founded on the rule for nuns written by her brother.¹³⁰ Sidonius provides no information on establishments for dedicated virgins in his letters and one has to assume that in his circle those women who were *sanctiores sanctis virginibus* lived in the prototype of a female community inside the family home. Sidonius may be merely complimenting Frontina's modesty and piety by comparing her to the dedicated virgins.

Widows were a source of concern for late Roman bishops and often appear in Christian texts. The option of remarriage is something that Roman law allowed but Christian doctrine, with its emphasis on celibacy, discouraged.¹³¹ Sidonius' letter written on behalf of the widow Eutropia indicates that she was involved in a legal battle with a priest over her son's inheritance (*Ep.* 6.2).¹³² Sidonius intervenes for Eutropia with the bishop of the priest in question and depicts her as a woman whose Christian charity knows no bounds and who spent endless energy on behalf of others (in *Ep.* 6.2.4 she is *sancta Eutropia*). A wealthy Christian widow was bound to good works according to Sidonius the bishop. There is something unseemly to Sidonius about a battle for inheritance between a saintly widow and a priest, but wealth was a

¹²⁹ Gregory of Tours' account of the lives of St. Lupicinus and St. Romanus does not mention the foundation of a sister female monastery. See *VP* 1.

¹³⁰ Female monasteries are better documented for the sixth century which coincides with the first *regula* for a female monastery written by Caesarius of Arles (*regula virginum*). A number of Germanic royal women, such as Radegund or Ingeltrude, founded female monasteries or went to live in them. These women are discussed in detail in chapter five.

¹³¹ See Evans Grubbs (1995) for the lifting of the Augustan penalties on celibacy. See Arjava (1994), 216-230, for the remarriage of a widow. Remarriage was an option but would depend on the age when a woman was widowed. There was a mandatory period of ten months she had to wait before remarriage to ensure that the paternity of any children born was known. *CTh* 3.8.1: *Si qua ex feminis perditto marito intra anni spatium alteri festinarit innubere - parvum enim temporis post decem menses servandum adicimus, tametsi id ipsum exiguum putemus* - 'If any woman having lost her husband hastens into another marriage within the interval of a year- for we designate that ten months time should be observed, although we think this itself is a small amount'.

¹³² Eutropia's son had married Agrippinus' (the priest) daughter (*Ep.* 6.2.2).

driving factor for all involved (including Sidonius since the widow presumably resided in his congregation).¹³³ Eutropia's daughter-in-law wanted to remain with her mother-in-law after she had inherited her husband's estate. Agrippinus the priest seems to be insisting that she return to her family as was the practice as cited above in Sidonius' letter to Aper (*Ep.* 4.21). Sidonius does not reveal the outcome, only that the bishop would make the decision.

As more restrictions were placed on women's inheritance rights in Germanic culture, the independent wealth of women was limited and remarriage became a different issue.¹³⁴ For a widow in the late fifth century who was relatively unprotected, inheritance was essential for survival. The choices for a single woman in Sidonius' circle were limited. Increasingly, Christianity offered an option for those who did not wish to remarry. This choice of remaining single was limited in the fifth century (and in the sixth century) to those families who could afford to keep a daughter in the family home, endow a female monastery, or to widows with independent means.

4.6. Historical reality underlying the literary constructs: marriage, divorce, *contubernium*, and inheritance

Information drawn from Sidonius' letters involves a great deal of uncertainty because of their self-consciously literary style. Percival has recently argued that in the detail one acquires information beyond the literary constructs but Sidonius' literary intentions can be found even in the details.¹³⁵ On account of this overtly literary context I am hesitant to interpret information as being real, practical, or representative of behaviours outside Sidonius' literary constructs.

¹³³ I think Nathan (2000: 122) overstates the case when he claims this as an example of 'legal harassment and extortion' against a widow. The wealth was important to all parties including the advocate and author of the letter whose views may be biased in this matter.

¹³⁴ Changes in inheritance laws are discussed in chapter five in more detail.

¹³⁵ See the discussion in Percival (1997), 280.

Despite this, there are issues that Sidonius mentions in his letters that deal with important factors in regulating women's lives. Sidonius offers advice and comments upon events in friends' lives that relate to inheritance, betrothal, and dowry. These issues, for the most part, revolve around the regulation of marriage and the transfer of wealth. By examining the context in which Sidonius presents these topics the aim is to assess what, if any, practical information he offers about women's lives in the late fifth century.

4.6.1. Inheritance

Sidonius mentions inheritance briefly in a letter (*Ep.* 3.1) written to his relation Avitus (1) concerning the donation of an estate (*praedium*) to the church at Clermont.¹³⁶ The estate belonged jointly to Avitus and his sister who had inherited from another sister on her death.¹³⁷ Sidonius indicates that Avitus made the decision to donate this estate to the church and that his sister followed his example (*Ep.* 3.1.3). The estate had been divided between the two siblings and one part was donated by Avitus and the other by his sister.¹³⁸ The impression is that the dead sister had been childless since any children born to her would have had precedence over the siblings in inheriting.¹³⁹ This letter demonstrates the testamentary capacity of women in

¹³⁶ *Ep.* 3.1.2 *Cuticiacensis praedii suburbanitate* 'the suburban estate of Cuticiacum'

¹³⁷ Estimates have been made over the amount of private property that was controlled by women. Arjava (1994: 98) suggests that anywhere from twenty-five to forty-five percent is possible. This is an estimate based on evidence from all over the empire, and so may not have any relevance to Gaul.

¹³⁸ The other possible alternative was that he was the *tutor* (legal guardian) of his sister. See below, chapter 4.6.3, for *tutor*.

¹³⁹ Roman laws dealing with inheritance were vast in number and the concern of the nobility in the passing on of landed property was something that constantly employed jurists. There is extensive detail concerning the laws of inheritance from the time of Constantine in Evans Grubbs (1996), appendix 1.7. For our period the right of celibate women to inherit and bequeath is important to family development over the fifth and sixth centuries. See Arjava (1994), 73-100 and 127-142, although much of this evidence comes from Egyptian papyri and cannot actually be applied to late Roman Gaul. See Nathan (2000), 68-69, 121-122, 148, and 214-215.

their own right and that they controlled significant amounts of private property.¹⁴⁰

Sidonius had a vested interest in this issue as the bishop of Clermont. The bequests of property and landed wealth to the church by wealthy Romans had an effect on many senatorial families.¹⁴¹ To donate property or wealth to the church was considered a pious act that also led to unintended consequences.¹⁴² The increased frequency of bequests to the church coincided with the increase in celibacy as a lifestyle choice. The number of Gallo-Roman aristocratic families, as mentioned above, whose daughters and sons entered the church was significant. The diminishing number of heirs and reduction of family wealth at this level of society resulted in a large amounts of property being left to enrich the church.

4.6.2. Dowry

Sidonius indirectly offers commentary on certain fundamental aspects related to marriage. One important feature of marriage in Roman society was the dowry that represented a wife's property.¹⁴³ There is evidence that the custom of dowry was a part of Roman marriage

¹⁴⁰ Women's inheritance rights changed in the fifth and sixth centuries. As restrictions were placed on divorce and changes in marriage customs occurred with the influx of Germanic traditions, so too did a woman's legal inheritance rights. This will be discussed further in the chapter five where Gregory of Tours' evidence reflects these changes. Sidonius' world reflects the Roman traditions.

¹⁴¹ This is best documented in the late fourth and early fifth century in Italy through the correspondence of Jerome, Melania the elder, Melania the younger and Paula. See G. Clark (1993), 52-56; E. Clark (1979), 35-89; and Cooper (1996), 68-91. Although the evidence is primarily from Rome and Constantinople, to a degree it must have been paralleled as an issue throughout the empire. The ascetic movement in Gaul took force with St. Martin of Tours at the end of the fourth century and was followed by the establishment of the monastery at Lérins in the fifth century.

¹⁴² Sidonius refers to it as a *bonum opus* (*Ep.* 3.1.3). Increasing the wealth and power of the church may have been intentional as the Germanic kingdoms were formed and Gallo-Romans lost their influence in secular life.

¹⁴³ *Dos*, or dowry, developed out of a concept of a gift that was brought to marriage by the wife, and although a husband had control over it during marriage, it reverted to the wife's control if she was left a widow or divorced. For more details, variation, and exceptions over the empire, see Arjava (1994), 73-100. See also Evans Grubbs (1996), for the influence of Constantinian legislation. For the basic rules and customs in Roman law towards dowry, see Gardner (1986), 97-116 and Treggiari (1991) 320-364. For legal attitudes in the

at all levels of society.¹⁴⁴ Marriage without dowry existed but it was not considered a desirable state for the woman. A dowry might be composed of money, land, slaves, or any kind of valuable property. It was generally negotiated at the time of betrothal and could vary greatly in value depending on the wealth of the bride's family. By law, when a woman entered a marriage her dowry came under the control of her husband and he was required to maintain its original value. If the couple divorced the dowry reverted to the wife.

Sidonius mentions dowry directly in a letter written to Montius (1.11). The letter describes an accusation made by Paeonius who implies that Sidonius was the author of an anonymous, treasonable satire. Sidonius defends himself against the charge and he does so in front of the emperor Majorian (461). Sidonius' comments on Paeonius' career and advancement reveal a man of relatively humble background who rose to be Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls (*Ep.* 1.11.5). His daughter's advantageous marriage came about because of the large dowry Paeonius provided.¹⁴⁵ The use of a dowry to raise the status of an individual or make political alliances was not new to Roman society and may have been common in Sidonius' time. The fifth century, with its political upheaval and turmoil, was a time of social mobility as established families lost power and newer families gained in rank.¹⁴⁶ Paeonius was not a unique case; there were other men of humble origins who had acquired power in fifth-century Gaul.¹⁴⁷ To the aristocratic Sidonius, humble birth was a weakness that could be attacked. Sidonius chose to attack this powerful man of inferior birth by denigrating his

Theodosian code see *De Dotibus*, *CTh* 3.13.1-4. See also Nathan (2000), 16,17, 21, 62, 109-110 and 146.

¹⁴⁴ Treggiari (1991), 322.

¹⁴⁵ *Ep.* 1.11.5: *splendida dotem*.

¹⁴⁶ The letter, according to Harries (1994: 159-166), may have been published to justify Sidonius' actions in a completely different matter. Sidonius defended his friend Arvandus who was accused of treason in 469. Little is known about the aftermath of Sidonius' defense of Arvandus and it has been proposed that by publishing this letter defending himself against an earlier charge of treason Sidonius is actually referring to his role in Arvandus' case.

¹⁴⁷ Harries (1994), 25.

daughter and her social-climbing marriage.¹⁴⁸

4.6.3. Consent to marry

As an aristocrat and bishop, Sidonius would routinely write letters of reference on behalf of friends and relatives. Sidonius wrote a letter on behalf of Proiectus, who sought to marry the daughter of a recently deceased senator, Optantius (*Ep.* 2.4.). Sidonius' referral was written to Sagittarius, the *tutor* of the daughter, whose permission was sought in order to allow the marriage. The *tutor's* role was to represent the legal interests of a minor or a female as guardian when the father or grandfather was deceased. The mother of this girl was still alive and her approval of the marriage had already been expressed (*Ep.* 2.4.2). A *tutor* in Roman society was normally a relative on the father's side. The impression left by the letter is that Sidonius and the prospective groom considered Sagittarius' consent important for the prospect of marriage. The letter makes it clear that the gesture is a ceremonial courtesy and that the consent of the guardian was not absolutely necessary but voluntarily sought and considered the proper thing to do.¹⁴⁹ The mother's consent, when the father was deceased, was most important. From the late fourth century (*CTh* 3.17.4, c. 390), the mother could assume guardianship of her own children and it was not necessary to have a male *tutor*.¹⁵⁰ Sidonius

¹⁴⁸ Contrast this attitude with (*Ep.* 2.2) where Papianilla's dowry brought Sidonius a villa that he celebrates in a letter to Domitius.

¹⁴⁹ See Treggiari (1991), 170-180. In classical Roman law the consent of the male head of the family (the *paterfamilias*) was the only consent necessary. It was considered proper that the bride and groom also had to agree to the marriage although how much they could resist the will of their families would be limited. The power of the *paterfamilias* was gradually eroded so that by the late Roman era the legal power of the father was less absolute, see Evans Grubbs (1996), 172-182 on betrothal. See also Arjava (1994), 43-44, on the mother's choice being preferred if the father was dead. This is assuming the bride was young and had not been married before so was therefore still dependent on her family.

¹⁵⁰ See Arjava (1994), 147-155, who discusses the changes in legal guardianship through the period of the Roman empire. See also *Ep.* 7.2. where a mother negotiates a marriage for her daughter but less successfully, according to Sidonius.

distinguishes the customary role of the guardian in granting consent. The legal necessity for consent in late Roman law depended on the age and status of the girl (*CTh* 3.5.2). If she was under twenty-five, the legal age of majority for both men and women, then the *tutor* would have a say in the marriage of a girl.¹⁵¹ Sidonius' letter is highly rhetorical and pleads the case of the young man while complimenting Sagittarius. The letter suggests that seeking the consent of the *tutor* is a customary nicety rather than a legal necessity.

4.6.4. The absence of consent: *raptus*

The term *raptus* comes from the verb *rapere* meaning to carry off or to seize. In a legal sense *raptus* refers to a number of different crimes involving the abduction of a girl without her parent's or guardian's approval, with or without a sexual connotation. It was a term generally applied in cases of elopement but the law made no distinction between the girl's running away voluntarily or actually being abducted. Sidonius wrote to Pudens to settle a legal case of *raptus* when the daughter of Sidonius' *nutrix* ran off with the son of the *nutrix* of Pudens (5.19).¹⁵² This is a short and relatively straightforward letter that perhaps indicates an unequal status between the two men. The legal penalties for *raptus* were severe. It was considered a serious crime and all involved were liable to be punished.¹⁵³ In the case of *raptus* discussed here the impression is that the couple involved had run away together.

¹⁵¹ Evans Grubbs (1996), 141.

¹⁵² This brings up the interesting question of the role of a *nutrix* in the late Roman family. The specific function of the *nutrix* was a wet nurse but they were also a type of nanny/governess; see Gardner (1986), 241-242. The status of a *nutrix* varied and she could be either free or slave. If free, a nurse would have presumably held a paid position. Since the daughter of Sidonius' *nutrix* was free the mother was as well (see below, *Ep.* 5.19.2). The hiring of a wet nurse was common in upper-class families in Roman society. See Garnsey (1991) and Saller (1991) for more detail on bringing up children in the Roman world. Much of the research relates specifically to Rome but is the only evidence available.

¹⁵³ See Evans Grubbs (1989) for an investigation into this issue in late Roman law and Clark (1993), 36-38 for a general overview in late antiquity. See also Arjava (1994), 45-47.

Sidonius refers to the act as *facinus indignum*, a shameful crime (*Ep.* 5.19.1). The letter was a response to one that Pudens had written to Sidonius calling for leniency in this matter and allowing the couple to stay together. Sidonius agrees to allow the couple to stay together as long as Pudens frees the man in order that the couple be able to marry lawfully.¹⁵⁴ The legal punishment for this crime, as stipulated by the *CTh*, was capital. According to the law, everyone connected with an incident of *raptus* was punished depending on their particular involvement and status.¹⁵⁵ The matter is settled ‘out of court’ in this case and one suspects *raptus* was dealt with privately whenever possible to avoid incurring the capital punishment demanded. The Constantinian punishments for the crime were so severe that it seems unlikely anyone would want to make the matter public.¹⁵⁶

In publishing the letter Sidonius certainly made the matter public. In other letters Sidonius published for specific reasons, often to explain his actions or portray some aspect of his authority or skill. Sidonius represents himself as the benevolent bishop/aristocrat (the date of the letter is unclear). The publication of the details implies that the law on *raptus* may have had little impact on the day-to-day life of citizens in fifth-century Gaul.¹⁵⁷ The impression is that decisions and punishments were meted out by landowners and bishops not courts of law. Sidonius’ motivations for publishing the letter may have been to establish or reiterate the

¹⁵⁴ The daughter of Sidonius’ *nutrix* was free, but the son of the *nutrix* of Pudens was not. See below under *contubernium* and unequal status in couples. See also Evans Grubbs (1993a) for marriages between free women and unfree men.

¹⁵⁵ *CTh* 9.24.1.5: *Patricipes etiam et ministros raptoris citra discretionem sexus eadem poena praecipimus subiugari, et si quis inter haec ministeria servilis condicionis fuerit deprehensus, citra sexus discretionem eum concremari iubemus.* ‘We order that participants and also those helping with the abduction, without sex distinction, be subjected to the same punishment, and if anyone among those apprehended was of servile status, without distinction to sex, we order that he be burned.’

¹⁵⁶ See Evans Grubbs (1989).

¹⁵⁷ At the time of the publication of these letters, Clermont was under Gothic control. The Germanic law codes were also strong in their condemnation of *raptus* but the punishments were more lenient. See below chapter 5.11.5.

authority of local aristocrats/bishops in social matters.

4.6.5. A relationship outside marriage: *contubernium*

Marriage was the most important factor in the regulation of society in the ancient world. The control and transfer of property and wealth depended upon a clear understanding of the local implications of the marriage bond. Although relevant for all levels of society, this was especially true for the aristocratic elite of late Roman Gaul who controlled all of the land and wealth. Relationships that existed outside of marriage were a threat to the order of society and strongly condemned.¹⁵⁸ The Christian church, as is commonly known, also disapproved of any relationship outside legal marriage.

One of Sidonius' letters mentions *contubernium* and not surprisingly, it has been referred to frequently in the modern scholarship of women in late antiquity (*Ep.* 9.6).¹⁵⁹ Sidonius wrote this letter to a fellow bishop, Ambrosius, and rejoices in the fact that an unnamed man had recently broken off his relationship with a slave girl and taken a respectable wife (*Ep.* 9.6.1). Sidonius refers to the man as *dilectissimus noster* which may indicate that he was also a consecrated priest. Sidonius mentions that the young man and his new wife should perhaps have one or two sons before abstaining from lawful enjoyments (*licita*), a term that is juxtaposed in the letter with the previous *inlicita* of *contubernium* (*Ep.* 9.6.4). When Sidonius implies that the young couple should live in a celibate state I would argue that he is also telling the audience that the young man is a member of the clergy.

The young man and the slave had lived in the legal state of *contubernium*. The definition of *contubernium* in classical Roman law was a relationship between sexual partners

¹⁵⁸ For marriage in the Roman empire see Treggiari (1991); for Christian marriage in the west see Stevenson (1983), 26-32; for late Roman marriage in legal texts see Evans Grubbs (1993) and (1995) and Arjava (1994), 146-200; and a general overview on late Roman marriage, see Clark (1993), 13-21.

¹⁵⁹ Clark (1993), 52; Evans Grubbs (1995), 315; Arjava (1994), 267-268; and Nathan (2000), 123.

who were not legally able to marry because of unequal status, usually because the woman was a slave.¹⁶⁰ A relationship of this sort was not illegal, but was considered to be *indignum* and Sidonius used the term *obscena* to refer to the relationship.¹⁶¹ This attitude is reiterated by the poet Paulinus of Pella who states it more explicitly when he describes how, as a youth, he sought out a slave girl and rather than a free woman - *quippe reus culpa potius quam criminis esse praeponens*.¹⁶²

Children born of *contubernium* took on the status of the mother, if the mother was a slave, the children were slaves. The legal codes reinforced this often and forcefully in an effort to regulate the situation where a free man had children with a slave but tried to pass them off as free.¹⁶³ It was legal for a man to free his own slave and marry her before any children were born, therefore allowing the free status to pass to the children. Men of senatorial rank, however, were prohibited from marriage to a freedwoman thus ruling this option out for Sidonius' colleague. If the woman in *Ep.* 9.6 had been freed, she would have become a *concupina* and this would not be an acceptable option for bishop Sidonius nor for the young man, especially if he was a priest.¹⁶⁴ Nathan points out that Sidonius discusses this matter in the terms of the 'folly of youth'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ See Treggiari (1991), 52-54. This was also the term used when both partners were slaves, but that is not the case here.

¹⁶¹ *Indignum* is the term in *CTh* 12.1.6.

¹⁶² Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticon* (166-168), 'because I preferred to be accused of a fault rather than a crime'.

¹⁶³ *CTh* 4.8.7 *Iure enim communi maternam condicionem natum sequi necesse est, ita ut, etsi herilem lectulum ancilla ascenderit, non liberorum domino, sed servorum partum suscipiat.* 'For in the common law it is necessary for the child to follow the maternal status, so that even if a slave has climbed into her master's bed, to the master she does not give birth to free children but to slaves.' Other laws are in the context of decurions who have fled the city which does not apply here. See Evans Grubbs (1995), 277-283.

¹⁶⁴ See *CTh* 4.6.3 for the women that senators were banned from marrying. The list includes ex-slaves, daughters of slaves, freedwomen or daughters of freedwomen (*...ex ancilla vel ancillae filia vel liberta vel libertae filia...*)

¹⁶⁵ Nathan (2000), 123.

Sidonius objected to the relationship on moral grounds and, interestingly, he uses the terms *contubernium* and *concubinatus* interchangeably in this letter.¹⁶⁶ For a Christian bishop, both were considered disgraceful states, for men and women. There was, however, a legal distinction between living in *contubernium* and *concubinatus* that apparently became blurred in the later empire. *Contubernium*, as stated above, was a relationship between a free man and a slave woman.¹⁶⁷ *Concubinatus* was a relationship between two free individuals who lived together but whose status was so unequal that it prohibited the possibility of marriage.¹⁶⁸ Children born out of a *concubinatus* relationship were free but illegitimate and a *concubina*, like a *contubernalis*, could be put aside in favour of a legal marriage without any recourse. The advantage to a woman in either situation was that by living as a *concubina* or a *contubernalis* she could not be accused of adultery. For Sidonius, the legal distinctions between the two states does not seem meaningful. The lack of distinction between *concubinatus* and *contubernium* indicates that increasingly any relationship outside sanctioned marriage was considered shameful.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Concubinatus* was a common topic addressed by many Christian bishops and moralists. It was an accepted form of co-habitation when marriage was not possible. See Cloke (1995), 105-107; Clarke (1993), 31-33; and Treggiari (1981a), 77-78.

¹⁶⁷ See Evans Grubbs (1995), 263-277. For relationships between free women and slave men see *CTh* 4.12.2 which is a law of Constantine that emphasised the loss of free status for any free woman who cohabited with a slave. There are four different laws, on the same subject that contradict each other. It seems that the legality and status of these relationships varied but the main point is reiterated in *CTh* 4.12.6: *si apud libidinosam mulierem plus valuit cupiditas quam libertas, ancilla facta est non bello, non praemio, sed conubio, ita ut eius filii iugo servitutis subiaceant. Manifestum est enim ancillam esse voluisse eam, quam liberam esse paenituit.* 'If in the opinion of a lustful woman her desire is valued more than freedom, she is made a slave not by war, not by plunder, but by co-habitation, in this way her offspring will lie under the yoke of slavery. For it is evident that she who repents her freedom wants to be a slave.'

¹⁶⁸ See Treggiari (1981a).

¹⁶⁹ This indicates a change from the earlier Roman practice of widowers taking concubines to preserve the inheritance rights of their children. As a Christian bishop Sidonius could have no other opinion.

4.7. Conclusions

Overall, the role of women in the writing of Sidonius is rhetorical rather than descriptive. Women do not have a large role in the published letters and poems. Sidonius does not include letters to women in his published works, except one letter to his wife. Women in his own family are absent from Sidonius' letters and poems although he does glorify the family connections of his wife. Sidonius' practice confirms the belief that women belonged in the private, not the public, sphere of Gallo-Roman aristocratic life.

Women mentioned in Sidonius' letters are portrayed as part of a larger rhetorical intent. This purpose is almost exclusively to praise a man discussed or addressed. The genre of epistolography necessitated a positive portrayal of women. Sidonius is writing to friends and family and representations of the women in his immediate circle could hardly have been negative. His poetry, written to flatter, also contains portrayals of women that are almost exclusively positive. As is to be expected, the language of the poems is more ornate and includes more mythological references than the letters. The letters tend toward a more temperate representation of women.

The women appear in different contexts but generally have a familial relationship to the author or addressee of the letter. Sidonius' information about the women is based on first-hand knowledge. These Gallo-Roman aristocratic women were held up to rhetorical standards derived from the traditions of Latin literature. Sidonius persuades his audience that a good wife is indicative of a good man, as in the case of Simplicius. Ferreolus' aristocratic wife is portrayed as equal in stature to famous Republican women implying that Ferreolus himself is comparable to the great men of the Republic. This is a traditional Roman concept of women that could be used positively or negatively. In Sidonius it is uniformly positive.

The letters and poems portray a series of ideal women. Representations vary from purely mythical amplification (Papianilla) in the poetry to sober reflections on a mother and

wife in the letters (Filimatia). Sidonius, a married bishop, represents the wife of his future episcopal colleague Simplicius as the traditional Roman wife. There are 'echoes' of Sidonius' own consecration as bishop in this letter and this suggests that the representation of Simplicius' wife is Sidonius' ideal wife.¹⁷⁰ The bishop's wife is presented in modest and traditional language.

The poems may be more laudatory but reflect the same ideal as the letters. The wives of fellow aristocrats are also portrayed with attributes of an ideal Roman wife. Papianilla was Lucretia, the pious, hard working Roman *matrona*. The virgin goddess Minerva represents the chaste, modest, and educated Eulalia. Filimatia who had five children and died very young is portrayed as having the same virtues as Lucretia. The ideal woman, from Sidonius' own portrayals, is modest, chaste, educated in books of the *stilus religiosus*, devoted, and hard-working. Sidonius looks back to the values of his cherished *romanitas* when depicting the characteristics of the wives of his contemporary aristocratic colleagues. For a woman of elevated status he makes comparisons with a familiar cast of characters, including Tanaquil and Claudia.

A more lavish portrayal of women in the *Carmina*, especially the *epithalamia*, provides some insight into Sidonius' influences and the literary tastes of his audience. Mythological comparisons in the two *epithalamia* are quite different in content. Sidonius lists famous Greek heroes and heroines to amplify the bride Hiberia. This type of enumerative mythical amplification seems to be reserved for Sidonius' references to women of a high status. Sidonius employs this style when referring to the marriage of the emperor Anthemius' daughter Alypia. They are formulaic and the similarity to Claudian's poems written for the women of the imperial court of Honorius, Serena and Maria, has been acknowledged. These mythological references would have little significance or meaning in late antique Gaul other than to reflect the

¹⁷⁰ Harries (1994), 15.

level of knowledge and education of Sidonius and the other educated aristocrats.

Some of the mythological representations may be interpreted as more personal. When the goddess Minerva is employed as a comparative figure, she amplifies the chaste and learned women in Sidonius' acquaintance (Eulalia and Araneola). These are two of the most individual representations of women with Araneola depicted as the mischievous maiden about to marry her philosopher groom. These women were from Sidonius' father's side of the family and there is a familiarity in his approach to them. A distinction is made among those Sidonius particularly wanted to impress and those he represented as women he knew personally.

The 'good wife' whose influences reflect the character of her husband and his ability to rule, preach, or govern was part of the literary language of fifth-century Gaul. Sidonius' representation of women is reflective of this tradition. Women are described for their virtue and used as examples rather than playing an integral part of the text itself. In almost every case the women mentioned in the text are peripheral to the purpose of Sidonius' writing. He did not write about the reality of women's lives in his society, but used their character, or ancestors, or what happened to them as proof of the good or bad behaviour, lineage or character of the men he discussed. This could occur on a royal level or on a personal level, whether it was the power of the Burgundian queen, the negative influence of Aëtius' wife or the nobility of Simplicius' wife's family, the underlying role of women in the texts was secondary and was used to prove Sidonius' point. This is integral to understanding all practical information in Sidonius' letters.

By understanding the role of women in the texts, then the question of interpreting the information drawn from Sidonius' writing about women in the late antique Gaul can be addressed. The letters Sidonius published reveal different facets of his life. Sidonius' role in society changed from an aristocratic landowner and official of emperors to a consecrated

Christian bishop. The poems and early letters, and the later letters were written in voices that illustrate his change in position. When Sidonius, the educated man of *otium*, writes poetry or prose to display his rhetorical skill he illustrates a different idealized woman than when Sidonius, the bishop, speaks on behalf of a saintly widow. The result is dependent on the voice of the speaker. In both the political and personal realm, any mention of women by Sidonius may be calculated to create a rhetorical or moral message. The letter concerning *raptus* tells the audience about aristocratic authority and the letter about *contubernium* displays the moral tone of Sidonius the bishop although the language is more tolerant than the words.

If the rhetorical role of women in literature in the fifth century was influenced by the Christian rhetoric of virginity it does not generally appear in Sidonius.¹⁷¹ His own daughter is presumed to have been living in a female community and no mention is made of her life as a female ascetic. Overall he maintains the rhetoric of traditional Roman roles for women as wives and there is little in his representation to indicate the increasing role of Christianity in his life. The prosaic language and vocabulary used in some letters may suggest his Christianity and certainly the general subject matter changes between his bishop's voice and aristocratic voice.

A certain historical reality underlying the literary constructs is assumed. This reality is limited and can only apply to the small circle of 'elites' who make up Sidonius' correspondents. Even then, Sidonius' conservatism and archaism indicate he may be representing a world that he believed should be rather than actually existed. The representations take different forms, the women appear in roles as supportive wives and mothers and occasionally as the queen. Off-hand remarks provide practical information on how the customs that controlled marriage, divorce, or remarriage affected the lives of the women Sidonius knew. Sidonius discussed many aspects directly relating to women's lives, such as dowry (*Ep.* 1.11) and inheritance (*Ep.* 3.1), consent (*Ep.* 2.4) and elopement (*Ep.* 5.19). These are details that

¹⁷¹ Cooper (1992), 164.

revolved around the control of property and wealth. All are issues that would have been of concern to a Gallo-Roman noble of the fifth century and all touch on the lives of women. It was the issues themselves that motivated Sidonius to express these opinions, not the women.

When Sidonius attributes actual characteristics to women, he notes the strength of character of the Visigothic queen and the wisdom of the Burgundian one. These royal women are depicted according to his perceptions of their kings. Euric, the Visigothic king, was not held in much respect while the Burgundians were favoured as Roman allies. It is clear from Sidonius that Chilperic's queen was catholic, not Arian. There is a perceptible shift in the treatment of the Burgundian and Visigothic queens that indicates they were viewed rhetorically as strong Roman women but practically as women who had influence over their men, a fact that may reflect the reality of Germanic royalty.

This is a cautionary tale about how difficult it is to use the evidence from Sidonius to illustrate reality, even late antique aristocratic reality. Much of the information in Sidonius' letters and poems is shaped from archaizing rhetorical tendencies and wishful thinking. As a source for the lives of women in the fifth-century, Sidonius can be informative on how a bishop perceived an issue such as *contubernium* but provides no detail or description of the woman involved. The material tells us about Sidonius himself; his behaviours and thoughts can occasionally be glimpsed but there is little about women. His use of anecdotal evidence to portray women takes the form of standard Roman literary behaviours. As a form of political rhetoric a certain amount of detail is supplied about how Sidonius idealized the lives of the women in his extended family circle and about the attitudes towards them. There is tantalizing insight into the important role women might have played in the careers of their husbands but no details or descriptions. The overall impression from the letters and poems is that a public view of Sidonius is presented and that there is little room for women in the public persona. Personal feelings about the women in his close family circle do not enter into his literary work. The

private realm to which women belonged in the ancient world was not part of the greater forum of discussion between the Gallo-Roman nobility. The value of this information lies in the fact that women and women's issues made up part of the greater rhetorical themes of the late Roman aristocrat. The impact of the Christian world only slightly influenced Sidonius' rhetorical constructs. For the most part he portrayed women in the part of the idealized, traditional Roman wife. This perception of women and the ideal of wives and their role in Sidonius' world leaves a sense of literary continuity with the Roman past, a continuity that Sidonius sought to hold onto. It is more difficult to connect these women with the women of the future as represented in the narrative history of Gregory of Tours.

CHAPTER 5

Representations of Women in Gregory of Tours

5.1. Women in the writing of Gregory of Tours

There has not been enough discussion in modern scholarship about how to use Gregory of Tours' narrative history as a source for women's history. The *DLH* is one of the main sources for the fifth and sixth centuries in important studies on women such as Wemple's *Women in Frankish Society*, Stafford's *Queens Concubines and Dowagers*, Ennen's *The Medieval Woman*, Goetz's *Frauen im frühen Mittelalter*, as well as articles on medieval royal women by Nelson (1978, 1991 and 1999). Attempts to achieve an understanding of 'daily life' in Merovingian Gaul rely heavily on Gregory's narrative for evidence. Verdon's important article on the daily life of lay women notes that the information about women reflects the mentality of the author of the source.¹ Verdon admits this and at the same time uses evidence from the *DLH* without applying the necessary analysis of the author's motivations to his conclusions.²

These studies have added tremendously to our understanding of women from the early middle ages and illustrate the importance of Gregory as a source. One of the recurrent problems is that the information has been used selectively to explain issues relating to women without a careful analysis of Gregory's aims and rhetorical strategies in regards to women. Conclusions drawn from the *DLH* without this analysis may be suspect. Much of the recent work inspired by the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the baptism of Clovis and by a renewed interest in royal Franks, such as *Brunèhilde, La première reine de la France*, make liberal use

¹ Verdon (1990), 240.

² For example, Verdon (1990: 252) cites the *DLH* as evidence that Fredegund is unmaternal but does not acknowledge that Gregory represents her unmaternal aspect as part of his hostility towards the queen.

of Gregory's narrative without any analysis of the *DLH* as a source.³ This is particularly important because recent studies have shown that Gregory was not overly concerned with historical accuracy and his rhetorical aims in writing his history guide his portrayal of events and people.⁴

Affeldt and Reiter's study on Gregory of Tours as a source for women's history is more clear about his lack of impartiality: 'Gewiß berichtet Gregor von Tours nicht etwa objektiv und emotionslos. Seine Aussagen über bestimmte Frauen sind von ganz persönlichen Erfahrungen geprägt, jedoch gilt dies auch von seinen Berichten über Männer der Oberschicht.'⁵ This needs to be taken a step further to clarify that Gregory's portrayal of women not only reflects his personal experiences but also his rhetorical strategies and political motivations. A statement such as 'Grégoire de Tours fait volontiers parler les femmes. En voulant accabler une Frédégonde ou une Chrodielde il mentionne leurs habitudes, même si elles lui paraissent moralement répréhensibles'⁶ acknowledges Gregory's intent to slander but does not recognize that he may portray a woman's habits to coincide with her character's presentation. Men and women of whom Gregory disapproved are attributed behaviours fitted to their literary representation.⁷

The rhetorical standards set by the author influence his representation of women. The role of the catholic Christian church as the central 'civilizing' force in the late sixth century is a fundamental aspect of Gregory's rhetorical aims. Gregory's own role and the impact of others

³ See Lantieri (1995).

⁴ For an example of Gregory's lack of attention to detail see Shanzer (1998), 57 and Wood (1994), 2.

⁵ Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 204. 'Gregory does not offer an impartial and unemotional account. His statements that characterize women reflect personal experience but this is equally true of his views on men from the upper classes.'

⁶ See Lescouzères (1993), 5.

⁷ The examples discussed below include Chlothar, Fredegund, Chilperic, Amalasuintha, and Goiswinth.

on the church is a driving factor in his representation of history. It is within this context that the women in the *DLH* must be interpreted.

The women mentioned most frequently belong to the ruling Germanic families. They are the wives, daughters, concubines, mothers, and sisters of Frankish, Visigothic, and Burgundian kings. Women in the Frankish realm are judged in order to assess the quality of their men. In this respect Gregory follows the tradition of Latin literature where the morals of a woman, either good or bad, reflect the abilities of her husband or father to rule or govern.⁸ This is a concept derived from the belief that a man controls his woman and controls her moral behaviour. A woman's virtues, or lack thereof, are a reflection of her man's authority and character. Gregory expresses the connection between the kings and queens in the words of King Chilperic, *crimen uxoris meae meum habetur obprobrium*.⁹

The representations of women analyzed in this study are those chosen by Gregory. His focus on the behaviours of the kings, queens, bishops and nuns forms the bulk of the research. The goal here is to examine how Gregory makes reference to women and how this relates his overall rhetorical intent. I have asked what his motives are in representing women and what influences his portrayals. The chapter discusses royal Frankish women, Visigothic women, and religious women and, on occasion, these categories overlap. Gregory's personal motivations are analysed and where possible supplemental material provides comparative evidence. Ultimately I hope to achieve a clearer picture of Gregory's rhetorical standards and the limitations that these standards place on his literary portrayals of women.

⁸ See Bradley (1985), 85-86, for how marriage ideals are represented in Suetonius. The women of the early Roman Republic as portrayed by Livy are excellent examples of this, Lucretia being the most famous (Livy 1.57. 6-11). Cooper (1996: 8-11) takes the representation of women in Plutarch's lives of Pompey and Anthony as examples. See also Fischler (1994) for the use of female stereotypes in sources for imperial Rome. For the later Empire see Cooper (1992).

⁹ *DLH* 5.49, 'an accusation against my wife involves reproach for me.' This is said at an inquiry held to investigate charges against the author for slandering Queen Fredegund. This attitude can also be perceived clearly in the story of the marriage of Sigibert and Brunhild (see below on marriage and *DLH* 4.27).

5.2. *Familia* and Gregory of Tours

Gregory wrote a narrative Christian history in which he himself plays an important role. M. Heinzelmann refers to 'l'omniprésence de l'évêque de Tours dans son ouvrage...' and points out that Gregory had great opportunity to appear in his own history.¹⁰ It is, however, Gregory's role as bishop of the Christian church that plays an important part in his narrative. To Gregory, the important members of his family were those relatives who had held episcopates all over Gaul. It is Gregory's connection to the church and the episcopal aristocracy that he wanted to publicize.¹¹ As a result there is little information provided about Gregory's immediate family and a great deal about his extended family.¹² Gregory's brother Peter and his niece Justina (his sister's daughter) are the only two members of his immediate family to feature in the *DLH* and both are mentioned in the context of church politics

Gregory's niece Justina was the prioress of the female monastery at Poitiers (*DLH* 10.15). Her virtuous behaviour in the face of rebellion at the monastery is elaborated by Gregory. Justina suffers the humiliation of having her veil torn off and hair let down while protecting the abbess.¹³ Gregory does not mention that Justina is his niece but her actions are singled out. Gregory's personal connection to the prioress may account for some of the detail

¹⁰ See Heinzelmann (1992), 539-540, who notes that Gregory modelled himself after an author like Sulpicius Severus who also makes a personal appearance in his work but only in a prologue or commentary. Gregory is much more prevalent than other authors which may reflect the shrinking world of sixth-century Gaul. The *DLH* is very localized and Gregory is personally involved in the events of the latter six books of the narrative giving the history an autobiographical aspect.

¹¹ See Mathisen (1984), 86-91 on the episcopal connections that Gregory claimed. See also Stroheker (1948), 179-80, for Gregory's family ties. Weidemann (1992) provides prosopographical data for the characters in Gregory of Tours. Most recently, Heinzelmann (1994: 8-21) provides an index of Gregory's family members and ecclesiastical relations as well as an extended family tree. Many of Gregory's familial episcopal connections come from his mother, Armentaria, and her relations. For Armentaria see appendix 1.

¹² See Heinzelmann (1992), 541 and (1994), 11; and Verdon (1989), 9-21 for Gregory's family background.

¹³ *DLH* 10.15: *excussis linteamibus, a capite soluta caesariae...*

provided (see below 5.7.3). Perhaps Gregory withholds the fact that he is related to Justina to create the impression of impartiality or to distance himself from the scandalous rebellion. The violation of the nuns and the abbess described in this passage illustrates Gregory's belief that only the wicked could commit such heinous acts. The details serve to discredit those who were involved in this challenge to the authority of the church.

The death of Gregory's brother Peter who was the deacon of the church at Langres is described in *DLH* 5.5. Peter was killed in an episode of violence between ecclesiastical factions. This cryptic story does not provide any background to Peter's life or death but does reveal the rivalry and violence that was involved in church politics. Most of the people described in this episode are Gregory's own relatives. His brother Peter is accused of murdering his own bishop (Silvester) who was also his relative (uncle ?), and it is a cousin who eventually kills Peter in revenge for the death. There seems to be a mix of familial and ecclesiastical rivalries at work.

One of the vital clues to deciphering Gregory's rhetorical intentions is apparent in both these stories. Gregory reveals to his audience how his family had been personally and unjustly injured by ecclesiastical factionalism. The rivalry and factionalism in the church is prominently mentioned many times in the *DLH* as undermining its integrity. The representations of his immediate family are illustrative of Gregory's strong personal motivation to protect the authority of the church and bishop in society. Attacks on the church come from all different levels in the *DLH*. Gregory provides details of events in which members of his family are intricately connected to the struggle to preserve the church.

5.3. The Frankish kings: *matrimonium*, polygamy, incest and *concupinatus*

Gregory's depiction of women can only be understood in the context of sixth-century

Frankish royal men. The history covered by the *DLH* takes place during the Frankish conquest of Gaul and the division of territory between the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of Clovis. At Clovis' death (c. 511), his sons Theuderic, Chlodomer, Childebert (1), and Chlothar (1) divide up the kingdom (*DLH* 3.1). In the mid sixth century, on the death of King Chlothar (c. 561), his four sons divide the kingdom among themselves. Sigibert's court resides at Rheims, Charibert's at Paris, Chilperic's (3) at Soissons, and Guntram's at Orléans.¹⁴ These four brothers (Sigibert, Charibert, and Guntram whose mother was Ingund and Chilperic whose mother was Ingund's sister Aregund) engaged in civil wars during Gregory's tenure as bishop of Tours. Their activities occupy the better part of books three to ten of the *DLH*.

In the prologue of *DLH* 2 Gregory describes his aim to represent '*bella regum et virtutes martyrum pariter*' and his concerns frequently turn to the powers of the kings but less often to their wars. Gregory's reveals that he was personally involved in the politics and intrigue of the royal families. He does not delve into the changing borders and frontiers of the Frankish realm in detail or with great accuracy. In his narrative Gregory ties the misfortunes of men and the fall of leaders to their moral behaviour and indulgence.¹⁵

The majority of scholarship about the status of women in the sixth century is based on Gregory's evidence for marriage among the Germanic royalty.¹⁶ I propose that underlying Gregory's depictions of the marriages of the Frankish kings are personal motivations and politics. Gregory's perspective on the virtue and morality of a king affected the manner in which he portrayed that king's marriage. This does not mean that Gregory's evidence on

¹⁴ See *DLH* 4.3 and 4.22 informs the audience that Chlothar had seven sons by three different wives. He had one daughter, Chlothsind, by Ingund. See appendix 1 for the details of Chlothar's complicated family and the families of his sons. For a clear background to this confused and convoluted history see Wood (1994), 55-101.

¹⁵ He does not only measure Franks in this manner but Romans also. In *DLH* 2.11 Gregory implies that it was Eparchius Avitus' libidinous behaviour that caused his overthrow. This was a means of linking immoral sexual behaviour to political misfortune but has no correlation with other accounts of Avitus' murder.

¹⁶ See Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 200; Nelson (1978), 35; and Stafford (1983), 62-71.

marriage has no value. It does mean that how Gregory portrays marriage and the Frankish kings must be included in any judgement about the status of the queens.

5.3.1. *Matrimonium*

Gregory has a great deal to say about the many marriages of the Frankish kings. Modern scholarship has used this evidence to claim that the Frankish kings practised polygamy and incest. Geary states that 'German people practiced resource polygamy' meaning that those wealthy enough to keep more than one wife did so.¹⁷ Stafford however, in reference to polygamy, thinks that 'it is less certain whether these wives were simultaneous or taken in succession.'¹⁸ Affeldt and Reiter see evidence in the *DLH* for both polygamous marriages and numerous concubines.¹⁹ Verdon disagrees with the term polygamy and refers to the kings' having more than one type of wife.²⁰ Stafford agrees with Verdon's verdict that only one wife at a time was favoured or called the 'queen'.²¹

A recent book on the religion and culture of the Merovingian world examines the marriage ritual in the sixth through eighth centuries.²² The conclusions are that there was only one form of legally recognized marriage in Merovingian Gaul.²³ This was an arranged marriage following negotiations, a betrothal, and the exchange of dowry, an arrangement similar to that accepted as the legal form of marriage in Roman Gaul. This may be the only form of marriage in the legal codes but evidence from the *DLH* and other literary sources point to the

¹⁷ Geary (1988), 52.

¹⁸ Stafford (1983), 73.

¹⁹ Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 200.

²⁰ Verdon (1990), 246.

²¹ Stafford (1983), 74.

²² Hen (1995), 124-128.

²³ Hen (1995), 125.

acceptance of another form of marriage, one where no dowry was exchanged.²⁴

The conflicting opinions on marriage in the secondary scholarship derive from the nature of the evidence. Gregory often discusses marriage but has been accused of ambiguity when employing the term *matrimonium*. Ewig claims that the author's failure to distinguish between *concubinatus* and *matrimonium* has led to confusion on the status of certain relationships.²⁵ I do not believe that Gregory is unclear when he mentions marriage. He refers to marriage with a variety of different words but means marriage in each case. Most frequently he employs *in matrimonio sociare* (e.g. *DLH* 2.21, 3.6, 3.7, 3.23, 4.27) but *coniugium* (2.28) is also used in place of *matrimonium* in the same expression. The verbs vary, with *sociare* being the most common but *copulare* (8.32) and *iungere* (10.8) also appear. There is no correlation between the different terminology and the various marriages of the Frankish kings. A marriage Gregory approved of and a marriage between a king and a slave are referred to in the same language (*in matrimonio sociare*, *DLH* 2.21 and *DLH* 4.27). Chlothar marries Ingund (*in coniugio accepisset*) and then commits incest by marrying her sister, Aregund (*in matrimonio sociavit*) in the same paragraph (4.3). In both cases he means marriage and although he makes it clear that he does not approve of certain marriages, he does not judge the act in terms of language.²⁶

²⁴ As Hen explains, the Germanic tradition identified four forms of marriage, referred to as *Muntehe*, *Friedelehe*, *Raubehe*, and *Kaufehe*. These correspond to arranged marriage, marriage without dowry, abduction marriage, and marriage by purchase. It is the first two, *Muntehe* which corresponds roughly to a Roman *manus* marriage and *Friedelehe*, the marriage without dowry, that concern us here. See Ennen (1989), 41-42, on the distinctions between the two forms. The latter two, marriage by abduction (the Roman concept of *raptus*) and marriage by purchase, were not legally recognized marriages. Wemple (1981: 12-14) asserts that marriage by purchase was an accepted form of marriage but there is no evidence to support this in the legal codes or the literary sources. The purchase of a bride was not the same as a bride price and Tacitus' evidence used by Wemple is not relevant to sixth-century Gaul.

²⁵ Ewig (1974), 38-39 and 42-44.

²⁶ The one variation in language of marriage occurs when Fredegund and Chilperic are married after Galswinth's murder and Gregory employs the verb *recipere* which perhaps indicates they had been married before and that Chilperic takes her back.

Gregory's evidence indicates that the status of the woman influenced her status in a royal marriage. It seems that a king's intent to be married with a chosen partner was enough to form a marriage bond. In this case no dowry had to be exchanged and no betrothal needed to take place. These formalities were reserved for marriages between royal families. Gregory mentions dowry or betrothal only when a man marries a royal woman such as, Sigibert and Brunhild (*DLH* 4.27), Chilperic and Galswinth (*DLH* 4.28), Theudebert (1) and Wisigard (*DLH* 3.27), Rigunth and Recared (*DLH* 6.34), and Ingund and Hermengild (*DLH* 4.38).

5.3.2. Chlothar, Chilperic, Charibert, and polygamy

The kings of the Franks married, divorced, remarried, took concubines, and then cast them out. The debate in the modern scholarship is about whether they practised polygamy and/or serial monogamy. The difference between polygamy, taking more than one wife at a time, and serial monogamy, the sequential marriage and divorce of many women in succession, is not clearly defined in the *DLH*. Polygamy was not a legal or recognized practice in Roman, Germanic, or Christian culture but Gregory implies that some of the kings were polygamous.²⁷ A problem arises because Gregory's descriptions of a king's polygamy usually occur as part of a general condemnation of the behaviour of a king. The three kings accused, Chlothar, Charibert, and Chilperic, were not Gregory's favorites and it is important to clarify whether he called a king polygamous as a general condemnation of his behaviour or if this accurately depicted his marital status. To clarify the issue, I will examine the accusations made against each king.

Gregory tells us that Chlothar had eight children by three different wives, two of whom were sisters married to him at the same time (*DLH* 4.3).²⁸ It must be argued that even by the

²⁷ See Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 199-200 and Wemple (1981), 38-40.

²⁸ For Chlothar's many and complicated relationships see Wemple (1981), 38-39 and Ewig (1974), 29-36.

standards of the Frankish kings this was excessive. These accusations against Chlothar, for which there is no other evidence, are strategically placed in the *DLH* directly after claims that Chlothar had ordered churches to pay one-third of their revenues into the royal treasury (*DLH* 4.2). Gregory refers to his behaviour as *luxoriosus*, a word reserved for strong moral condemnation in the *DLH*. The term *luxoriosus* is used only eight other times, seven to refer to men whose immoral behaviour brings them to a bad end and once to refer to pagan worship.²⁹ Chlothar's misguided church policy is linked to his marital indulgences and condemned as dissolute.

Chilperic (3), the son of Chlothar and Aregund, ruled from 561-584. The list of his recorded crimes includes: hatred of the church, lack of respect towards bishops, and interference in wealth bequeathed to the church (*DLH* 6.46).³⁰ Chilperic also had *plures uxores* (*DLH* 4.28), it is implied he had them at the same time. There are three women known to have married Chilperic: Audovera, Galswinth, and Fredegund. When Gregory mentions Audovera he refers to her as Chilperic's *prior regina* (*DLH* 4.28).³¹ Gregory tells us that Chilperic promised to abandon his other wives and enter into a formal contract to marry Galswinth, the daughter of the Visigothic king Athanagild.

Chilperic's marriage to Galswinth was short-lived. According to Gregory, Galswinth was murdered on Chilperic's orders because she was unhappy that the king would not give up Fredegund (*DLH* 4.28). Gregory's straightforward hostility toward Chilperic makes us

²⁹ These men include the emperor Nero (1.25); Eparchius Avitus (2.11), who, Gregory claims, fell from power because of his debauchery; the early Frankish king Childeric (2.12), father of Clovis who was run out of his kingdom for his debauchery; Victorious, Duke of Arvermus (2.20) whose seduction of women led to his being stoned to death in Rome; a priest who seduces women (6.36); a slanderous term used by king Chilperic against priests (6.46); and in a reference to the worship of a cult statue of Diana (8.15). The reference to Chlothar is straightforward but the term carries with it a serious moral judgement.

³⁰ *DLH* 6.46, among Chilperic's other evils it is claimed that under his rule, *pauci clerici episcopatum meruerunt* 'few churchmen were elected to bishoprics'.

³¹ See Nelson (1999), 179-180 on the 'queenship'.

suspicious of his claims but Venantius Fortunatus' elegy to Galswinth supports his accusation. Venantius lists those who mourn Galswinth and significantly, Chilperic's name is missing, a detail that might suggest his culpability in her death.³² Chilperic's absence from the scene of Galswinth's funeral coincides with the report in the *DLH* that Chilperic was driven from his kingdom by his brothers as a result of the murder (*DLH* 4.28). The violent removal of a queen from her position was rare since there were easier ways of getting rid of an unwanted wife in most situations.³³ Gregory implies that Chilperic was interested in keeping Galswinth's dowry and if she had been sent home, he would have had to return the dowry. The fact that Chilperic was willing to risk his political alliances with the Visigothic king and his own brothers is surprising. It is difficult to make sense of events surrounding Galswinth's death since the reports in the sources are vague and distorted.

Charibert, like his father Chlothar, is accused of practising polygamy and incest (*DLH* 4.26). The passage pertaining to the marriages of King Charibert also accuses him of contravening canon law. The two subjects are linked in the narrative. Charibert contravenes the judgement of a council of bishops in a case concerning the dismissal of Emerius, bishop of Saintes (*DLH* 4.26). Charibert married Ingoberg and then dismissed her, took up with Merofled and also had a child by Theudechild who is later referred to as his *regina* (*DLH* 4.26). Charibert then married Marcovefa, Merofled's sister and they were both excommunicated.³⁴

In each of these three cases, the accusations of polygamy are connected to the king's abuse of the church or church laws. Gregory's agenda is to condemn the king who does not respect the church or the factions of the church that Gregory represented. By employing

³² See Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 6.5, 274- 349.

³³ See Ennen (1989), 45.

³⁴ See below chapter 5.3.3 on incest and the motivations for the excommunication.

traditional rhetorical patterns Gregory represents these kings as outside of the law and their unlawful marriages to unworthy women imply that their judgement overall is misguided. The question remains as to whether they practised polygamy. Gregory's narrative is uninformative on this issue because he does not make a distinction between marriages unless a king married a woman of royal status. What is clear is that, in Gregory of Tours' opinion, the incestuous relationships are more of a concern than any polygamy.

5.3.3. Guntram and serial monogamy

Guntram was Gregory's favorite king and is portrayed in the narrative as working with the church and listening to the advice of bishops (especially Gregory). There are numerous positive portrayals of Guntram whom Gregory refers to as the *bonus rex*.³⁵ Guntram had at least two wives and one *concubina* but Gregory implies that he had one after another rather than all at the same time. Guntram, who was Chlothar's son by Ingund, took Veneranda as his *concubina* (DLH 4.25). They did not marry but did have a son named Gundobad (2) who was one of Guntram's legitimate heirs. Guntram then married Marcatrude who Gregory claims killed her step-son Gundobad.³⁶ The fate of his mother Veneranda is not disclosed.

This illustrates one of the common problems caused by the policies of multi-partner reproduction: rivalry between children of different mothers led to wars between half-brothers. Within the Frankish royal family unit, the son of a *concubina* could inherit but often lacked protection in the larger family unit when his father made legitimate marriages. Guntram had two more sons with a woman named Austrechild (DLH 4.25). Gregory refers to Austrechild as Guntram's former queen, implying marriage (DLH 5.35). Guntram takes up and puts away one woman after another but unlike his brothers, there is no implication that he had more than

³⁵ See DLH 5.17, 6.19, 6.33, 7. 13-16, 7.19, 7.32-33, 7.40, 8.1-7, 8.9-10, 8.37, 8.45, 9.11, 9.20. Heinzelmann (1994: 49-57) presents a complete typology for Guntram based on the biblical figure of Hezekiah/Ezekias.

³⁶ DLH 4.25 Gundobad, according to Gregory, was poisoned by Guntram's wife Marcatrude.

one partner at a time and no condemnation of Guntram's relationships.

Stafford's view is that serial monogamy was the norm among kings in this period. As political alliances shifted the king took up and put aside wives to seal allegiances.³⁷ Gregory does not make this clear in his discussions on marriage. The matrimonial history of the Langobard king Waccho as described by Paul the Deacon illustrates more concisely the practice.³⁸ Waccho first married the Thuringian princess Ranigunda, then married a Gepid princess Austrigusa-Ostrogotho and finally the Herulian princess Silinga. Waccho marries and divorces as politics necessitated and it would not be difficult to imagine that the Frankish kings behaved the same way.³⁹

5.3.4. Chlothar and Charibert: incestuous marriages

The late Roman, Germanic, and Christian traditions had similar rules regarding incest. David Herlihy comments that 'in the early middle ages, between the third and the eighth centuries, the Christian church, with the approval of Roman emperors and barbarian kings, extended the domain of relationships within which marriages were prohibited to extraordinary lengths'.⁴⁰ This implies a Christian motivation to decrease the level of consanguinity between marriage partners but Herlihy himself later points out that the extension of prohibition on marriages had been a trend visible in pre-Christian Roman law.⁴¹ Apart from the standard prohibitions against marrying anyone related within the fourth degree (first cousins), there were also restrictions in late Roman, Christian, and Germanic laws on the marriage between in-laws.

³⁷ Stafford (1983), 52.

³⁸ *Historia Langobardorum* 1.21.

³⁹ See Wolfram (1997), 279-300 on the Langobards. The Langobard king Alboin married in the same way. See *Hist. Lang.* 1.27 and *DLH* 4.3 and 4.42 for Alboin's marriages.

⁴⁰ Herlihy (1990), 1.

⁴¹ Herlihy (1990: 2), who notes the trend in Roman law from the second century B.C.E. onwards.

The ban on marriage between in-laws recurs in the Germanic codes: *Liber Const.* 36 calls a man's marriage to his wife's sister incestuous adultery and *PLS cap.* 6.1.2 reads, 'we decree that no one should be joined in an incestuous marriage, that is (in marriage with) the wife of a brother or with the sister of a wife or with the wife of an uncle (*patruus*) or with consanguineous relatives'.⁴² Marriage to the sister of a deceased wife was considered incestuous adultery because the husband and wife become 'one flesh' in marriage. *PLS cap.* 6.1. also prescribes the death penalty for anyone who marries a step-mother. The church councils in sixth-century Gaul repeatedly banned a wide range of marriages including marriage to widows or dedicated virgins.⁴³

These laws and prohibitions are prominent in both the sixth-century church canons and the secular legal codes promulgated under the authority of the Frankish kings.⁴⁴ When Chlothar marries Aregund, the sister of his wife Ingund, he is not censured by the church although Gregory refers to him as *luxoriosus* (*DLH* 4.3). In contrast, when Charibert marries Marcovefa, sister of his wife Merofled, Germanus, the bishop of Paris, excommunicates both of them. Gregory explicitly states that Charibert would not give her up (*DLH* 4.26).⁴⁵ The difference in the two cases may reside in the status of the bride. As a dedicated virgin Marcovefa had broken her vow by marrying Charibert. The excommunication may have resulted from the broken vow of chastity more than the charge of incest.⁴⁶ The incongruity is

⁴² (translation Fisher-Drew (1991), 157) This is a law that dates to the late sixth century promulgated under Childebert II whose mother Brunhild had broken this very law when she married her nephew Merovech. See *DLH* 5.2. For the Roman laws on incest see also *CTh* 3.12.2 and 3, a law dated from 396 that banned marriage between first cousins.

⁴³ For the complete overview of the Frankish incest legislation and its development see Mikat (1994), 98ff.

⁴⁴ See Wood (1998) who explores the background to the Burgundian incest legislation of the early sixth-century that influenced the Frankish church council legislations.

⁴⁵ In *DLH* 5.48 Gregory states the Marcovefa replaced her sister as Charibert's wife and that he loved her dearly.

⁴⁶ See Stafford (1983), 73 and Wood (1998), 294 and 302.

that while the church canons condemn these marriages they were also influenced by legal capitularies promulgated by Charibert himself in the secular law codes (especially council of Tours II (567) *can.* 21 (20)).⁴⁷ This evidence has been surveyed in a recent article by Wood who points out that it is the incest and not the polygamy of the Frankish kings occupies the minds of church legislators.⁴⁸ Gregory's portrayal of these marriages seems to echo the interests of the church canons. His condemnation of the incestuous behaviour of the kings is linked to their behaviours towards the church and, in the case of Charibert, to his lack of respect for the authority of bishops and their decisions.

5.3.5. *Concubinatus*

There are only a few examples where Gregory specifies that a woman was a *concubina*. *Concubinatus* was a different concept in Roman and Germanic culture and both versions are portrayed in the *DLH*.⁴⁹ In Roman terms, *concubinatus* was a relationship between two people who could not legally marry because of unequal status but who chose to live together. The best comparison using modern terminology is that of a common-law marriage except that the *concubina* had no legal protection under Roman law.⁵⁰ In the Roman tradition the distinction between *concubinatus* and marriage is clear but it becomes blurred in the Frankish kingdoms. *Concubinatus* was acknowledged, but morally condemned, by many Gallo-Roman bishops in sermons and letters.⁵¹

The vital social issue that concerned Roman and Germanic law-makers in relation to

⁴⁷ See Wood (1998), 294 and Mikat (1994), 41-127 for the legal origins of the legislation passed at the council of Tours II.

⁴⁸ Wood (1998), 301-302.

⁴⁹ Evans-Grubbs (1995), 294-299 details the legal status of concubines in the late Roman period.

⁵⁰ See Cloke (1995), 105, for concubinage as 'common law' marriage.

⁵¹ Most famously by Caesarius of Arles (*Serm.* 43.5) where he states that to excommunicate all those members of the congregation who had concubines would be impossible because they were too numerous.

concubinatus was the regulation of inheritance. The Roman law emphasized the need for legitimate heirs created through legal marriage controlled by families. In contrast the Germanic law emphasized the need for male heirs. The *Pactus Legis Salicae* does not refer to illegitimacy in any way and literary evidence tells us that as long as the father recognized the child, he was legitimate (*PLS* 69.6). Gregory sums up the rules on legitimacy of children for the Frankish kings as: *praetermissis nunc generibus feminarum, regis vocitantur liberi, qui de regibus fuerint procreati*.⁵²

Gregory reveals that Clovis had a son, Theuderic, by his *concubina* before he married Chlotild.⁵³ More importantly, after the death of Clovis, Theuderic inherited his part of the kingdom along with his step-brothers, the sons of Chlotild (*DLH* 3.1).⁵⁴ Guntram's son Gundobad was also legitimate (*DLH* 4.25). Gundovald claimed that his father was Chlothar but Gregory does not mention his mother (6.24). In this case Chlothar denied paternity but Gundovald's claim to be of royal blood became a catalyst for rebellion by Frankish nobles and rivals of the king.⁵⁵ Wood points out how difficult it would be to reject Gundovald's claim in a society in which all male offspring were legitimate and a king like Chlothar had many *concubinae*.

Gregory describes the life of a *concubina* turned royal wife in the representation of a

⁵² 'Since the descent of the women has now come to be disregarded, children produced by kings are called children of the king' (*DLH* 5.20). Succession in the sixth century was a chaotic affair. The many different possible heirs increased the propensity for civil war.

⁵³ *DLH* 2.28: *Qua visa, rex valde gavisus, suo eam coniugio sociavit, habens iam de concubina filium nomine Theudericum*. 'when he saw her the king was very pleased and married her, even though he already had a son named Theuderic from his concubine.'

⁵⁴ See Wood (1977), 14, on how concubinage exacerbated the rivalries between brothers and step-brothers. Wood also recognizes that in asserting dynastic claims, the son of a concubine who had legitimate half-brothers would not necessarily have the support needed to ascend the throne. Much did rest on the mother's position. The story of Guntram's son Gundobad is an example (*DLH* 4.25).

⁵⁵ Wood (1977), 15. Wood (1994: 93-98) suggests that Gundovald was secretly supported by Childebert (2) and Brunhild since he made no claim for their territory. See *DLH* 7.36 where Gregory reports that Gundovald's claim was supported by two of Chlothar's former wives, Radegund and Ingridude.

woman named Deuteria. A local woman from the city of Cabrières, Deuteria is credited with saving her city from Theudebert by negotiating its surrender (*DLH* 3.22).⁵⁶ The representation of Deuteria as the saviour of her city may be formulaic since a similar story can be found in the *Vita S. Genovefa* (12), where the saint negotiates with Attila to save the city of Paris from the Huns. Notwithstanding the poetic aspect of the story, Gregory makes it clear that Deuteria becomes Theudebert's *concubina* at first and then his wife (*DLH* 3.23).

At the time Theudebert marries Deuteria he is also betrothed to Wisigard, the daughter of the Langobard king Waccho (*DLH* 3.20). Theudebert is eventually forced to honour his previous commitment and seven years after the betrothal, he sets aside Deuteria and marries Wisigard under pressure from other Franks (*DLH* 3.27). It is entirely probable that Wisigard had been too young to marry when first betrothed and Theudebert had to wait for her to come of age.⁵⁷ Alternatively, the betrothal to Wisigard was made at a time when Frankish-Langobard relations were important and this alliance was important to Theudebert's relations who forced him to honour his agreement.⁵⁸

Gregory's preoccupation with the excesses of Chlothar and his sons is localized in the first half of book four of the *DLH*. Gregory's claims of incest or polygamy need to be questioned and it is necessary to avoid making generalizations about marriage practices in the sixth century from this evidence. There is no indication that polygamy was common, even

⁵⁶ Kurth (1892: 382) refers to the story of Deuteria as 'éminement poétique'.

⁵⁷ Betrothal could occur at a very young age and a princess could be betrothed from birth if she was part of a political alliance. Venantius Fortunatus' *Carm.* 4.28 is an epitaph to a girl named Eusebia who died at the age of ten and was already betrothed. Epigraphic evidence provides concrete examples of an early age of marriage in Gaul. A fifth century inscription from Trier records the death of Macedonia who was thirteen (Gauthier (1975) n. 1, 32 a). The epitaph was set up by her husband and parents whose names are also recorded.

⁵⁸ See Wolfram (1997), 282, who considers Deuteria to be a concubine and does not acknowledge her marriage. The Frank-Langobard marriage connections continue when Theudebald, son of Deuteria and Theudebert, marries Vuldetrada, sister of Wisigard and another daughter of Waccho (*DLH* 4.9). See *Hist. Lang.* 1.21 for these marriages.

within the royal classes.⁵⁹ In the minds of the sixth century clergy, incest was the more serious crime. Gregory presents the situation as one in which the king in Frankish society could be above the law but a good king acted within it. The lack of a formal marriage ceremony makes subtleties in these relationships difficult to interpret. In these representations of the Frankish kings and marriage there are three important points that relate to the portrayal of women in the *DLH*. The first is that kings seemed to do very much as they pleased when it came to marriage. The only case where there is some accountability for their behaviour is when a formal contract is made between a king and a woman of equal royal status. The second point is that the struggle between ecclesiastical and royal power underlies Gregory's depictions of the moral failing of certain kings. Gregory often projects this judgement onto women and his interpretation of their relationships. The third point is that Gregory's portrayal of marriage reveals the vulnerability of women in society. Especially when the majority of the Frankish kings married women of lower status who had little control over their position in a marriage. The example of Galswinth illustrates that even royal women had little protection inside a marriage.

5.4. Royal women

The most frequently mentioned women in Gregory of Tours are the wives of the Frankish kings. The royal women appear in the contexts mentioned above, in relation to the king, but also as mothers and regents to royal children. The sixth century was a period of political turmoil when kingdoms frequently changed hands and marriage alliances were essential to the political system. Wives were taken and put away as necessary by kings coping

⁵⁹ See Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 200, who interpret polygamous marriages and the existence of numerous concubines as indicative of a society where women had little choice. The rivalry for men's favour created a willingness to live polygamously. I agree but only in relation to the Frankish kings. There is no evidence that polygamy was accepted outside royal circles.

with shifting loyalties. Gregory's narrative is full of women who were integral to the political struggles carried out by the sons and grandsons of Clovis. Some appear only as a name, for instance as the wife, daughter, or concubine of a duke or king. Others played a greater role in the politics and power struggles between the rival brothers and accordingly play a greater role in Gregory's history.

Gregory's allegiance to certain kings and condemnation of others extends to their queens. The *DLH* represents queens as the extremes of behaviour and concerns itself with the intimate details of their actions and motivations. 'That women played a "large role" in Merovingian society is a commonplace of the historiography of the period', and it is the royal women who have allowed so much to be said about women's lives in the Frankish kingdoms.⁶⁰

The attention that royal women receive in the *DLH* is an affirmation of their relative importance in Frankish society. It can also be viewed as a result of the motivation behind Gregory's writing. Gregory believed that the quality of a man was reflected by his choice of a wife. The tradition of portraying marital harmony as a means of illustrating the character of a man is one that spans the history of both classical and Judeo-Christian literary traditions.⁶¹ A leader whose household is in order was judged by Roman and Christian tradition as fit for power.⁶² This was a pervasive concept in Latin, Greek, and Biblical traditions.⁶³

⁶⁰ Nelson (1978), 31. The Frankish queens are the most discussed women in the modern scholarship on Gregory of Tours. Articles and books that refer to their lives and power include Affeldt and Reiter (1986), Nelson (1991) and (1978), Stafford (1983), Wemple (1981) and (1991), McNamara and Wemple (1974) and (1976), Goetz (1995), and Ennen (1989).

⁶¹ See Bradley (1985), 82-91; Cluett (1998), 78-84; and Fischler (1994), 117-121 for the Roman period. See also Cooper (1996), 1-19, who explains how the Christian tradition took this view from Roman practice.

⁶² Cooper (1996), 3.

⁶³ Cooper (1996: 3) points out that the accusation of domestic discord as a political attack can be traced back to Homer.

There are four types of female who fall under the category of 'royal women'. The first type is the queen from the Frankish legendary past. The second type is the contemporary queen who had a direct influence on the life of Gregory of Tours. The third type is the religious queen who, as a patron of the church or resident in a monastic institution, is held up as an example to all. The fourth type is a foreign queen, often an Arian, of whom Gregory knows little but employs as an illustration of malevolent Arian behaviour. Gregory's strong opinions on the role of these women in society shape his representations. The purpose here is twofold: the first step is to analyse the function of these royal women according to Gregory's rhetorical strategies and the second is try to assess how, or if, these representations lend themselves to historical interpretation.

5.4.1. The legendary queens: Basina and Chlotild

Gregory is vague about the early history of the Franks. What is known about the first kings and queens is based almost entirely on legend and myth.⁶⁴ The first Frankish queen to receive attention in the *DLH* is Basina (1). Basina deserted her husband Bysinus, the king of the Thuringians, to marry Childeric who was the son of Merovech and king of the Franks (*DLH* 2.12). The details lack historical verisimilitude but the message is being conveyed to describe how the marriage between Basina and Childeric resulted in the birth of Clovis.⁶⁵ Gregory represents Basina's choice of Childeric as prophetic since a great king was born from their union (*DLH* 2.12). The episode lies in the primordial history of the Franks and moral judgement has been suspended.

In *DLH* 2.9 Gregory tells us that his sources do not provide information on the early

⁶⁴ See above chapter 2.4 on the origins of the Franks.

⁶⁵ See Wood (1994), 36-38, for the legendary origins of the Franks. Venantius Fortunatus, in the *Vita S. Radegundis Reginae* (1.2), mentions that the Thuringian princess Radegund was the granddaughter of Basinus.

kings (and therefore the queens) of the Franks. Gregory may be repeating a version of the oral tradition that had been passed down about the birth of Clovis. Basina's claim that she would travel across the sea for a great man echoes the story of the Queen of Sheba who travelled to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The Old Testament seems to be the inspiration for this story.⁶⁶ It is possible, however, that Gregory was using unknown sources for Basina's representation. A belief in the existence of a historical Basina is supported by the fact that three generations later Chilperic's (3) daughter carries the same name.⁶⁷

Clovis became king and conquered most of Gaul. He married Chlotild (1), the daughter of the Burgundian king Chilperic (2). The details of the marriage begin with Gundioc, the Burgundian king who died and left his kingdom to his four sons. Gregory's version claims one of the sons, Gundobad (1), killed his brother Chilperic (2) and his wife leaving their two daughters as orphans.⁶⁸ Chilperic's two daughters were sent into exile; one retired to a convent and the other, Chlotild, married Clovis (*DLH* 2.28). Gundobad was the legal guardian to whom Clovis applied for permission to marry Chlotild (*DLH* 2.28). Gregory claims that envoys were sent by Clovis and the permission to marry was sought. Clovis followed the proper channels to acquire his bride and this story is representative of Gregory's views on a

⁶⁶ For the Queen of Sheba's journey to King Solomon see 1 Kings 10, 1-10. Gregory employs the image of Queen of Sheba in the *Liber Vitae Patrum* 19. *pref.* in reference to Monegund and in *Liber de Virtutibus sancti Martini* 1.12 to refer to Queen Ultrogotha. Kurth (1893: 194-195) has identified this behaviour as typical in legend. See Wolfram (1997), 20-22 for the king as a 'hero' in Germanic legend.

⁶⁷ See appendix 1, Basina 1 and 2.

⁶⁸ Chilperic and his wife are mentioned by Sidonius in *Epp.* 5.7.7 and 6.12.3. Sidonius tells us that Chilperic's Burgundian kingdom was centered at Lyon and that his wife was the height of virtue, piety, and wisdom, by inference a catholic Christian. The murder of Chilperic by his brother is only attested to here in Gregory and the validity of this event is challenged by Wood (1985: 253). The source that Wood cites as contradictory is Avitus, *Ep.* 5, who refers to Gundobad as weeping at the funeral of his brother. The reliability of Avitus as an impartial witness in this matter can be also questioned. Avitus, who lived under the Burgundian king, had personal motivation to represent Gundobad in a positive light. His attempts as the bishop of Vienne to convert Gundobad to catholic Christianity are documented. Gregory's version may be formulaic, but Avitus' letter is not necessarily a repudiation of Gregory's claims. See Shanzer (1997), 225 for how little is known about Gundobad.

correct royal marriage. Gregory uses the union to illustrate aspects of the ideal character of the king, of the future queen, and of their marriage. It has been noted that the story of Chlotild's early life and her marriage to Clovis as represented by Gregory has the qualities of an epic.⁶⁹ There are also hagiographical aspects to the story of the early life of Chlotild visible in the death of both her parents that breaks the family bond. The young Chlotild was orphaned just as Radegund had been when her parents were killed by her uncle.⁷⁰ The situation of the two princesses was quite similar.

The marriage of Chlotild and Clovis divides the early mythology of the Franks and the factual foundation of the ruling Frankish dynasty in the *DLH*. Chlotild was a catholic Christian married to the pagan Clovis.⁷¹ Her role in the conversion of Clovis from paganism to catholic Christianity elevates Chlotild to saintly status in Gregory's narrative.⁷² Chlotild's portrayal as the motivation behind Clovis' conversion 'established a proto-type of female

⁶⁹ The epic aspect of Chlotild's life is noted in Wood (1985), 253 and originally found in Kurth (1893), 237. The representation of Chlotild is idealized and it has been suggested that the queen herself, who resided as a dedicated religious woman in Tours after Clovis' death, was responsible for the story of their union. See Wood (1985), 253. Gregory could not have known the queen herself but popular history and tradition would have passed the story down to him.

⁷⁰ See Venantius Fortunatus, *De Vita Sanctae Radegundis* 1.2 and *DLH* 3.4 for Radegund the orphan.

⁷¹ See *DLH* 2.29 for Chlotild's attempts to have her first-born son baptized. Chlotild's Christianity makes it quite possible that, even in Sidonius' time, some of the Burgundians were catholic Christians. See above, chapter 4.4, on how this may have impacted on Sidonius' representation of the Burgundian royalty. In Gregory's portrayal of the events, Clovis is firmly a pagan, not an Arian, but this has been challenged recently by Shanzer (1998).

⁷² See *DLH* 30-31, for the conversion and baptism of Clovis dated traditionally to 496. There are three sources that describe Clovis' baptism which occurred soon after a Frankish defeat of the Alamanni: Gregory, Avitus, and Cassiodorus. In a recent article, Shanzer re-examines these sources and concludes that the baptism took place c. 508, not, as Gregory tells us, in the fifteenth year of Clovis' reign (496) (Shanzer (1998)). The letter of Avitus (bishop of Vienne from 490-518) congratulating Clovis on his baptism (*Ep.* 46) is not clearly datable, although Shanzer makes a case for the date to be early sixth century, c. 508. Cassiodorus, in the name of Theodoric, sent a letter to Clovis congratulating him on a victory over the Alamanni. See also Wood (1985), 265-271.

sanctity' among royal women: a queen-saint.⁷³ In his representation of Chlotild, Gregory creates his ideal of a royal wife and queen. The pious Christian woman as the inspiration behind the conversion of a king/emperor to Christianity was not new. That role is played by Helena in the conversion of Constantine, the first Christian emperor.⁷⁴ Gregory parallels Clovis with Constantine and Bishop Remigius, who performed the baptism, with Silvester, who baptized Constantine. It is legitimate to argue that the saintly depiction of Chlotild derives from Helena.⁷⁵ After Clovis' death Chlotild continues with her patronage of the church and of the cults of the saints Martin and Genovefa.⁷⁶ In her *Vita*, Chlotild is credited with the foundation of the female monastery at Chelles although there is no corroborating evidence for this and the *Vita* was written long after she died.⁷⁷

Chlotild died in c. 544 only a few years after Gregory was born. Gregory could not have known her personally but her connection to Tours and the cult of St. Martin made it possible for him to present a saintly picture of her activities. The representation of Chlotild, a real historical figure, is described in hagiographical formulae by Gregory and the sources who follow him.⁷⁸ It is not until the contemporary part of Gregory's history, in book four, that women Gregory knew personally are portrayed. Chlotild came to be represented as the ideal

⁷³ Schulenburg (1988), 105. For further discussion on female sanctity and its origins in the early middle ages, see Schulenburg (1988). There is a tenth century life of Chlotild, *Vita S. Chrothildis reginae Francorum*. By the tenth century the role of Chlotild as saintly queen was entrenched in the Carolingian mentality.

⁷⁴ As told by Eusebius. It is unlikely, however, that Gregory had read Eusebius but possibly Rufinus' Latin translation.

⁷⁵ Wood (1985: 251-253) asks the important question about what source Gregory is using to create this comparison. As he acknowledges, oral history on this subject would have been very important from Clovis' death onwards. Gregory implies that he had access to a *vita* of Bishop Remigius that is no longer extant. *Est enim nunc liber vitae eius, qui eum narrat mortuum suscitasse (DLH 2.31)*.

⁷⁶ See DLH 2.43 for her life devoted to St. Martin. For the worship of the cult of S. Genovefa of Paris see Gregory of Tours *Gloria Confessorum*, 89 and Van Dam (1993), 24.

⁷⁷ *Vita S. Chrothildis reginae Francorum*, 11.

⁷⁸ See Scheibelreiter (1997), 349-367 for the formulaic aspects of Gregory's portrayal of Chlotild.

queen: she was Christian, charitable, pious, and loyal.⁷⁹ This was the standard Gregory upheld for the queens who followed.

5.4.2. Contemporary queens: Brunhild and Fredegund

Gregory's representations of the Frankish royal women Fredegund and Brunhild are reminiscent of women in some earlier Roman historians.⁸⁰ The wives of Kings Chilperic (3) and Sigibert, Fredegund and Brunhild are portrayed as powerful and influential women in their own right. Gregory's frequent mention of these two women has generated commentary from most scholars of the history of the early Frankish kingdoms.⁸¹ The problem is that the nature of Gregory's biases and views on these two women has not been studied within the greater context of the political climate in the sixth century. The civil wars of the late sixth century provide the focus for the political aspects of books four to ten of the *DLH*. Fredegund and Brunhild were intimately involved in these wars and Gregory presents a picture of two women who were able to manipulate, assassinate, and negotiate. Neither of these women was 'typical' in a general or even in a royal sense.⁸² They married rival kings who were step-brothers, both women had to protect young sons when left widows, and they both managed to retain their power and influence after their husbands had died. Thus they continued to be a force in the politics and intrigue of the sixth and early seventh centuries as widows and regents.

⁷⁹ Chlotild is depicted with many of the same qualities listed in the *Vita S. Genovefae* that characterize a female saint. See, *Vita S. Genovefae*, 15.

⁸⁰ The machinations of Livia and Agrippina the younger as represented by Tacitus for example.

⁸¹ The lives, histories, and activities of Brunhild and Fredegund are discussed in detail by Gregory, the *LHF*, and Fredegar. The more recent scholarship that deals with their lives in some manner includes general works on early medieval Gaul such as Geary (1988), James (1988), Ewig (1974), Wood (1994), and Weidemann (1982). The women also figure prominently in research on early medieval women, such as Ennen (1989), Wemple (1981), Stafford (1983), Affeldt and Reiter (1986) and Nelson (1978) and (1991).

⁸² See Nelson (1978), 31.

5.4.3. Brunhild and Sigibert, Fredegund and Chilperic: marriages

Gregory's opinion on the subject of a royal marriage and how it should be undertaken is revealed in his portrayal of the union between Sigibert (1) and Brunhild. Sigibert sets out to win the hand of the Visigothic princess Brunhild because, Gregory reports, he is disgusted by the disreputable way his brothers were being married (*DLH* 4.27).⁸³ The betrothal, dowry exchange, and marriage of Brunhild and Sigibert conforms to the ideal royal wedding that Gregory expected from a king.⁸⁴ Gregory represents Brunhild as the ideal queen using a biblical model: like the Old Testament queen Esther, Brunhild's marriage to Sigibert is celebrated at a banquet attended by all the leading men of the realm.⁸⁵

Gregory's political perspective played an integral part in his representation of royalty. Gregory was appointed as bishop of Tours by Sigibert, and Venantius Fortunatus implies that Brunhild actively supported Gregory's nomination.⁸⁶ The royal couple whose patronage helped Gregory secure his position as the bishop of Tours appear in the *DLH* as the ideal couple. Despite Brunhild's Arian origins, Gregory's portrays her as the model royal bride. Her willingness to convert to catholic Christianity obviously played an important part in this portrayal.⁸⁷ She is represented by characteristics such as virtue, propriety, and wisdom (*DLH* 4.27). Gregory makes use of a literary formula he established with Chlotild (1) to depict the characteristics of an ideal queen. Brunhild is described as the new Chlotild, a queen who is

⁸³ Sigibert's intentions in seeking a marriage alliance with the Visigoths was about dowry and connections to the Mediterranean trade routes through the Visigothic kingdom. His brother Chilperic's intentions in marriage came with the same motivation (see below) but is not represented that way by Gregory. See Nelson (1991), 468 on the politics behind these marriages and Visigothic-Frank relations.

⁸⁴ Gregory emphasizes that Brunhild's father supplied her with a great treasure (*DLH* 4.27).

⁸⁵ Compare *DLH* 4.27 to Esther 2.18 where the king makes a great feast and celebrates his marriage with all the princes and servants.

⁸⁶ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 5. 3. 15-16. See Wood (1994), 126, on Gregory's appointment as bishop.

⁸⁷ She was convinced to convert on the advice of the bishops (*DLH* 4.27) but it seems unlikely that she had a choice in the matter.

wise, pious, and beautiful.⁸⁸

An enlightening comparison can be made with the first passage in which Fredegund, Brunhild's rival and enemy, is introduced to the narrative. The introduction of Brunhild and Fredegund follow one another (*DLH* 4.27 and 4.28). As discussed above, Fredegund was Chilperic's common-law wife. She and his 'other wives' (*aliae*) were put aside when Chilperic married Galswinth, Brunhild's sister (*DLH* 4.28). The weddings of the two Visigothic sisters are set in contrast to each other and form a diptych used to compare the behaviour of the two kings. Chilperic did not give up Fredegund as he had promised resulting in Galswinth's unhappiness and murder. Chilperic re-married (*recipere*) Fredegund soon after Galswinth's death.

Beginning with this inauspicious introduction in the narrative Gregory continues to condemn the motives and behaviour of Fredegund. Fredegund was a woman of servile status (*DLH* 9.34) in contrast to Brunhild who was part of an established royal dynasty.⁸⁹ If a man's character is reflected by his choice of a wife then Gregory portrays Fredegund as a reflection of her husband's character. In real terms she married without any contract and would not have had the personal wealth in the form of a dowry or the education that Brunhild had acquired through her royal upbringing in Spain.⁹⁰ Fredegund also married a man who had just killed his wife. From this insecure beginning she successfully kept her marriage to Chilperic (until his death in c. 584), accumulated a great deal of personal wealth and influence, outlived Gregory (she died c. 596/7 according to Fredegar 4.17), and left a son who ruled a

⁸⁸ There is a very different Brunhild portrayed in Fredegar, a seventh-century source who wrote under Fredegund's son King Chlothar II and is extremely biased against Brunhild. See Fredegar 4.42 on some of Brunhild's less charming characteristics.

⁸⁹ See Nelson (1991), 468-470.

⁹⁰ See Riché (1962), 338-339 on the education of women in the sixth century. For Fredegund's insecurity as a result of her status see Stafford (1983), 55. Her vulnerable situation and transition from slave to queen make her achievements all the more extraordinary.

united Gaul in the early seventh century.

5.4.4. Brunhild: remarriage and regency

The death of Sigibert (c. 575) left Brunhild a widow with a five-year-old son, Childebert (2), who is proclaimed king by Duke Gundovald and taken away from Paris for protection from his uncle Chilperic (*DLH* 5.1). Alone Brunhild could do little to defend herself or her children and she soon married Merovech (2), Chilperic's son by his first wife Audovera.⁹¹ Brunhild's marriage to her late husband's nephew is portrayed as a means of protecting herself and her children (*DLH* 5.2). Gregory acknowledges that the marriage contravenes canonical and secular laws of incest but he does not strongly condemn the couple.⁹² Merovech's marriage to Brunhild was a significant act of rebellion against his father and an attempt to gain a kingdom for himself.⁹³ Brunhild's motivation in marrying Merovech, the step-son of her rival Fredegund, is more difficult to understand unless she supported Merovech's claim to his father's kingdom. Gregory is silent about any political motivation for the marriage on Brunhild's part. The partiality of the bishop of Tours becomes clear when he provides sanctuary for Merovech and refuses to hand him over to Chilperic (*DLH* 5.14). In the preface to book five Gregory cites from Matthew 10. 21 and 24. 7 that, as the Lord prophesied, 'the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents'. The context for the marriage of Merovech and Brunhild is the beginning of civil wars foretold.⁹⁴

Brunhild kept herself involved in politics and survived Merovech's eventual defeat and death (*DLH* 5.18). In the last five books of the *DLH* she appears as an influence in treaty

⁹¹ Her two daughters Ingund (2) and Chlodosind were held in custody in Meaux (*DLH* 5.1).

⁹² *DLH* 5.2: *scilicet contra fas legemque canonicam uxorem patruī accepisset...*

⁹³ See Wood (1994), 90, on the political motivations behind this marriage.

⁹⁴ Merovech's motivation is discussed in Wood (1994), 128 and Nelson (1986), 10-12.

negotiations and in battles between rival nobility. She also spends time fending off assassination attempts by Fredegund (*DLH* 6.4, 9.11, and 7.20). Gregory illustrates her autonomy and political influence when he tells us that bishop Elafius died in Spain while tending to Brunhild's affairs. She kept herself involved in politics by employing bishops as envoys and communicating with her family in Spain.⁹⁵ A key to autonomy and power for a woman was wealth, and Brunhild controlled a great deal. Along with her own dowry, Brunhild controlled the *morgengabe*, or morning gift, that Galswinth received from Chilperic for her wedding.⁹⁶ The size of this inheritance was substantial and included the cities of Bordeaux, Limoges, Cahors, Bigorre, and Béarn (*DLH* 9.20). It has been rightly observed by Nelson that Galswinth's *morgengabe* seems unusually large.⁹⁷ Nelson also admits that we really do not know what the custom entailed in this period.⁹⁸ Attempts to project backwards from the better documented Carolingian period or forward from Tacitus are misguided.

In the *DLH* Brunhild is the intended victim of assassination attempts but never the assassin. Venantius Fortunatus' poems provide information to confirm that Brunhild was powerful, such as *Carm.* 10.8 addressed jointly to the young king Childebert (2) and his mother Brunhild.⁹⁹ Fredegar and the author of the *LHF* draw heavily on Gregory for details

⁹⁵ See *DLH* 5.40 and 9.28. These are two examples where Brunhild is independently communicating with the Visigothic rulers in Spain. For the political activities of Brunhild in Spain see below chapter 5.7. and Nelson (1991), 472-474.

⁹⁶ *Morgengabe*, translated into Latin by Gregory as *matutinale donum* (*DLH* 9.20), was a gift presented to the bride by the groom on the morning after their wedding night when she had been proven a virgin. For more on *morgengabe* see Wemple (1981), 45.

⁹⁷ See Nelson (1991), 469.

⁹⁸ There has been some speculation that in 5.34, where Gregory refers to Fredegund's receiving of the revenue from certain cities, that these cities had been included in her *morgengabe* (see Thorpe (1974), 297, n. 66). It is unlikely that these cities formed part of an official *morgengabe* since Fredegund and Chilperic were probably not married in a formal context. It is more probable that Chilperic gave her the revenue from certain cities throughout the course of their marriage. This was accumulated wealth and not wealth associated with the marriage ritual. See Nelson (1986), 36, who comments on how important 'treasure', or a treasury, was to political success in the Merovingian world.

⁹⁹ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 6.1 and 6.1a were written for the marriage of Sigibert and Brunhild

but present the reverse of Gregory's bias and condemn Brunhild as a promiscuous murderer (e.g. Fredegar 3.93).¹⁰⁰ This reversal mirrors the political events of the early seventh century when Brunhild's grandson Theuderic (3) dies (c. 612) and Chlothar (2), Fredegund's son, comes to power as king of all three Frankish realms.¹⁰¹ Brunhild is put to death and her reputation in the contemporary sources becomes that of the malevolent queen rather than the saint. Fredegund's reputation is correspondingly rehabilitated.¹⁰²

5.4.5. Fredegund: the evil stepmother.

Brunhild's actions in the *DLH* are best described as defensive while Fredegund's are offensive. Fredegund's representation is modelled on the biblical queens Jezebel and Athaliah who incite their husbands to commit crimes.¹⁰³ As Chilperic's queen, Fredegund was intimately involved in the politics of the day. Wood points out that many of Chilperic's less creditable actions are seen as instigated by Fredegund.¹⁰⁴ Gregory credits her with a number of assassinations, including that of her brother-in-law Sigibert (*DLH* 4.51) and two of her step-sons.¹⁰⁵ Gregory occasionally gets carried away with blaming Fredegund. He first reports that Merovech, rather than captured by his father's troops, ordered a servant to kill him and then Gregory reports the rumour that Fredegund assassinated Merovech (*DLH* 5.14).

but contain little information beyond flattery.

¹⁰⁰ Fredegar claims that Brunhild was responsible for Chilperic's murder.

¹⁰¹ Theuderic (3) had previously defeated Theudebert (2) to control Austrasia and Burgundy and Chlothar (2) controlled Neustria.

¹⁰² See Nelson (1986), 42.

¹⁰³ For example in 1 Kings 21: 4-15 Jezebel causes the death of Naboth to secure his lands for Ahab.

¹⁰⁴ Wood (1993b: 256) cites *DLH* 5.18, 38, and 49.

¹⁰⁵ In *DLH* 7.6 Gregory lists the deaths he holds Fredegund responsible. He accuses the queen through the words of Childebert II who demands her surrender after the death of Chilperic. The accusations refer to the deaths of Galswinth, Sigibert, Chilperic (3), Merovech (2), and Clovis (2). Fredegar (3.93), in contrast, claims that Brunhild was responsible for Chilperic's murder and the *LHF* credits Brunhild with instigating the murder of her own grandson.

Merovech's brother Clovis (2) also rebelled against his father and is allegedly killed on Fredegund's orders (5.39).

The formulaic portrayal of the evil stepmother who systematically kills off her step-children appears more than once in the *DLH*.¹⁰⁶ In a similar story Gregory credits Marcatrude, king Guntram's second wife, with the death of her step-son Gundobad (2) (*DLH* 4.25). Elsewhere Gregory reports that a step-mother would naturally be hostile to her step-sons: *aliam duxit uxorem; quae calide contra filium eius sicut novercarum mos est malignari ac scandalizare coepit* (*DLH* 3.5).¹⁰⁷ The Germanic inheritance strategies that recognized the father's lineage as dominant increased the number of possible heirs and the number of step-children. Thus a step-mother might be very hostile to a rival heir who could diminish her own son's chances of inheritance.

At the end of book six, Fredegund, her husband dead, has taken refuge in a church (*DLH* 6.46). As a widow with a young son to protect Fredegund was extremely vulnerable but receives little sympathy in the narrative. Like Brunhild before her Fredegund had little choice but to seek protection from another king. She sent to Guntram, Chilperic's half-brother, inviting him to take over the kingdom in the name of her young son Chlothar (2) (*DLH* 7.5). Guntram, who became Chlothar's guardian, held off his baptism for six years indicating that he was uncertain of the boy's paternity (*DLH* 10.28).¹⁰⁸ Gregory, by repeating the rumour that there was some question as to the paternity of the young heir, emphasizes his condemnation of

¹⁰⁶ Watson (1995) has produced an interesting study of the ancient step-mother. Greek and Roman tradition (and western fairy-tales such as Cinderella) considered it natural that a stepmother would be malevolent towards her step-children (1995: 3). These attitudes prevailed in the controlled inheritance structure of ancient Greece and Rome. Sidonius (*Ep.* 7.14.3) describes nature's harsh treatment of humanity as 'stepmotherly'.

¹⁰⁷ '(Sigismund) took another wife; and she promptly began to be unkind and to mistreat his son, as is the way of a step-mother.' This is referring to the Burgundian king Sigismund.

¹⁰⁸ See *DLH* 6.46 for the assassination of Chilperic and see *LHF* 35 and *DLH* 5.8 for Fredegund's adultery.

Fredegund (*DLH* 8.9).¹⁰⁹

5.4.6. Fredegund: the mother

Fredegund's representation as a mother makes for a useful study. If Fredegund was truly an evil step-mother, it was directly related to her role as a mother. Gregory's condemnation of Fredegund as queen extended to his portrayal of Fredegund as mother. Fredegund and Chilperic had five sons and one daughter. Of her five sons, four died before they were fully grown. The youngest son, Samson, died of dysentery at age five (*DLH* 5.22 *a dysenteria et febre comprehensus*).¹¹⁰ According to Gregory, Fredegund rejected him at birth but under pressure had him baptized (*DLH* 5.22).¹¹¹ Gregory uses this episode to display the queen's un-maternal qualities but the possibility that Samson was weak at birth and not likely to survive is another explanation. The abandonment of weak children or those who could not be fed was condemned by the church but not necessarily by the law.¹¹² In classical antiquity, the evidence of Soranus and Galen indicate that it may often have been the midwife who decided whether or not a child was to be abandoned.¹¹³

Chilperic and Fredegund lost two more sons in a plague (*DLH* 5.34). The younger,

¹⁰⁹ A court made up of three bishops and leading nobles convenes to swear to his legitimacy. See Wood (1977), 15, who views Guntram as exploiting the situation to his own advantage. Guntram weakened the claim of the young Chlothar to his father's kingdom by questioning his legitimacy.

¹¹⁰ Infant mortality rates are difficult to determine even for the Roman period, which is much better documented than sixth-century Gaul. It is assumed that there was high infant mortality even for royal children who must have been relatively well nourished compared to others. See Rousselle (1983), 65, on the frequency of infant mortality.

¹¹¹ Samson is an interesting choice of name for the child. It is from the Old Testament and certainly not in keeping with the Germanic family names given to Fredegund and Chilperic's other children (Dagobert, Chlodobert, Theuderic, and Chlothar). The Christian name may have resulted from his weakness at birth or from the state of siege they were under when he was born.

¹¹² *CTh* 5.9.1, *Liber Constitutionum* (add. 20.), and *Lex Vis.* 4.4.1. protect the rights of those who take in abandoned or exposed children. These laws seem to confirm that the exposure of children was a part of society although how common we can not tell. The focus of the laws was the regulation of the rescued children.

¹¹³ See Rousselle (1983), 68-70, on the role of the midwife in the evidence from classical antiquity.

Dagobert, is not named specifically by Gregory, possibly because he had not yet been baptized when he fell ill. His name is recorded in an epitaph written by Venantius Fortunatus commemorating the life of the young prince (Venantius, *Carm.* 9.5). His elder brother Chlodobert's death was an event for general mourning. Chlodobert had survived long enough for the family to assume he would live to succeed his father. With the death of her fourth and last surviving son Theuderic (2) (*DLH* 6.34), Fredegund must have worried about her own future.¹¹⁴ Theuderic died at the age of two and had been baptized when he was one (*DLH* 6.27).¹¹⁵ The reports on Fredegund's behaviour towards her only daughter Rigunth are mixed. Fredegund organized Rigunth's rescue from Toulouse after her wedding plans fell apart and also personally supplied a great deal of wealth for her dowry (*DLH* 6.45 and 7.39). In a conflicting story Gregory claims that Fredegund tried to kill her daughter (*DLH* 9.34).

Fredegund's efforts on behalf of her sons are construed by Gregory as a manipulation of power. He fails to acknowledge the nature of Frankish kingdoms and the climate of civil war and rivalry that made a queen's position very precarious. It is a mistake for modern scholars to do the same. It was essential for a queen to have a son who would inherit the crown and secure her future. Gregory tells us that Fredegund went to great lengths to destroy Chilperic's sons by his previous partner Audovera (*DLH* 4.28). The power that Fredegund needed to thrive in her environment was closely linked to her sons' succeeding Chilperic and was challenged by the rivalry presented by her step-sons.¹¹⁶ Even by sixth-century standards to have four of five sons die seems extraordinarily back luck.¹¹⁷ The fate of Fredegund's children offers

¹¹⁴ Chlothar (2) was born after the death of Theuderic (2) (*DLH* 6.41).

¹¹⁵ This is perhaps a good indication of the normal time of baptism for a healthy child. If a child had survived a year then they had a decent chance to survive longer.

¹¹⁶ Stafford (1983: 79) rightly refutes Gregory's charge that Fredegund was unmaternal claiming much of it as anti-stepmother rhetoric.

¹¹⁷ All four died either of dysentery or a similar disease, a fact that suggests a poor water supply in the cities even for the royalty.

considerable insight into family life, reproduction, and infant mortality in the sixth century. It illustrates that even the most privileged in society were vulnerable to high infant mortality.

5.4.7. Brunhild, Fredegund, Gregory, and personal politics

Gregory's personal animosity towards Chilperic and Fredegund is evident throughout his narrative. The root of this hostility reveals itself in an episode in which Count Leudast of Tours accuses Gregory of slandering Fredegund.¹¹⁸ Gregory was required to defend himself against this charge in front of King Chilperic and Fredegund (*DLH* 5.49).¹¹⁹ There is a similar story about Brunhild who summoned an abbot named Lupentius to trial because he was charged by a local count with speaking contemptuously about the queen (*DLH* 6. 37).¹²⁰ The comparison to Gregory's trial for slandering Fredegund must be noted. These episodes serve to illustrate the power of the two queens and the role of royalty in ecclesiastical rivalries.

Gregory catalogues Fredegund's crimes and represents her as malevolent in order to persuade his audience that Chilperic was a bad king. Perhaps he was also aware, while he wrote, of the influence of Queen Brunhild and her sons and grandsons. By illustrating Fredegund's influence over Chilperic, Gregory insinuates that he is not worthy of the authority of a king. The lives of Fredegund and Brunhild are reported very differently in the narrative, belying the similarities of their lives. As queens their representations are based upon stereotypes dating back to the Old Testament models of virtue as represented by Esther and of vice as represented by Jezebel.¹²¹ Brunhild as both the daughter and wife of a king was

¹¹⁸ The slander was that Fredegund and Bertram, the bishop of Bordeaux, were having an affair; see chapter 3.1.

¹¹⁹ Charges of adultery were taken very seriously and the accusation alone could cause a great amount of damage; see below chapter 5.10.3.

¹²⁰ Lupentius' subsequent death is not attributed to Brunhild although it must have been suspicious.

¹²¹ See Nelson (1999), 181, on the prevalence of these stereotypes in medieval literature.

considered superior and legitimate by Gregory's standards, especially when compared to the ex-slave Fredegund. Gregory lived as a contemporary to Brunhild and Fredegund and played a part in the civil strife between the two families.¹²² Gregory was not neutral and should not be interpreted as such. Wemple's acceptance of Gregory's claim that Fredegund's hold over Chilperic was partly due to her willingness to make arrangements for assassinations and political intrigue ignores Gregory's extremely biased evidence. It also overlooks the fact that Fredegund bore Chilperic five sons and had accumulated a great deal of personal wealth through her marriage.¹²³ It also ignores the traditional rhetoric that blames the woman for the actions of a man.

Ultimately how much can we believe about Gregory's portrayal of Brunhild and Fredegund? Their representations are designed to contrast Brunhild who was pious and wise with Fredegund who was profligate and immoral. Reported behaviours are adapted to suit Gregory's rhetorical purpose. The inclination is to believe the outline of events presented but question motivations that are attributed to their behaviours. Both women fought hard for their survival and power. They were unique and this drew the attention of their contemporary narrative historian and of King Guntram who is reported to have joked about their rivalry with Gregory and Felix of Nantes (*DLH* 9.20). Gregory portrayed Brunhild in the role of the new Chlotild and Fredegund as the female counterpart of her evil husband. It is certain that neither reputation was entirely deserved. Gregory uses literary conventions to represent Brunhild and Fredegund that are influenced by his personal agenda. That being said, I think we must believe that these two exceptional women exercised a great deal of independence, influence, and power.¹²⁴ The fact that Brunhild is positively represented in contrast to Fredegund reveals who

¹²² See *DLH* 5.14 where Merovech takes refuge in the church of St. Martin of Tours.

¹²³ See Wemple (1981), 84. References in the *DLH* to Fredegund's accumulated wealth include a reference to her own cities and her contributions to the dowry of her daughter Rigunth; see *DLH* 5.34 and 6.45 respectively.

¹²⁴ See Wood (1994), 135, for the similarities between the two women.

was more influential in Gregory's immediate circle. It may also be an indication of who was more powerful while Gregory was writing his narrative.

5.5. An Arian royal widow as queen regent: Amalasuintha

Another example of a powerful and influential queen regent in the *DLH* is Amalasuintha, the daughter of Audofleda (sister of Clovis) and Theodoric, the Ostrogothic king of Italy. Amalasuintha was an important and powerful woman who acted as regent of the Ostrogothic kingdom for her son Athalaric from 526-534. Gregory's account of Amalasuintha accuses her of every type of impious and malevolent behaviour including taking a slave as her lover and matricide (*DLH* 3.31).¹²⁵ Gregory was, or chose to be, ignorant of the details of Amalasuintha's life. His portrayal of Amalasuintha appears as a kind of digression about an immoral Arian woman.¹²⁶ No mention is made of her regency or of her son. The narrative describes how she was killed by Theodahad who had been called in by the Ostrogothic nobility to rule (*DLH* 3.31). The accepted historical account of these events is that in 534, with the death of her son, Amalasuintha was forced to proclaim her cousin Theodahad as co-regent. She was then banished by him and murdered.¹²⁷

The important point has been made that in regard to events outside of his own geographical sphere, Gregory is notoriously unreliable.¹²⁸ When he records events that took

¹²⁵ As similar claim is made about the Gepid princess Rosamund (*DLH* 4.41) who Gregory claimed poisoned her husband and ran off with a servant. She is not named in the *DLH* but is mentioned by Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Lang.* 1.27.

¹²⁶ Other sources discuss her regency. Cassiodorus, who wrote for a Gothic audience, describes Amalasuintha as eloquent, educated, and powerful. Procopius describes her as a woman of decency and sense and tells of her attempts to fend off rivals and her struggle to keep power (*Procopius, De bello gothico* 1.2). See *PLRE* 2 s.v. Amalasuintha for the complete references to her in Cassiodorus, Procopius, and Jordanes.

¹²⁷ Wolfram (1988), 337-339.

¹²⁸ Verdon (1989), 143. Italy is certainly outside of Gregory's geographical sphere.

place fifty years earlier Gregory is even more unlikely to be certain of the details.¹²⁹ Amalasuintha was the cousin of King Chlothar and his brothers who ruled Gaul in the 530s. The neighbouring kingdoms of the Visigoths, the Franks, and the Ostrogoths frequently raided each other's territory and incursions were common.¹³⁰ Gregory implies that Amalasuintha's death was a motivating factor in an attack by the Franks on Ostrogothic territory, an incongruous statement when combined with the tales of Amalasuintha's malevolent behaviour. It may be that the details of this episode were shaped from Frankish oral history merging with Gregory's religious prejudices.

The most obvious reason for Gregory's odious portrayal of Amalasuintha is that she was an Arian. The passage forms part of a larger tirade against the Arian Goths who are depicted as barbaric (*DLH* 3.30). It served Gregory's purpose to depict Arians as inherently immoral and evil (*DLH* 3.31). Gregory describes Amalasuintha as a *meretrix*, a term he employs in other passages to refer to unfaithful wives.¹³¹ She was a powerful woman and women with power could be attacked as unnatural. Gregory's information on Amalasuintha may be based on a popular or legendary version of the powerful woman or perhaps he chose to include only the sordid details of what he knew. It seems more likely that he describes this story to prove catholic Christian superiority over Arian decadence.

The manner in which Amalasuintha died is another incongruity in Gregory's adaptation of events. Amalasuintha is shut up by Theodahad in a scalding steam bath until she dies.¹³²

¹²⁹ James (1999: 61) remarks that the contents of book three of the *DLH* illustrate Gregory's limited knowledge of Gaul between 511-544. He knew even less about Italy.

¹³⁰ See Burns (1984), 198-199 on the relations between the Franks and Ostrogoths.

¹³¹ *DLH* 1.31 he quotes from Matthew 21:31: *quia meretrices et publicani praecedent vos in regno dei..* 'because the harlots and tax-collectors precede you into the kingdom of God'. See chapter 5.10.2 for other places where *meretrix* is employed.

¹³² *DLH* 3.31: *succenso vehementer balneo, eam in eodem cum una puella includi praecepit. Quae nec mora, inter arduos vapores ingressa, in pavimento corruens mortua atque consumpta est.* 'Firing up the bath to a great heat, he ordered that she be shut up in the bath with one servant. With no delay, when she entered among the scalding steam, she collapsed dead on the floor and was killed.' This is an example of

The manner of death is remarkably similar to the death of Fausta, the first wife of Constantine who Gregory reports drowned in a scalding bath (*DLH* 1.36). She is accused of committing adultery with a slave and plotting rebellion with Constantine's son Crispus.¹³³ I would argue that Gregory uses the method of death attributed to Fausta to construct the death of Amalasuintha. The facts around Fausta's death are murky but later pagan historians portray her paganism as the reason for her murder. Woods argues convincingly that Fausta may have been trying induce an abortion with the scalding bath and died accidentally.¹³⁴ The similarity in the deaths of Fausta and Amalasuintha, as a pagan and an Arian, may be purposely linked by Gregory in a moral tale of how non-catholic Christian women might die.

Amalasuintha certainly lived outside the customary role played by women in society. She was, like Brunhild and Fredegund, exceptional. Gregory's portrayal of Amalasuintha seems to be an amalgamation of female literary constructs found elsewhere in his narrative.¹³⁵ Amalasuintha is described as so wicked that she poisoned her mother at the altar of a church. Gregory's aim in portraying Amalasuintha in this way was to demonstrate the superiority of the catholic Christian belief by proving the immorality of the Arians. The fact that Gregory's account of Amalasuintha's death may be constructed from a death he reports elsewhere indicates that he may have shaped an historical figure and event to fit his own rhetorical intent.¹³⁶ This

what has been called Gregory's vivid narrative style where he over-expresses his point that she had died. See Auerbach (1953), 85.

¹³³ Fausta's death by drowning in a hot bath appears in one source that Gregory had access to: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 5.8.2. Sidonius recounts the story as if it were common knowledge and this may have formed part of the general understanding of imperial history in the sixth century. The textual evidence for the story of Fausta and its various forms are analysed in Paschoud (1975) and most recently Woods (1998).

¹³⁴ See Woods (1998), who concludes that the unwanted child belonged to her stepson Crispus and their adultery was the reason for Crispus' death. Wood (1994), 43 alleges that Gregory employs this type of back-construction in the deaths of Chilperic (2) and Sigismund.

¹³⁵ See also the portrayal of Amalaberg (*DLH* 3.4), an Ostrogothic Arian princess married to the Thuringian king Hermanfrid whom Gregory refers to as 'wicked and cruel'.

¹³⁶ Kurth (1893), 382, declares that Gregory's version is 'l'histoire d'Amalasonthe entièrement défigurée et devenue un sombre légende.'

case illustrates how far Gregory was willing to stretch history to fit his moral vision of the world and how little credibility his representations may contain. Amalasuintha's life is evidence that queen regents, no matter how powerful, were vulnerable and without their sons had no basis for their power.¹³⁷

5.6. Royal widows: exile and remarriage

A widow in the sixth century was in a vulnerable position.¹³⁸ Widowhood was an uncertain state even for a queen who had her own wealth and perhaps some power. In the law widows had certain rights. I believe, however, that Wemple overstates the case when she claims, 'In the Merovingian kingdom a widow was able to assume all her husband's rights. Whether she lived under Roman or Germanic law, she became the head of the household, gaining control of property and the guardianship of minors'.¹³⁹ There are examples of royal widows who exercised great power, namely Brunhild and Fredegund, but they are only so well known because they were exceptional.¹⁴⁰

The evidence reveals a few royal women who, as widows, held onto power and many more royal widows who could not protect themselves or their children. In *DLH* 3.18 the saintly Queen Chlotild (1) tries in vain to protect her fatherless grandsons (the sons of Chlodomer) from their uncles. After her husband Charibert's death, Theudechild sought protection in marriage with King Guntram. Guntram proceeded to confiscate her treasure and send her to a female monastery in Arles where she died (*DLH* 4.26).¹⁴¹ Gregory approves of

¹³⁷ Wemple (1981), 63-70. Another example is Brunhild's death after her grandsons had died and she no longer had a basis for power.

¹³⁸ See Stafford (1981), 148 and Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 203, on widows.

¹³⁹ Wemple (1981), 31.

¹⁴⁰ See also Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 202-203, who acknowledge that a widow could wield power but also note the dangers involved in widowhood.

¹⁴¹ This example is also cited in Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 203.

Guntram's behaviour and condemns Theudechild for seeking remarriage. Remarriage was rarely an option for a widowed queen and to be successful she needed to have a son. If a queen could become the regent for her young son and maintain the support of her husband's nobles she might be able to retain some power and influence.¹⁴²

A royal widow who did not seek refuge in religion left her fate in the hands of the king who succeeded her husband. If this was not her own son then the situation could be dangerous.¹⁴³ The Langobard princess Vuldegrada married Theudebald and on his death (c. 555) was left in the care of King Chlothar who took over the realm (*DLH* 4.9).¹⁴⁴ Gregory tells us that the priests complained about the incestuous liaison between Chlothar and the widow of his nephew that followed.¹⁴⁵ Vuldegrada was then given over to Garivald, the Duke of Bavaria, and is one of the few examples of a queen's remarriage. The impression from Gregory is that Chlothar, as the king, controlled Vuldegrada's future even though she was a Langobard princess who might be expected to have had some choice in her own prospects. This passage focuses on Chlothar's licentious behaviour towards the widowed queen and the fate of Vuldegrada is peripheral to Gregory's argument.¹⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that Paul the Deacon contradicts Gregory's version by describing how Theodobald gave Vuldegrada to

¹⁴² Ewig (1974: 22) states that a son could legitimately take over his kingdom at the age of fifteen. Childebert II was only five when Sigibert died so there was a ten-year regency before he took power. Chlothar II was just a few months old when his father died. See also Nelson (1978), 38 and Wood (1977), 11 who point out that a queen needed the support of the nobility to be able to reign as regent.

¹⁴³ See Wood (1994), 120-139 on some of the other options presented to widowed queens. See also Wemple (1981), 155 and Stafford (1983), 178.

¹⁴⁴ Theudebald was the son of Theudebert and Deuteria who had succeeded to the throne after his father's death in 547. This made Chlothar Theudebald's uncle. See appendix I for more detail.

¹⁴⁵ See *DLH* 4.3 where Chlothar commits incest with Ingund and Aregund without comment from priests.

¹⁴⁶ As mentioned above, there is a great deal of information about Chlothar's sexual exploits in book four that are connected to Chlothar's attempts to tax church revenues. Gregory seems determined to prove how immoral he was.

Garivaldus because he did not like her.¹⁴⁷ Chlothar is not mentioned in Paul the Deacon's account. Either way, it is unlikely that Vuldegrada had a choice about her future. Some kings tried to protect the women of their family from exploitation but they were seldom successful. When the treaty of Andelot was signed in 588 between Childebert II and Guntram it included a clause guaranteeing that Guntram would protect the women in Childebert's family if he died.¹⁴⁸

When King Childebert (I) died in Paris (c. 558) his brother Chlothar took over his kingdom. As with Theudebald, Childebert had died without sons and therefore his nearest male relative inherited his kingdom. Chlothar's first move was to exile Childebert's widow Ultrogotha and their two daughters (*DLH* 4.20). The exile of Childebert's widow and daughters, as described by Gregory, was politically motivated. Childebert's queen had a particularly saintly reputation as described in the *vita* of the seventh century queen Bathild.¹⁴⁹ Venantius Fortunatus mentions, in a panegyric on Charibert, that Ultrogotha and her daughters were living under his protection (*Carm.* 6.2. 20-25). It is assumed that on inheriting his portion of Chlothar's kingdom, Charibert recalled Ultrogotha from exile.

Gregory's descriptions of both these episodes involve the widows of Chlothar's relations and he mentions them to demonstrate further Chlothar's ill-treatment of women and of people in general. Gregory takes every opportunity to highlight any behaviour by Chlothar that was morally questionable. Gregory is not forthcoming on Ultrogotha's reputation as a saintly queen, and only mentions that she had been exiled by Chlothar. From the evidence provided by Gregory a widowed queen possessed a certain power that kings feared. In the factional world of Frankish royal politics a queen of royal blood could bestow power on the man she

¹⁴⁷ *Hist. Lang.* 1.21. Paul the Deacon, who was of Langobard origin, wrote about these events much later than Gregory (late eighth century) but may have had access to other sources.

¹⁴⁸ The text of the Treaty of Andelot is reproduced in *DLH* 9.20.

¹⁴⁹ See *Vita S. Bathildis* 18 for Ultrogotha's devout nature. Venantius Fortunatus (*Carm.* 6.6) writes about Ultrogotha's garden that adorned the church of St. Vincent in Paris.

married.¹⁵⁰ It would have been imprudent of the succeeding king to leave a royal widow single and unchecked.¹⁵¹ The evidence makes it clear that widowed queens were not ignored. They were either put away in a monastery, married off to make a political alliance or, if they proved to be a political threat, exiled.

5.7. Visigothic queens, Frankish kings, and royal marriage alliances¹⁵²

The foreign marriages of the Frankish royal families can be very instructive about the shifts in foreign policy and strategic interests in the sixth century. Diplomatic relations in the sixth century took the form of a series of marriage alliances between royal families. Mentioned in the *DLH* are marriages between Frank and Burgundian (e.g. Clovis and Chlotild), Ostrogoth (e.g. Audofleda and Theoderic), Langobard (e.g. Theuderic and Wisigard), and Thuringian (e.g. Chlothar and Radigund) royal families.

Brunhild's marriage to Sigibert and the succeeding marriages between Frankish and Visigothic royalty are the most prominent foreign unions described in the contemporary books of the *DLH*. The political relationship between the Visigoths and Franks was an uneasy one and skirmishes between these two neighbouring kingdoms were not unusual.¹⁵³ The marriages between catholic Franks and Arian Visigoths provide a venue for Gregory to elaborate on his anti-Arian sentiments.

When Chlotild (2), the daughter of Clovis, married Amalaric, the Visigothic king of Spain (c. 526-531) the relationship was not a success (*DLH* 3.1).¹⁵⁴ It is reported that

¹⁵⁰ For example the threat caused to Chilperic by Brunhild's marriage to Merovech.

¹⁵¹ See Wood (1977), 14-16 on the importance of royal blood to an heir.

¹⁵² See Nelson (1991), whose article on the relations between Visigothic and Frankish royalty explores the political motivations for the various marriages.

¹⁵³ Nelson (1991: 465) comments that 'Les razzias, les emprises de butin, constituèrent les relations normales' between the two kingdoms.

¹⁵⁴ For the dates of the marriage see Collins (1995), 34.

Chlotild was mistreated by her husband because of her religious beliefs (*DLH* 3.10). Chlotild's brother Childebert (1) came to her rescue but Chlotild died on her way back to Paris (*DLH* 3.10). Chlotild's mistreatment and the fight against Arianism are given as the reason for Childebert's invasion of the Visigothic kingdom.¹⁵⁵ Gregory employs Childebert's invasion as a symbolic of a greater rhetorical battle against Arians.¹⁵⁶ The representation of Chlotild is that of the pious catholic abused by an Arian king. She becomes a martyr to the cause of the catholic Christian church (*DLH* 3.10).

Janet Nelson mentions a 'rapprochement' between the Visigoths and Franks during the 560s-570s that resulted in the marriages of the Visigothic sisters Brunhild and Galswinth to Sigibert and Chilperic (3).¹⁵⁷ Brunhild and Galswinth were the daughters of the Visigothic king Athanagild whose capital was Toledo. The success of the marriage between Brunhild and Sigibert has been discussed above. Brunhild converted to catholic Christianity and became, as represented by Gregory of Tours, the new Chlotild, the favoured queen, and mother of the future king Childebert II.¹⁵⁸ Brunhild's success at adapting to life in Gaul partially relied on her cultivation of a relationship with the Frankish nobility and the church. Most importantly, however, she had a son.

The life of Galswinth, Brunhild's sister, provides a striking comparison. As mentioned above, the comparison was intentional and the presentation of their marriages in the *DLH* is

¹⁵⁵ According to Gregory, Chlotild sent her brothers a towel stained with her own blood. She was in Barcelona at the time (Collins 1995: 34).

¹⁵⁶ See *DLH* 3.10, where Amalaric is killed as he tries to take refuge in a catholic church. Gregory then tells us that good king Childebert donates all the wealth (plunder) from his incursion into Spain to various churches and monasteries.

¹⁵⁷ See Nelson (1991), 468, who provides a political context for these marriages. She believes the marriage alliances were part of a conscious effort on behalf of Sigibert and Chilperic to open up routes to the south and the Mediterranean. Chilperic had his capital at Paris and Sigibert at Rheims. The weddings date to the 560s and are recorded in *DLH* 4.27 and 28.

¹⁵⁸ See appendix 1, Childebert (2). Brunhild's patronage of the cult of St. Martin of Tours must have played an important role in Gregory's continued favourable account of her. For her patronage to St. Martin see Venantius Fortunatus *Carm.* 10.7.

designed to contrast the behaviour of the two kings. Galswinth was sought in marriage by King Chilperic after he observed how successful his half-brother Sigibert had been with Brunhild (*DLH* 4.27).¹⁵⁹ In contrast to Chlotild (2) mentioned above, Galswinth's mistreatment and murder is not avenged by her Visigothic family. This incident, for which Gregory was a contemporary, illustrates just how vulnerable a foreign queen was when married outside the reach of the protection of her family.¹⁶⁰

It is noteworthy that Galswinth is the last known Visigothic princess who is sent to marry in Gaul. Inter-marriage between Visigothic and Frankish royalty continued in the next generation with Frankish princesses sent to marry in Spain. Ingund (2), the daughter of Brunhild and Sigibert, marries Hermengild, the son of the Visigothic king Leuvigild (*DLH* 5.38). The evidence suggests that this marriage was arranged primarily by Brunhild who continued to be actively involved in the politics of Spain from her home in Gaul.¹⁶¹ In his version of events Gregory tells us that Ingund, the catholic princess, is sent to Spain where her stepmother-in-law, Goiswinth, tries to force her to convert to Arianism. In the face of this pressure Ingund retains her faith and manages to convert her husband Hermengild to catholic Christianity (*DLH* 5.38).

There are a number of inconsistencies in the version of Ingund's marriage presented in the *DLH*. This is primarily a result of the representation of Ingund's marriage being designed to employ two of Gregory's preferred literary female stereotypes. Ingund is portrayed as a catholic missionary princess in an Arian land who converts her husband to the true religion in

¹⁵⁹ Gregory claims that Chilperic's motivation was the large dowry that came with his bride (*DLH* 4.28).

¹⁶⁰ Nelson (1978), 38-40; Ennen (1989), 45; and Wallace-Hadrill (1962), 134-135. See Wood 1994, 121 and also Cassiodorus, *Var.* 9.1 for marriage of Hilderic and Amalafida as an example of another queen left unprotected

¹⁶¹ The delegates who are in Spain on business for the queen may have been arranging the marriage (*DLH* 5.40 and 9.28). See also Nelson (1991), 471 and Nelson (1978), 42.

the manner of Chlotild and Clovis.¹⁶² Goiswinth, Ingund's Arian stepmother-in-law, is credited with a general persecution of all catholics in Spain and with forcibly re-baptizing her stepdaughter-in-law as an Arian (*DLH* 5.38).¹⁶³ This portrayal of Goiswinth is hardly credible since she was, after all, Ingund's grandmother. Gregory was aware of this, but conveniently fails to mention it here: it would ruin the effect of his story. Earlier in *DLH* 4.38, Gregory notes that Goiswinth was Brunhild's mother and when her husband died, she re-married Leuvigild making her Ingund's grandmother and stepmother-in-law.¹⁶⁴ In this passage however, Goiswinth embodies the malevolent traits of a step-mother, mother-in-law, and Arian. Gregory's contradictions in his portrayal of Goiswinth make it difficult to believe his representation of Ingund as the persecuted martyr. The contradictions in his version of events also lead us to question the validity of Gregory's claims of widespread persecution of catholic Christians in Spain.¹⁶⁵

Further along in this convoluted story of Arians, catholics, Visigoths, and Franks, Ingund's husband Hermengild unsuccessfully rebels against his father and is captured (c. 584) (*DLH* 6.40).¹⁶⁶ The evidence suggests that the son rebelled against the father but Gregory claims that Leuvigild attacked Hermengild because of his conversion to catholic Christianity.¹⁶⁷ When Hermengild is captured Ingund is left with the Byzantines (*cum Graecis*) who controlled the south-eastern coast of Spain from c. 551 to 624 (*DLH* 6.40).¹⁶⁸ This episode

¹⁶² See Nelson (1991), 470, for Ingund as a catholic missionary.

¹⁶³ In her role as stepmother, Goiswinth would naturally be considered malevolent by Gregory. Nelson (1991: 471) points out, 'les belles-mères dont pour ainsi dire naturellement méchantes que Grégoire décrit ainsi Goiswinthe.'

¹⁶⁴ Gregory repeats this in *DLH* 9.1.

¹⁶⁵ Nelson (1991), 471.

¹⁶⁶ For Hermengild's death see *DLH* 8.28.

¹⁶⁷ Nelson (1991: 471) and Collins (1995: 46) accept this and see an alliance between Goiswinth and Hermengild against Leuvigild.

¹⁶⁸ See Collins (1995), 38, for more detail.

suggests that Hermengild had allied himself with the Byzantines against his father.¹⁶⁹ The last reference to Ingund in the *DLH* finds her and her son Athanagild (2) held captive by the Byzantines, either in North Africa or Constantinople.¹⁷⁰ Brunhild's attempt to rally the Frankish nobles to rescue Ingund ultimately failed and she dies in Africa.¹⁷¹

Marriage negotiations between Franks and Visigoths continued as kings sought support in their civil wars from foreign allies. A marriage was arranged between Chilperic and Fredegund's daughter Rigunth and Recared, another son of Leuwigild.¹⁷² On three occasions Gregory mentions the dowry negotiations that took place as envoys from both sides verified the amount before the wedding was agreed upon.¹⁷³ The marriage was postponed when Chilperic's son Theuderic died and the family was in mourning (6.34). The alliance must have been vital to the king, since he suggests Basina, the daughter of Audovera, in place of Rigunth

¹⁶⁹ Gregory gives the impression that King Miro of Galicia had a pro-Byzantine attitude and that he supported the Byzantine presence in Spain. Collins (1995: 48) claims that the Visigoths and Sueves were allies until the kingdom was annexed in 589. See also Goffart (1957) for Byzantine support of rebellions in Visigoth and Frankish territory.

¹⁷⁰ Gregory contradicts himself on her whereabouts. In *DLH* 8.18: *Sonus enim erat sororem suam Ingundem iam Constantinopolim fuisse translata*. 'For the rumour was that his sister Ingund had been now transferred to Constantinople' and in *DLH* 8.21: *Ibique Brunichildis regina pro Ingunde filia, quae adhuc in Africa tenebatur omnibus prioribus quæstæ est: sed parum consolationis emeruit*. 'And there Queen Brunhild lamented to all the nobility on behalf of her daughter Ingund, who still was held in Africa: but she obtained little consolation'.

¹⁷¹ See Wood (1994), 169-176, for details on the relationships between the Franks and the Visigoths and of the fate of Ingund and her son who become barter between the Byzantine emperor and the Franks. There are varying opinions in the modern scholarship about the complex familial relationship between Leuwigild, Hermenegild, Goiswinth, Recared, Childebert (2), Brunhild, and Chilperic (3). Nelson (1991) reads between the lines of Gregory's literary version of these events and arrives at a plausible historical account that I have followed here. *DLH* 8.28. tells us that Ingund died in Africa but her son Athanagild survived and was sent on to the emperor in Constantinople. Letters survive that were written to Athanagild from his grand-mother Brunhild and uncle Childebert II describing attempts to have the boy returned to Gaul (*Epistolæ Austrasiciæ* 27, 28, 43-5). Wood (1994: 129) relates Brunhild's failure to rescue her daughter to hostility from the Frankish nobility towards the queen and their unwillingness to support her.

¹⁷² Nelson (1991: 472) views the efforts by Leuwigild to ally himself with Chilperic as an attempt to counter the coalition between Brunhild, Childebert, Ingund, Goiswinth, and Hermengild

¹⁷³ See *DLH* 6.18, 40, and 45.

who was in mourning.¹⁷⁴ Fredegund, who saw all of Audovera's children as rivals, may have been against the idea of switching brides and the original plan was reintroduced. Eventually the bride was prepared and dispatched from Paris with a huge entourage and great dowry (*DLH* 6.45). Chilperic's death in c. 584 stops the marriage from taking place. Rigunth, who received news of her father's death in Toulouse, was abandoned by her entourage and had her dowry confiscated. The princess, left without protection, was forced to take refuge in a church (*DLH* 7.10).

Recared later offers marriage to Chlodosind, another daughter of Brunhild and Sigibert and sister of Childebert (2). Brunhild was active in these negotiations but no marriage is recorded (see *DLH* 9.16, 9.20, 9.25, and 9.28). It is clear that loyalties shifted quickly and the marriage negotiations can reveal these shifts. With Chilperic dead, a marriage to Rigunth was of little value to Recared and a connection to Brunhild and Childebert II much more desirable. The changing loyalties may have resulted in Rigunth's abandonment but Gregory makes no mention of Brunhild and Childebert II in connection with the dynastic upheaval in Spain.

The women involved in these events are portrayed in order to record the conflict of catholicism vs Arianism as one of good vs evil. Gregory employs female literary stereotypes to represent women while the historical context for these marriages is overlooked. When reporting on events in the early sixth century, as in the story of Chlotild (2), Gregory does not seem to rely on sources other than popular legend or oral history. When events are contemporary to Gregory and he had first-hand knowledge of them, it is difficult to believe that he was completely ignorant of the historical details concerning the intermarriage between the

¹⁷⁴ The emphasis was the alliance itself and not who was married. At the time Basina lived in the female monastery of the Holy Cross in Poitiers. Gregory declares that she was unwilling to cooperate with her father. This is not surprising considering Chilperic (and Fredegund) had murdered Basina's brother Clovis and her mother Audovera. Gregory reports that Radegund, the abbess of the monastery, also disagreed with the proposal that one of her nuns break her vows (*DLH* 6.34).

royal families.¹⁷⁵ The representation of women in these marriages comprises a complete index of female literary constructs. These range from the malevolent step-mother (Goiswinth) to the innocent catholic victim of Arianism (Chlotild (2)), and include the pious princess whose faith converts the heathen prince (Ingund (2)). The marriages between the royal daughters and sons of the Franks and Visigoths serve to illustrate how difficult it could be for a woman sent to marry into another culture. Once a daughter left the confines of her family she was on her own and had to fend for herself. Of all the princesses who are married to foreign allies only Brunhild managed a successful reign.

5.8. Holy retirement¹⁷⁶ and dedicated virgins

One of the most striking changes in the lives of women in late antiquity was the rise of female asceticism and the foundation of female monastic institutions. There is a corresponding shift in the rhetoric on and representation of women in the literary sources.¹⁷⁷ The option of entering a secluded life as a nun was not, however, open to the general public in the fifth and sixth centuries. The women entering a female monastic institution were, mainly, the daughters and wives of Gallo-Roman aristocrats, Germanic royalty, and bishops.¹⁷⁸ Holy retirement was clearly not a choice available to women in general and an increase in female monasticism does not reflect greater freedom in ordinary women's lives. One example of a dedicated virgin who was not from the nobility is Marcovefa, whom Gregory describes as a servant of Queen Ingoberga (*DLH* 4.26). She served the queen and wore the clothes of a nun but did not live a

¹⁷⁵ In *DLH* 6.40 Gregory describes his conversation with one of the envoys from Leuvigild who was passing through Tours. He includes their debate over religion in the narrative but it is likely they discussed politics as well.

¹⁷⁶ The very appropriate term 'holy retirement' comes from Wood (1994), 136.

¹⁷⁷ See Cooper (1992 and 1996), A. Cameron (1989), Cloke (1995), and Clark (1979, 1983, 1986 and 1990).

¹⁷⁸ See McNamara (1985), 39.

secluded life. Holy retirement does not seem to have been an option for Marcovefa who was the daughter of wool-worker.¹⁷⁹ Caesarius of Arles tells us that among the women at the monastery at Arles, some were widowed, some married (*Reg. Virg.* 5), but most were unmarried women and young girls (*Reg. Virg.* 7). This coincides with the evidence from Avitus, whose sister was dedicated to virginity from birth.¹⁸⁰

The rise of female monasticism and asceticism had a significant impact on the Christian literary sources and their approach to women. It broadened the spectrum in which women were represented and exercised influence. The positive representation of women was extended from the devoted wife in a family context to include the devoted Christian in a religious context.¹⁸¹ Rhetorically speaking, the ascetic woman begins to replace the pious married *matrona* of Roman tradition as the ideal of womanhood in Christian literature.¹⁸²

5.8.1. The origins of female monasticism in Gaul

The female monastic movement in Gaul began with women who lived devoted to God as virgins in their family homes.¹⁸³ The female monastery as an institution in Gaul developed out of this in-home seclusion from the secular world into monasteries set up for women themselves.¹⁸⁴ The foundation of a female monastery for dedicated virgins often occurred in conjunction with an existing monastery for men.¹⁸⁵ In Arles, bishop Caesarius founded a monastery for his sister and wrote a *regula* for female monasteries that was adopted all over

¹⁷⁹ She broke her vow of celibacy when married to King Charibert and as a result was excommunicated (*DLH* 4.26).

¹⁸⁰ Avitus, *Carm.* 6.

¹⁸¹ See Cloke (1995), 220.

¹⁸² Cooper (1996), 19.

¹⁸³ See above section 4.6. and E. Clarke (1986), 181, for this 'genteel form of asceticism'.

¹⁸⁴ As discussed above, Avitus of Vienne's mother established herself as a celibate in the home after her fourth child was born and one of the daughters of Sidonius Apollinaris lived there (Avitus, *Carm.* 6.83).

¹⁸⁵ As discussed in chapter 4.5 above.

Gaul.¹⁸⁶ Sister monasteries were founded in conjunction with the existing houses at Marseilles, Jura, Vienne, Tours, Arles, and Poitiers.¹⁸⁷ These early monastic settlements were populated by the female members of bishops' families and other Gallo-Roman aristocrats.

5.8.2. *In monasterio beatae Radegundis...*¹⁸⁸

The establishment of the Germanic successor kingdoms created a role for the Germanic queens as patrons of religious institutions. Female monasteries were one of the outlets for a queen's patronage and Gregory provides a number of examples of religious patronage by widowed queens.¹⁸⁹ These women could possess a great deal of wealth accumulated through marriage and once widowed or divorced their position was insecure and their wealth easily confiscated. Even the powerful Fredegund was forced to seek refuge with part of her treasure in the cathedral in Paris at the death of her husband Chilperic (*DLH* 7.4). Patronage of, or investment in, a religious house may have been a way of attaining financial, as well as personal security for women left to fend for themselves.¹⁹⁰

The best known female monastery in sixth-century Gaul was founded by Radegund, a Thuringian princess taken in war by King Chlothar and made his queen (c. 531) (*DLH* 3.7).

¹⁸⁶ Caesarius' *Regula Virginum* (c. 524) is believed to be the first set of rules written specifically for female monastics. See Klingshirn (1994), 177-124; McNamara (1985), 40; and Coon (1997), 122.

¹⁸⁷ Coon (1997), 121-122. The female monasteries at Arles, Poitiers, Metz and Laon followed Caesarius' *regula*.

¹⁸⁸ *DLH* 6.29. St. Radegund is discussed by most political and social historians of this period. Some of the main secondary sources include Ewig (1974), 56-57; Wemple (1981), 181-185; McNamara (1985); Consolino (1988); Ennen (1989), 47-51; Gäbe (1989); Wood (1994), 136-139; and Coon (1997), 126-135. Our intention here is to analyse the representation of Radegund in the *DLH* and the rebellion of the nuns at her monastery at Poitiers.

¹⁸⁹ Chlotild (1), the widow of Clovis, devoted herself to religious matters (*DLH* 2.43). Ingoberg, a widow of Charibert, devoted herself to a religious life (*DLH* 9.26) and left a legacy to the cathedral at Tours and is praised by Gregory (9.26).

¹⁹⁰ Coon (1997: 122) sees the investment and patronage in female monasteries as a natural extension of the secular duties of a Frankish queen. The authority of a royal woman was important for the status of a female monastery. It could be considered as equally important for the royal woman seeking refuge.

Radegund retired from her position as queen to her own monastery dedicated to the Holy Cross at Poitiers. There is some speculation that Radegund was forced into the monastery by Chlothar for political reasons since voluntary retirement while still on the throne was unusual for a queen. Gregory is rather circumspect about what arrangement existed that allowed Chlothar's queen to retire to a monastery (*DLH* 3.7). Modern scholars have suggested that Radegund's failure to produce a child may have played a part in her retirement but this seems unlikely.¹⁹¹

Gregory may indirectly provide the answer to this problem when he links the death of Radegund's brother with her conversion to religious life.¹⁹² Fortunatus' *Vita S. Radegundis* implies that Chlothar sent Radegund to St. Medard to be converted to religious orders after her brother's murder. The connection made by both authors has led some to suggest a political context for the foundation of the monastery rather than a lack of children.¹⁹³ If Radegund's brother was involved in a rebellion against Chlothar, perhaps Radegund was implicated as well. It is possible that the rebellion of Radegund's brother broke off an alliance with Chlothar and made his marriage no longer politically viable.¹⁹⁴ Radegund's hagiographer Baudonivia tells us that Chlothar, unwilling to let her go, tried to take Radegund back from the monastery that he had agreed to build for her (Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis* 4, 6, and 7).¹⁹⁵ Baudonivia's *vita*

¹⁹¹ See Nelson (1978), 38 n. 29 on the importance of a son for a queen.

¹⁹² *DLH* 3.7 *Cuius fratrem postea injuste per homines iniquos occidit. Illa quoque ad Deum conversa, mutata veste monasterium sibi infra Pictavensem urbem construxit.* 'Her brother afterwards (Chlothar) unjustly killed by assassins. She then turned to God and having taken the habit she constructed a monastery below the city of Poitiers for herself'.

¹⁹³ See Fortunatus, *Vita S. Radegundis*, 12. The suggestion that there was some political motivation for the foundation of her monastery comes from Wood (1994), 137.

¹⁹⁴ This would suggest that the marriage between Radegund and Chlothar had a political motivation and the description of Radegund as a wife captured and carried off by Chlothar may be part of the hagiographical legend. Is it not possible that marriage to Radegund was part of an agreement between Chlothar and her brother?

¹⁹⁵ There are two surviving *vitae* of Radegund. One was written by Venantius Fortunatus who was Radegund's contemporary and correspondent. The other was written by Baudonivia, a resident of her monastery

was written a generation after Radegund lived, and the author was less inclined to portray the king as wanting to be rid of his queen.¹⁹⁶ Gregory and Fortunatus who are Radegund's contemporaries do not suggest that Chlothar was against the plan and both indicate some political motivation for her retirement. It is conceivable that some agreement between the king and his queen existed, requiring Radegund to remain in the realm of religion.

Radegund was an influential woman and the monastery she founded was an important institution. She continued to be politically active from a religious perspective throughout her life at the monastery. Radegund was involved in acquiring relics for the monastery at Poitiers, which included her crowning achievement, a piece of the 'true cross'. Her status as a queen and abbess gave her access and connections beyond the realm of the Franks.¹⁹⁷ Radegund also had enough political clout to stand up to a king. She denied Chilperic's request when he wanted his daughter Basina, one of her nuns, to leave her cloistered life and marry Recared (*DLH* 6.34). Gregory represents Radegund as a saint and an ideal woman who devoted herself to God. Her purity and holiness are conveyed by Gregory through details of visions and miracles that happened at the monastery (*DLH* 6.29). After her death her tomb became the venue for her miracles (*DLH* 9.2).

Gregory of Tours portrays a saintly Radegund who lived a life of ascetic purity. Venantius Fortunatus' depiction of Radegund's life at the monastery, while not actually

from the next generation of nuns. Both *vitae* are of interest for information on her life but for our purposes it is what Gregory says about Radegund and the monastery that is important. See Gäbe (1989) and Consolino (1988) for the life of Radegund in the two different *vitae*. Kitchen (1998: 115-153) examines the rhetorical structure of the *vitae*.

¹⁹⁶ The exact dates of the composition of the *vitae* cannot be established. Kitchen (1998: 225, n.1) discusses the dates as established by Krusch (*MGH AA* 4.2, xvi-xvii) in which Fortunatus is thought to have written his *vita* just after the death of Radegund (c. 587) and Baudonivia just after the death of Fortunatus (post c. 600).

¹⁹⁷ Radegund sent an envoy to Constantinople to acquire a piece of the 'true cross' from the Byzantine empress Sophia (*DLH* 9.40). See Moreira (1993) for the petitions Radegund made to the patriarch of Jerusalem and to the empress.

contradicting Gregory's claims, offers a slightly different perspective. Fortunatus wrote a number of *Carmina* dedicated to Radegund and his evidence suggests that a real friendship existed between them.¹⁹⁸ Radegund maintained her queenly influence and status while living in the monastery and she also cultivated friendships with men. The atmosphere created by Fortunatus' poems is one of a royal court with Fortunatus writing in honour of Radegund and presenting her with gifts. This was not the life of an average nun advocated by Caesarius' strict *regula* but one of a queen presiding over her own domain.¹⁹⁹

5.8.3. Involuntary retirement and the rebellion of nuns

Not all residents of female monasteries in Gaul were there on a voluntary basis. As mentioned above, even Radegund may not have had free choice when it came to her retirement. Many women chose the religious lifestyle but others were imprisoned by it. This reflects a fundamental change in the female monastic movement. The female monastery, under the late sixth-century Frankish kings, is both a place of refuge for vulnerable widows and somewhere to keep unwanted or troublesome royal women.²⁰⁰

Beyond marriage the choices were limited for royal women in the late sixth century.²⁰¹ Consider the fortunes of the widow Theudechild who had her wealth confiscated by King Guntram and was sent off to the female monastery in Arles. Gregory declares that Theudechild did not adapt well to the harsh life in the monastery and she plotted her escape.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ See George (1992), 161-178.

¹⁹⁹ See Venantius, *Carm.* 8.2, 8.6, 8.7, 11.13, 11.25, and appendices 10 and 15.

²⁰⁰ See Klingshirn (1994), 265-266 on the female monastery at Arles as a refuge. It is, of course, also an establishment for women who were truly devoted to God.

²⁰¹ As Affeldt and Reiter (1986: 203) point out, 'über das Leben im Kloster, das neben der Ehe eine weitere Existenzmöglichkeit darstellte'.

²⁰² See Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 203. The life at Arles which was the original foundation for Caesarius' strict rule for nuns may have been harsher than life in Poitiers. For communication between the two establishments see Klingshirn (1994), 266.

Theudechild's plan was discovered and she spent the rest of her days a prisoner in the monastery (*DLH* 4.26). Gregory is critical of women who were unwilling to retire happily to a monastery, because they lacked piety and devotion. King Charibert's daughter Berthefledis who lived in Ingeltrudis' monastery founded at Tours was not naturally given over to religious life or work and escaped as soon as the abbess was out of sight. She is described as *gulae et somno dedita, et nullam de officio Dei curam habens*.²⁰³

The practice of sending unwilling royal women to a life of religious seclusion led to discontent inside at least one of these establishments. Radegund's death in 587 left the monastery without her wealth and personal influence.²⁰⁴ Leubovera, who became the abbess after Radegund's death, was of Frankish noble birth. She was not, however, royal and this may have undermined her authority over some of the royal nuns.²⁰⁵ Leubovera could not supply the personal wealth, prestige, and royal patronage that Radegund had provided for the establishment.

Gregory's record of the rebellion at the Holy Cross monastery at Poitiers describes significant upheaval in the community.²⁰⁶ The leaders of the rebellion were Basina (2) and Chlotild (3). Basina, the daughter of Chilperic and Audovera, was sent into the monastery after the death of her brother Clovis (2) (*DLH* 5.39). The murder of her brother and mother Audovera left Basina without any protection. Gregory maintains that Basina was tricked by Fredegund into entering the monastery and all her property was confiscated. One might consider that with her step-mother Fredegund in power seclusion was the safest place for

²⁰³ *DLH* 9.33 'devoted to her gullet and sleep and having no care for the work of God.'

²⁰⁴ *DLH* 9.2 tells of her death and that Gregory was present at the funeral. See McNamara (1985), 46-47 who points out that 'while Radegund lived, the nuns of her community could count on the bounty of her royal fortune.' See also Scheibelreiter (1979) who connects the death of Radegund with the rebellion.

²⁰⁵ Ennen (1989), 48.

²⁰⁶ See *DLH* 9.39-43 and 10.15-17. See Scheibelreiter (1979) on the rebellion and the two princess leaders.

Basina.²⁰⁷ Basina's move to the monastery was not totally voluntary nor was it driven by religious devotion. The other key figure in the rebellion was Chlotild (3), the daughter of King Charibert (*DLH* 9.39). It is not made clear which of Charibert's four wives - Ingoberg, Merofled, Theudechild, or Marcovefa - was Chlotild's mother (*DLH* 4.26).²⁰⁸

In 589, Basina and Chlotild led forty other nuns out of the monastery at Poitiers. The nuns charged their abbess Leuovera with a variety of crimes including playing backgammon, holding dinner parties, and giving parties to celebrate betrothals. Other complaints included bad food, a lack of decent clothing, and generally harsh treatment (*DLH* 10.15).²⁰⁹ The nuns first marched on the city of Tours where they met with Bishop Gregory who advised them to return or face excommunication. Gregory reports much of the action around the rebellion as the forces of evil acting on the nuns and causing them to break their vows (*DLH* 9.39).²¹⁰

To supplement his commentary Gregory reproduces original documents such as letters and decrees of bishops, including a letter written by Radegund herself. Heinzelmann notes that the documents are part of Gregory's larger intent to depict King Guntram as a good ruler who listens to the wise council of bishops. The documents reproduced include the letter of foundation written for St. Radegund (9.39), a letter from the bishops sitting in council with King Guntram who were debating what to do with the nuns (9.41), and a letter Radegund wrote

²⁰⁷ There are elements of a family feud in this story. Gregory blames Fredegund who may have seen Clovis (2) and Audovera as rivals and had them killed. If Clovis had rebelled with his mother's help against his father then Chilperic was just as likely responsible for their deaths. Basina was lucky to have lived. See Wood (1977), 11-12, for other sons who rose against their fathers.

²⁰⁸ Gregory seems to question her paternity in his ambiguous description of her parentage in *DLH* 9.39: *Chrodichildis, quae se Chariberti quondam regis filiam asserebat*. 'Chlotild, who claimed she was the daughter of King Charibert.

²⁰⁹ The abbess was found innocent (10.17). The backgammon charge was dismissed because Leuovera used to play with St. Radegund herself and board games were not forbidden by Caesarius' *regula*. The complaints about lack of food and clothing could have been due to a lack of support and wealth at the monastery.

²¹⁰ *DLH* 9.39: *insidiante diabolo in corde Chrodichildis*.

to her contemporary bishops (9.42).²¹¹ By reprinting some of the documents drawn up at the foundation of the monastery Gregory provides evidence for his condemnation of the rebel nuns. Gregory is unequivocal in his condemnation of the nuns who had broken their vows by leaving the monastery and whose behaviour was damaging the institution of the saintly Radegund. Gregory was also personally connected to the event through his niece Justina who was the prioress of the monastery and a strong supporter of the abbess.

Gregory gives no credence at all to the women's complaints about the abbess or about their bishop in Poitiers, Maroveus. There had been previous hostility between Maroveus and Radegund due to rivalry between the church in Poitiers and the monastery. Maroveus refused to install officially the relic of the true cross in the monastery and wanted it to be deposited in the church (*DLH* 9.40). Maroveus' hostility to the monastery may validate the nuns' complaints but Gregory could not see beyond their broken vows.²¹²

Chlotild is portrayed as a spoiled princess who would not listen to the reason. She refuses the advice of a bishop (Gregory) and insists on appealing to the power of the king (*DLH* 9.39). The rebellion became a focal point for dissent and had support within the community. Gregory describes those who had gathered around Chlotild as *homicidii, maleficii, adulterii, fugitivi*.²¹³ The sanctity of the holy place had been desecrated by Chlotild and her followers. The excommunication of the rebels and the restoration of the abbess was achieved with royal support. It took the intervention of the king to quell the affair but significantly Guntram took action after listening to the advice of a tribunal of bishops who sat in

²¹¹ Heinzlmann (1994), 67. Gregory also reproduces the text of the treaty of Andelot that was signed by King Guntram, Childebert II, and Brunhild (*DLH* 9.20).

²¹² See McNamara (1985), 47, who points out that without Radegund to protect them the nuns may have been vulnerable to abuse by Maroveus. This is also an illustration of the power of relics and their place in church politics.

²¹³ *DLH* 10.15: 'murders, sorcerers, adulterers, and fugitives...'

judgement over the women (*DLH* 10.15).²¹⁴ Gregory uses his description of the rebellion to justify his beliefs on the authority of the church over secular power.

What can be learned about female monastic communities from Gregory's portrayal of these events? The letter sent to St. Radegund on the occasion of her founding the monastery at Poitiers is the reply to a petition made to the bishops of the realm and it grants permission to set up the female monastery (*DLH* 9.39).²¹⁵ The letter emphasizes the saintly virtues of Radegund and states the intention that the *regula* of Caesarius be followed in the monastery. Gregory uses this letter to emphasize the permanence carried by the decision to enter a monastery and the permanence of the vows.²¹⁶ Punishment for leaving the monastery was excommunication and these nuns were in breach of their vows. A female monastery may have become a place to store unwanted or troublesome daughters and ex-wives but Gregory emphasizes that they had all taken vows.²¹⁷ The importance of royal support and patronage is also clearly outlined. Without the powerful queen Radegund to protect the nuns, they were vulnerable to abuse from the outside world.

5.9. The Bishop's wife: *episcopa*

Among the category of celibate women described in the *DLH* are the wives of married clergy and bishops. The role of the wife of the bishop was controversial yet important in late Roman and early medieval society. There are both positive and negative the representations of these non-royal women in the *DLH*. Gregory's representations are illustrative of the sixth-century trend toward the limitation and restriction of marriage among the higher clergy. The

²¹⁴ This again emphasizes the behaviour of the *bonus rex* Guntram.

²¹⁵ The letter was sent to Radegund by the bishops Eufronius, Praetextatus, Germanus, Felix, Domitianus, Victorius, and Domnolus.

²¹⁶ Caesarius, *Reg. Virg.* 2 prohibits nuns from leaving the monastery for any reason. Gregory reiterates, the women were all supposed to have been inside of their own free will (*DLH* 9.39).

²¹⁷ The trend seen here for the female monastery as a storage place for unwanted women became more common in the Carolingian period according to Wemple (1981: 171-172).

intention here is to examine what motivates Gregory to portray these women and if he judges his episcopal colleagues in the same manner as kings, by asserting that the virtue of a wife reflects the quality of the husband.

The wife of Namatius, the bishop of Clermont, built a church outside the city walls dedicated to St. Stephen. She organized the foundation, construction, and decoration of the church and is represented as industrious, modest, and humble (*DLH* 2.17). Gregory even includes in his narrative a hagiographical episode that demonstrates her humility. A poor man who has mistaken the *episcopa* for a needy woman offers her bread, which she accepts and eats as her meal. This is a formulaic pattern of behaviour that demonstrates the humility of the saint applied to the bishop's wife.²¹⁸ Gregory's ideal of the duties and appearance of the *episcopa* is clearly outlined. She should be modest, pious, given to good works, and dressed simply - *in veste nigra* (*DLH* 2.16). The positive portrayal of the *episcopa* in this episode should be connected to the fact that Gregory was related to bishop Namatius. Namatius was responsible for the construction the cathedral at Clermont, for the acquisition of the relics of two saints from Bologna, and there are a number of legends associated with his name.²¹⁹ In writing about his saintly relations Gregory was inspired to portray Namatius' wife as the ideal Christian woman. Gregory's portrayal concerns a woman who had lived in the previous century as the wife of a saint and it is probable that he is repeating hagiographical legend.²²⁰

Brennan has observed that the less ideal and more negative representations of the *episcopae* occur the closer one gets to Gregory's own time.²²¹ It is fair to argue that this is a

²¹⁸ For hagiographical formulae and women, see Coon (1997), 7-13, 21-23.

²¹⁹ Brennan (1985: 317) remarks that this positive portrayal of the *episcopa* is a story related to the reputation of the saintly bishop Namatius. See also Duchesne (1894, vol. 2, 34) for the list of bishops of Clermont.

²²⁰ As the ninth (according to Duchesne, 1894, vol. 2, 34) or eighth (according to Gregory, *DLH* 2.16) bishop of Clermont, Namatius held the episcopate in the mid fifth-century.

²²¹ Brennan (1985), 318.

reflection of Gregory's disapproval of contemporary married bishops and of the growing hostility towards married clergy. Gregory is much less positive in his portrayal of the *episcopa* Placidina who was the wife of the short-lived bishop of Clermont, Apollinaris (son of Sidonius). This episode is revealing for its portrayal of the increasing role of the king in episcopal politics. When Quintianus was elected bishop of Clermont in the early sixth-century a rival faction preferred Apollinaris as their candidate (*DLH* 3.2). Gregory reports that Apollinaris' wife Placidina and sister Alchima were the motivating forces behind political manoeuvres to usurp Quintianus' see. Gregory implies that the women sent Apollinaris to King Theuderic with gifts as a bribe. The king, who had the final authority over who was appointed bishop, selected Apollinaris. Gregory contrasts the people's election of the saintly Quintianus with the appointment of Apollinaris by the king. Apollinaris died after only four months as bishop. Quintianus was then re-appointed to the episcopate (*DLH* 3.2).²²² In this passage Gregory implies that the weak Apollinaris had succumbed to the negative influence of women and was not an appropriate choice for bishop.²²³ The king's choice of the wrong candidate is held up as a condemnation of royal involvement in episcopal politics.

Married men continued to be appointed as bishops at the end of the sixth century. Gregory uses the behaviour of the wives of episcopal rivals to condemn them and by portraying these women negatively he discredits his rivals. Gregory's description of bishop Priscus who succeeded Nicetius as the bishop of Lyon (573) demonstrates his attitude (*DLH* 4.36). Apart from what Gregory tells us, Priscus is known to have attended various church councils and died c. 586.²²⁴ In the *DLH*, Priscus' wife Susanna is portrayed as an active partner in his criminal

²²² Gregory does not mention this version in *Liber Vitae Patrum* on the life of Quintianus and only states that Apollinaris preceded Quintianus (*LVP* 4.1).

²²³ In *DLH* 3.12 Gregory tells us that Placidina and Alchima were eventually exiled because of the unwise actions of Arcadius, son of Placidina and Apollinaris.

²²⁴ Duchesne (1894, vol. 2), 168.

activities. Susanna's impiety is emphasised by her desecration of the holy cell of the saintly bishop Nicetius (*DLH* 4.36).²²⁵ One explanation for Gregory's hostility to Priscus in the narrative is that Priscus may have been from a rival episcopal family since the bishopric of Lyon was a position previously held by members of Gregory's family. By characterizing his wife's behaviour as immoral, Gregory questions Priscus' ability to perform his duties as bishop.²²⁶

The most extreme and badly behaved of the *episcopae* is the wife of Badegisil, bishop of Le Mans, who incites her husband to commit terrible crimes (*DLH* 8. 39). As a widow she continued to rob the church and abused the position that her husband had occupied. Gregory includes genital mutilation among a list of her crimes. This unusual accusation appears without explanation and has not been satisfactorily explained in the modern scholars.²²⁷ Does Gregory imply that the widow practised medicine, witchcraft, performed abortions, or was she simply sexually deviant? The description of the widow maintains Gregory's belief that the influence of a woman undermines the authority of a man and his ability to hold the office of bishop. In a conflicting story the same woman, named Magnatrude, bravely defends her daughter's honour against an unscrupulous Frankish count named Chuppa (*DLH* 10.5). The same woman is portrayed contrastingly in two episodes: when she is associated with her husband she is condemned and when she is the victim of hostility of a Frankish count she is praised. In both cases it is clearly the men who are being attacked through their association with and action towards this woman.

There is a perceptible sense of hostility towards *episcopae* in Gregory's narrative. As celibacy became an important attribute in the Christian ideal of authority, a married man could

²²⁵ Women were forbidden from entering the cells of monks or priests, see below chapter 5.10.3 on adultery.

²²⁶ See Brennan (1985), 315-316. For Gregory's family connections to the bishopric of Lyon see Mathisen (1984), 91.

²²⁷ Brennan (1985: 316) comments generally on this passage but does not attempt to explain what crimes Gregory accuses the widow of committing.

be attacked through his wife.²²⁸ Wemple's comments that the bishop's wife was viewed negatively in the community are based on Gregory's evidence.²²⁹ Gregory's view on married bishops is negative because he believed the ideal state for higher clergy was celibacy. In the *DLH* he is trying to prove this point. The only positive portrayal of an *episcopa* is part of a hagiographical description of a relative of Gregory's family (*DLH* 2.17). The negative portrayals of the *episcopae* are contemporary and concern the wives of Gregory's rivals. It seems fairly clear that Gregory is playing episcopal politics by employing a rhetorical argument that a man who is married to an impious woman is himself without proper piety and authority. He gives little indication about what the community as a whole thought about married clergy.

5.10. Wives, sisters, and daughters: a few women outside the Germanic royalty

As an unmarried bishop Gregory did not have a personal investment in the representation of wives. That is not to say that he had no opinion on wives and marriage. There is ample commentary in the *DLH* on how the behaviour of a wife reflected upon her husband. The specific evidence from the Frankish queens has been examined above and does not necessarily represent the general population. In this section the more general representations of women as wives will be assessed.

The Roman model for ideal behaviour was the loyal and dedicated wife represented as the pinnacle of moral virtue.²³⁰ This traditional Roman view of marriage takes second place behind the Christian ideal of celibacy but, the pious and virtuous wife was still the appropriate model if marriage had to take place.²³¹ Gregory implies that if people had to be married then

²²⁸ See Cooper (1992), 164.

²²⁹ See Wemple (1981), 134ff on perceptions of a bishop's wife.

²³⁰ See Cooper (1996), 1-19; Fischler (1994); and Cluett (1998) for the models set out by classical authors for women.

²³¹ See Cooper (1996), 19 for how the classical ideology of marriage lost ground to the ideal of Christian chastity.

the best way in which to live was to remain celibate within the marriage. Gregory expected celibacy for both men and women but expresses the standard view that it is a state more difficult for a man to maintain than a woman.²³²

The issues around remaining celibate within marriage are the focus of an early passage in the *DLH* (1.47). The portrayal of a young senatorial couple from Clermont (c. early fifth-century) who marry but vow celibacy gives us insight into Gregory's attitudes.²³³ They are both sole children and sole heirs of their respective families, a point which is acknowledged by Gregory.²³⁴ As the heirs to large fortunes their abstinence and chastity portrays an even greater show of piety.²³⁵ Despite family pressure the young bride convinces her husband to remain chaste and this is portrayed as model behaviour for any married couple. According to Gregory, their chastity and purity of spirit was so complete that when they died a miracle took place at their tomb.

Gregory found the celibate ideal more difficult to discover in his present. In a contemporary story about the women in the family of his rival, Bertram of Bordeaux, he describes how Bertram's sister Berthegund was eager to leave her family and join her mother Ingeltrude in a celibate lifestyle in Tours (*DLH* 9.33).²³⁶ Rather than displaying admiration for her devotion, Gregory condemns Berthegund as an unnatural wife who abandons her husband. Berthegund takes refuge with her brother Bertram and eventually King Guntram

²³² See *DLH* 1.47 where the young wife claims that *difficile est sexum virilem mulieribus ista praestare* in relation to a man making a vow of celibacy in a marriage.

²³³ *DLH* 1.47: *et datis inter se dextris quieverunt. Multos postea in uno strato recumbentes annos, vixerunt cum castitate laudabili.* 'and having shaken on the agreement they slept. After many year lying together in one bed they lived with a praiseworthy chastity.' This story is also mentioned in the *Liber in Gloria Confessorum* (31).

²³⁴ See Clark, E. (1979) for the family reaction to young women heirs who chose to remain celibate in the fourth century. See also Cloke (1995), 35-38 and 49-50 for the debate on celibacy in the late Roman family.

²³⁵ Then the church would then inherit the couple's fortune.

²³⁶ Ingeltrude founded a female monastery in the forecourt of St. Martin's church in Tours (*DLH* 9.33).

orders her to return to her husband. She had left her husband, taken her property and one of their sons with her. In doing so Berthegund had broken both secular and canonical laws of marriage.²³⁷ These events may reflect a more realistic result of a woman unilaterally declaring celibacy and reclaiming her possessions in a marriage. Gregory's motives in describing the details of this story may be found in *DLH* 5.48, where he reveals that Bertram of Bordeaux testified against Gregory at his trial for slandering Fredegund.²³⁸ A lengthy description of the disreputable squabbling between the women in Bertram's family is an effective way for Gregory to discredit the man.

The reality was that a woman who abandoned her husband, no matter how horrible he might be, was in the wrong. A less prominent example is the case of Tetradia. A council of bishops convened to judge whether Tetradia, who had left her husband, should repay what she had taken from him when she left (*DLH* 10.8). The council decided that even though Tetradia's husband had committed terrible crimes against her and many others, she had to pay him back four times what she had taken. Furthermore, her sons by her new marriage were declared illegitimate. The council was adamant, so Gregory tells us, that Tetradia should not be rewarded for her crime of abandonment. Gregory is not clear as to whether the council granted a divorce to the couple but by implication this may be a rare example of divorce instigated by a woman.²³⁹ Perhaps the fact that Tetradia was of Roman origin (assumed by her name) meant that she was judged under Roman law which was more lenient towards a woman who wanted to

²³⁷ Canon 14, Council of Gangres (c. 340) on a wife who leaves her husband and scorns the marriage state is cited in *DLH* 9.33.

²³⁸ Gregory repeats the rumour that Fredegund was having an affair Bertram (*DLH* 5.47). The possibility of a bishop engaging in an illicit relationship with the queen is quite fascinating. It is difficult to judge how much of what Gregory claims as rumour can be believed. Clearly Gregory and Bertram were involved in some sort of mutual slander.

²³⁹ Wemple (1981: 43) claims that by making these payments Tetradia was granted a divorce. Christian tradition was more egalitarian on these issues and was likely to grant a divorce because of the violent behaviour of Tetradia's husband.

leave her husband. The church was adamantly opposed to divorce except in certain circumstances of extreme behaviour by either partner as with Tetrada's husband.²⁴⁰ In the end Tetrada was allowed to leave but she had to pay dearly for it. The difficulty involved in a woman unilaterally leaving her husband is clearly expressed in these events.

5.11. Historical reality underlying the literary constructs

Gregory's representations of women are highly rhetorical and driven by an agenda based on power struggles and episcopal rivalry in the sixth century church. Notwithstanding the rhetoric, there is also material in the narrative about women's lives worth examining in further detail. To acknowledge the rhetorical conventions that Gregory employs when he represents women is the initial step. The next step in the process is to accept that among his literary constructs there are some aspects of historical reality. This is dangerous territory because the reliability of Gregory's evidence has not been questioned enough. I have shown that Gregory was willing to subvert the facts in relation to women to support his own agenda on religion or morality. It has been suggested that 'Gregory is probably more reliable when *overheard* than when *listened to*'.²⁴¹ Even when Gregory attempts to slander or to praise it is important to acknowledge details in the narrative about issues in women's lives such as divorce, remarriage, children, adultery, and violence.

5.11.1. A church wedding

The evidence indicates that there was no one formal marriage ceremony in sixth-century Gaul. The marriage ritual differed between the Roman and Germanic traditions and official

²⁴⁰ In some cases this meant the adultery by a wife. See McNamara and Wemple (1976) for a close examination of the issue. Church councils are insightful on these issues. For example the *Concilium Eliberitanum* 10 and 69 assigns equal penalties to men and women for adultery.

²⁴¹ Shanzer (1998), 57.

Christian marriage had not yet been established as a sacrament. A wedding mass was not celebrated in Gaul until the eighth century and it was not until the twelfth century that an official Christian marriage sacrament was in place.²⁴² As is noted by Hen, the Christian marriage ritual in the Frankish kingdoms has been overlooked by modern scholarship in favour of the more clearly defined Carolingian tradition.²⁴³ Evidence for ecclesiastical marriage presented by Paulinus of Nola (*Carm.* 25) provides a description of the fifth century Christian marriage rite. In the *epithalamium* the father brings the bride to the altar of the church, the bishop gives a benediction, the couple bow their heads in prayer, and a choir sings psalms.²⁴⁴ The marriage consisted of a nuptial blessing, as opposed to a nuptial mass and was considered a privilege granted by the church rather than an obligation or necessity.²⁴⁵

The *DLH* provides evidence for a rare case of ecclesiastical marriage (*DLH* 5.3). Gregory mentions a Christian wedding ceremony in his portrayal of the marriage of two *famuli* who belonged to Rauchingus. The couple had run away together against Germanic and Roman law and seem to have taken refuge in a church. Both legal traditions forbade slaves from marrying without their master's permission.²⁴⁶ Gregory mentions that the couple were married in the church by a priest. The actual ritual described in the *DLH* is similar to that in the *Carmen* of Paulinus of Nola. The marriage consists of a kind of marital blessing and

²⁴² Hen (1995), 122-137; Vogel (1977); Stevenson (1983), 28-29, and Ennen (1989), 42.

²⁴³ See Hen (1995), 123.

²⁴⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25, 238-245. Vogel (1977), specifically presents the evidence for the development of a Christian marriage ritual. Volume 24 of *Setimane di Studio* is dedicated to marriage in the middle ages but the articles generally deal with the later medieval period and are indicative of the final outcome of the mix of these traditions.

²⁴⁵ Vogel (1977), 421.

²⁴⁶ Ennen (1989: 43) points out that marriage for the unfree was first recognized in the legal codes in the seventh century but for our period it was in the control of the slave owners. In Burgundian law, slaves could not enter into legal contracts (*Liber Constitutionem* 21. 1-2) without their master's permission and therefore could not marry.

symbolic joining of two people.²⁴⁷ The Christian church wedding is so seldom mentioned in the sixth century that it must have been an unusual event.

This passage does not focus on the legality of the marriage and was written to expose the cruelty and lawlessness of those who refuse to accept the right of the church to grant sanctuary. Gregory represents the young couple who are blessed in the church as the symbols of innocence while their master, who challenges the actions of the priest and the church, is the force of corruption. The right of the church to grant sanctuary was something of a problem for Gregory personally. He had given sanctuary to Guntram Boso and Merovech in the church at Tours and the community of Tours and its surrounding had suffered from Chilperic's hostility as a result (*DLH* 5.4 and 14). In the narrative, the story of the slaves precedes that of Guntram Boso and is used to express the bishop of Tours' view on sanctuary, not Christian marriage.

5.11.2. Divorce and remarriage

Gregory does not present a clear picture of the rules for marriage nor for what constituted a legitimate divorce. Divorce was available in the sixth century at certain levels of society.²⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that the laws concerning the divorce of men in the late Roman and Germanic legal codes are similar but the laws concerning the divorce of women differ. In late Roman law a man could unilaterally divorce his wife if she committed adultery, sorcery, or defiled the dead.²⁴⁹ If a husband wanted to divorce his wife for less serious crimes or perhaps

²⁴⁷ Hen (1995), 124-125.

²⁴⁸ For information on divorce in the late Roman empire see Arjava (1988) and Evans Grubbs (1993), 126-130 and (1995). Arjava (1994), 230-248 points out that divorce would always have been rare in the ancient world and restricted to the upper classes in Roman society.

²⁴⁹ *CTh* 3.16.1. As is noted by Arjava (1994: 233) this section of the code, called *De repudiis* is missing from the manuscripts of the Theodosian Code and appears only in the *Breviarium* of Alaric. These were capital crimes and if convicted the result would be execution. The regulation of divorce was necessary for inheritance and organization of property. If a wife was convicted of any of the crimes mentioned above, the husband did not have to return her dowry.

because he simply no longer wanted to be married, then he was required to return her dowry and pay a penalty, but could still obtain a divorce. It became increasingly difficult for a wife to divorce her husband in later Roman law.²⁵⁰ Divorce was possible for a woman only if her husband had committed a capital crime, meaning homicide, sorcery, or the destruction of tombs.²⁵¹

In Germanic law the regulation of divorce rights was similar to that in late Roman law codes but more strict. Under Burgundian law a husband could unilaterally divorce his wife if she had committed any of the crimes listed in Roman law, i.e. adultery, witchcraft, or the violation of graves.²⁵² If a man left his wife without cause he was obliged to leave her all his property and wealth. A woman who left her husband without cause was to be 'smothered in mire'.²⁵³ There were no provisions available in the Germanic codes for a wife to leave her husband no matter what crimes he may have committed.²⁵⁴

In a legal sense divorce in the sixth century was not encouraged. Yet the *DLH* frequently mentions what is considered to be divorce. These instances almost entirely refer to a small group of Frankish kings who set aside their wives to facilitate remarriage. Gregory uses a variety of terms to describe the royal repudiation of wives; he refers to Guntram's dismissal of Marcatrude whom he had married, using the verb *dimittere* (4.25) and describes Charibert's abandonment of his wife Ingoberg using the verb *relinquere* (4.26).²⁵⁵ One observation is that divorce among the Frankish royalty reflects the law in the fact that the king divorced the

²⁵⁰ As in the case of Tetradia mentioned above.

²⁵¹ *CTh* 3.16.1.

²⁵² *Liber Constitutionum* 34.1-4. This similarity with Roman law is not surprising for the Burgundian Code was heavily influenced by the Roman. See Drew (1963), 5-6, for divorce in the Burgundian code. For the lack of provisions for divorce included in the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, see McNamara and Wemple (1976), 100.

²⁵³ *Liber Constitutionum* 34.1.

²⁵⁴ See Hertihy (1985), 51, on Germanic divorce laws.

²⁵⁵ *DLH* 3.27 and 4.28 use *relinquere*.

queen and never the reverse.

There is no evidence indicating that when a queen was dismissed or abandoned (*relinquere*) she was free to marry someone else.²⁵⁶ This can generally be said about the female population in the *DLH* as a whole. In Roman society the highest status a woman attained was to be a *univira*, a one-man-woman. Realistically remarriage was a natural result of the death of a spouse or divorce especially if the woman was still reproductively active. A woman was obliged to wait for a period of ten months before she could remarry to avoid any confusion in the paternity of children.²⁵⁷ The central focus of the laws that dealt with remarriage was the effect on legitimacy and inheritance.²⁵⁸ Among the Germanic codes, the *PLS* and the *Liber Constitutionum* make provisions for remarriage of both men and women but only if they are widowed.

The Christian church did not encourage remarriage but recognized it as a social necessity.²⁵⁹ High death rates among women of childbearing age left many men alone with children.²⁶⁰ Caesarius of Arles indicates that remarriage was common for both men and

²⁵⁶ When the queen was left a widow the situation was slightly different. Brunhild and Vuldetrada both remarried after the death of their husbands. See above chapter 5.6.

²⁵⁷ Gardner (1987), 50-56 and Treggiari (1991), 501-502. This was an old Roman law that Arjava (1994: 217) traces through Plutarch back to the time of the Etruscan king Numa. The late Roman law codes extended the mourning period to one year (see *CTh* 3.8.1) and extended it to include divorced women (*CTh* 3.16.2.1). For remarriage in the late empire, see Clark (1992), 61 and Arjava (1994), 216-229.

²⁵⁸ See *PLS* 100 for the remarriage of women and *PLS* 101 for the remarriage of men. Naturally since the *PLS* makes no provision for divorce it is not considered in remarriage laws. The *Liber Constitutionum* 24.1-4 sets out the rules for women who marry two or three times and again is concerned with dowry. The *PLS* refers to dowry as *dos* (which is the usual term), but the Burgundian code calls it *donatio nuptialis*.

²⁵⁹ Remarriage was common among all members of the community. For a survey of the attitudes on marriage, see Arjava (1994), 219-223. The *Concilium Arelatense* 10 (*CCSL* 148:11) allows for remarriage after a divorce.

²⁶⁰ A sample of inscriptions from Trier dated from the fourth to sixth century as published by Gauthier (1975) reveal that out of the fourteen inscriptions set up to women whom we can tell were married and whose age we know at death, ten were of child-bearing age. As well, the example mentioned above (chapter 4.3.2) of

women in his parish (Caesarius, *Serm.* 33.3). Women married very young to husbands much older than themselves would have to consider remarriage if they had no personal wealth. Restrictions on women's inheritance rights increased the possibility of widow's not possessing the resources to take care of herself and made remarriage a practical necessity.²⁶¹

Gregory's information on remarriage in the general population is mainly concerned with widowers and their status. A man in Tours named Lupus was inclined to enter the church after he lost his wife and children (*DLH* 6.13).²⁶² When his brother Ambrosius convinces him to remarry, Gregory condemns him as someone who gives evil counsel (*malesuadus frater*). Not only is the brother wrong but Gregory emphasizes the point by relating that Ambrosius had an adulterous wife whose lover murders both brothers.²⁶³ Gregory implies that the advice of a man with an adulterous wife was flawed. Remarriage is represented here in opposition to entering the church. Gregory chose to narrate this event and compounds his disapproval by slandering the brother's character through the adultery of his wife. Gregory considered celibacy the highest state for a person to live in. The motivation for Gregory's censure may be somewhat self-serving as the church at Tours stood to inherit from Lupus if he had joined the clergy (*DLH* 6.13).

5.11.3. Adultery

There was no more serious a crime in the late Roman law codes than adultery committed by a woman. The penalty was capital and if the husband caught his wife in *adulterium* he had

Filimatia who died at 30 leaving five children behind may not have been unusual.

²⁶¹ See Goody (1983), 188-189.

²⁶² Woven into the narrative of the *DLH* are stories about Gregory's parish of Tours. For other examples of life in Tours under the episcopacy of Gregory see *DLH* 7.2, 7.47, 8.40, 9.19, and 9.30. These stories lie outside the actions of the Frankish royalty and are some of the rare examples of regular people in sixth-century Gaul.

²⁶³ The word *meretrix* is used here again to refer to the unfaithful wife and *moechus* refers to the adulterous man (*DLH* 6.13)

the right to kill both her and her lover.²⁶⁴ A man could commit adultery without any legal repercussions and there is no provision for punishment of male adultery in Roman or Germanic law.²⁶⁵ It seems that adultery was only 'adultery' for a married man if he committed it with a married woman. A wife who was merely suspected of adultery could be executed. A passage about the tax collector Parthenius clearly portrays the rules concerning adultery (*DLH* 3.26). Parthenius kills his wife Papianilla (3) and his friend Ausanius on the suspicion that they were having an adulterous affair. Parthenius was the grandson of Ruricius of Limoges, had studied in Ravenna, and had been *patricius* in Provence. While in the service of King Theudebert, Parthenius had been a tax collector and after the king's death he was killed by an angry mob in Trier.²⁶⁶

Parthenius' life provides a view of a Gallo-Roman working in the service of the Germanic kings and illustrates the importance of royal patronage and protection. Gregory's version of Parthenius' life and death reveals how little he may have actually known about Parthenius or Papianilla. Gregory does not mention the familial connection between the couple and Sidonius Apollinaris. His motivation to omit the connection may have been to spare the reputation of the saintly Sidonius by not linking him to the scandal. If this were the case Gregory would not have included the unflattering description of Sidonius' son Apollinaris

²⁶⁴ Adultery is a topic dealt with in most research on late Roman women. See Arjava (1994), 249-261 on the options available in Roman legal texts and other examples. Treggiari (1991), Evans-Grubbs (1994) and Clark (1992), 35.

²⁶⁵ If one were to rank crime in ancient Roman society adultery committed by a woman, sorcery, murder, and crimes against the dead were the most serious in the *CTh*. See *CTh* 9.38 for a list of the crimes that were never pardoned and *CTh* 9.40.1 for the capital penalty for adultery. *Liber Constitutionum* 34.3, 44.1, 61, and 68. 1-2 deal with various aspects of adultery claiming that if a woman commits adultery then the harmed parties will be paid and the husband can kill her and her lover (68). The paternity of children is the motivation behind these laws. Controlling with whom the woman had intercourse was the only means of ensuring the paternity of a child.

²⁶⁶ See appendix 1, Stroheker (1948), n. 383, Heinzelmann (1983), 663, and Mathisen (1999), 26 and 204.

either (*Ep.* 3.2). The reality is that Gregory may not have known that Papianilla was Sidonius' niece. Gregory declares that Parthenius wrongly accused his wife and suggests that his death was an act of retribution. The story does illustrate that the law was upheld and Parthenius was within his rights when he killed his wife and friend.

When Gregory is at his most critical he uses the word *meretrix* to describe a woman. He refers to a married woman who consorts with the abbot Dagulf as a *meretrix* (*DLH* 8.19).²⁶⁷ This passage about the abbot who visited a married woman reveals how reprehensible Gregory felt the act was. The husband caught and killed them both as he was legally able to do according to both Roman and Germanic law.²⁶⁸ The adulterous woman may have been a *meretrix* but the abbot who could not control himself was even worse. Gregory's condemnation in this passage is directed at the clergy and not the adulterous women. The passage ends with a warning to the clergy in general about obeying the church canons and not seeking out the company of women. Gregory could be referring to any number of church canons including the *Concilium Arelatense secundum*, which says: *nullus diaconus, vel presbyter, vel episcopus ad cellarii secretum intromittat puellam, vel ingenuam, vel ancillam* (4).²⁶⁹ Obviously the church elders wanted to avoid any sort of contact between the clergy and single women. The same sentiment is revealed when Gregory mentions that among St. Lupicinus' virtues was his careful avoidance of discourse or meeting with women.²⁷⁰

Another case of what Gregory refers to as *adulterium* again involved a member of the clergy. A priest in Le Mans ran off with a woman and lived in *adulterium* (*DLH* 6.36).

²⁶⁷ *Meretrix* is a term used in a law about sorcery in *PLS* 64.2.

²⁶⁸ Killing those caught in the act was an option (*Liber Constitutionum* 68.2) although the *PLS* (15.1) makes monetary payment a way of making reparations for adultery, not for the woman but for the man she had the relationship with. Arjava (1994: 258) sees this tendency in the Frankish laws as a way of trying to combat blood feuds between families.

²⁶⁹ *DLH* 8.19. 'No deacon, or priest or bishop shall let a girl or freedwoman or female servant into the solitude of his chamber.'

²⁷⁰ *Liber Vitae Patrum* 1.2.

Gregory may be using the word *adulterium* here interchangeably with the concept of *stuprum* (see below). In this example the woman's family takes revenge on the couple and the woman is burnt alive (*DLH* 6.36). The priest was let off more lightly and held for a ransom that was paid by his bishop. Gregory contrasts the woman who ran away with the priest with a woman of virtue who rejects his advances (*DLH* 6.36). This *pudica mulier* displays model behaviour but the information provided about women in this passage is incidental. This is a cautionary tale illustrating the immoral behaviour of the priest and the repercussions that followed.²⁷¹ The priest attempts to assassinate his bishop and then slander him to the king. Aspects of this episode are similar to Gregory's battles for his own episcopacy and his trial before King Chilperic.²⁷² Any priest who would try to harm his bishop is represented as morally corrupt.

The examples referred to above illustrate that adultery was disgraceful for both sexes but for a women even to be suspected was fatal.²⁷³ This corresponds with the law codes which enshrine the right of a betrayed husband to kill his adulterous wife. The Christian attitude towards adultery was more egalitarian than the law codes as both men and women were condemned for committing adultery.²⁷⁴ Arjava interprets Augustine as implying that the church did not support the murder of adulterous women. Augustine suggests that if a woman had committed adultery and making it public would cause her death, then a good Christian should silently let God deal with the sin.²⁷⁵ There is nothing in Gregory's narrative to suggest leniency and from his perspective the death of women guilty of adultery was not unjust. The

²⁷¹ *DLH* 6.13 also describes the adultery of a priest. Adultery was an issue of some concern for Gregory and does not seem to have been an unusual event in the city of Tours.

²⁷² See *DLH* 5.48–49 for Gregory's own trials with a priest who wanted to usurp his position.

²⁷³ There is a provision in the *PLS* (30. 3) that makes wrongly accusing a man or woman of being a prostitute a punishable crime.

²⁷⁴ This appears in a variety of church councils from the western empire e.g. *Concilium Eliberitanum* 7, 14, 31, 64–70 or *Concilium Arel.* 11.

²⁷⁵ See Arjava (1994), 255.

point accentuated here is the impiety not of these women but that of the priests who consort with them. For Gregory these men are not breaking the law but they are breaking their vows to God and this is the greater sin. The frequency with which Gregory felt the need to condemn priests who consorted with women may be indicative of real behaviours in the parishes of the bishop of Tours.

5.11.4. *Stuprum*

The crime of *stuprum* was defined by the Romans as 'illicit intercourse' and came to be a term used interchangeably with *adulterium*. In traditional Roman society the difference between the two terms was that adultery was committed with a married woman and *stuprum* was committed with a virgin, widow, or divorcee.²⁷⁶ Gregory uses the word *stuprum* in a specific example in which a woman is accused of having intercourse with a man who was not her husband (*DLH* 5.32). The *stuprum* in this passage was a serious crime that would affect all members of the family and punishment was capital. The families involved in this case were important in the Frankish kingdom of Chilperic and the accusations came from a husband whose wife had left him. Gregory describes how violence broke out between the families and the king was involved. The suggestion is that this accusation had more to do with rival factions at Chilperic's court than it did with *stuprum*. The woman's reputation is so seriously damaged by this charge that she kills herself rather than face a trial (*DLH* 5.32).

The Germanic legal codes deal with a variety of types of illicit intercourse and the punishment of death is always an option, although other alternatives are sometimes provided.²⁷⁷ Gregory implies a political motivation behind the charge of *stuprum* in the case involving

²⁷⁶ Treggiari (1991), 262-263.

²⁷⁷ Leniency was granted in the specific case mentioned in the *Liber Constitutionum* 52: a betrothed woman was guilty of consorting with another man, but instead of death, payment was made by her to the injured party.

Chilperic's nobles. The accusation is used to attack a rival based on the belief that a disloyal wife was a reflection of the character of the husband and family. If there is any judgement in this passage it is on the behaviour the men who were '*maiores natu et primi apud Chilpericum regem*'.²⁷⁸ The violent behaviour of Chilperic's leading nobles caused blood to be spilled in the church of St. Denis, which desecrated this holy place (*DLH* 5.32). Gregory is again condemning Chilperic by implying that his nobles were so barbarous that they would spill blood on the tomb of a holy martyr. This example also illustrates the fragility of a woman's reputation and how it could be exploited if she was caught between rival political factions.

5.11.5. Abduction and *raptus*

Germanic and Roman law codes were both concerned with protecting women from abduction. In Roman law when a woman was abducted, *raptus* had also been committed. The term *raptus* is not used by Gregory who employs the verb *abducere* instead.²⁷⁹ The issue was considered serious by the Theodosian code, and the penalty for it was death.²⁸⁰ The *PLS* condemns a man to death or exile for abduction. The penalty depended on their intentions: if the couple sought refuge in the church then their punishment was only exile, not death.²⁸¹ By seeking out the church perhaps it was assumed they intended to be married and received a lesser penalty.

Gregory makes a distinction between women taken as spoils of war and the abduction of a girl from her family without the consent of her parents or guardian. Radegund was carried off (*abducere*) from her home in Thuringia by Chlothar as a spoil of war (*DLH* 3.7). Gregory reports in more detail on the abduction of the niece of Felix, bishop of Nantes. The

²⁷⁸ *DLH* 5.32 'high born and leaders at the court of King Chilperic'.

²⁷⁹ See chapter 4.7.4 for this issue in Sidonius' letters.

²⁸⁰ *CTh* 9.24.1-5.

²⁸¹ *PLS* Capit. 6.2.2, dated c. 595.

verb *detrahere* describes how the girl was taken from her uncle (*DLH* 6.16). Pappolenus, the man Felix's niece chose to marry, did not meet with her uncle's approval and consequently they were separated. Pappolenus then appeared with armed men (*cum magna cohorte*) and took the girl away to the nearest church. The act of *raptus* is not implicit merely because Pappolenus had taken the girl away and this differs significantly from the Roman law and tradition.²⁸²

Bishop Felix took his niece back and shut her up in a monastery, whence she was rescued again by Pappolenus and eventually married to him, but only after Felix's death. Pappolenus and the niece intended to force consent from her relatives by taking refuge in the church and when that failed they had to wait until the bishop's death (*DLH* 6.16). Even with Felix dead Pappolenus had to seek out the consent of the king. Gregory makes it clear that there would not have been a marriage without the king's protection. Gregory thus illustrates another example of royal power overruling laws and customs.²⁸³

This passage tells us very little about the girl involved other than she had gone with Pappolenus voluntarily. Nor does it explain why Felix was opposed to the match.²⁸⁴ Once again, the motivation behind the representations in this passage may lie in personal antipathy and ecclesiastical politics. Gregory had an uneven relationship with Felix who is represented as both his rival and colleague.²⁸⁵ Felix, as the bishop of Nantes (549-582), had accused

²⁸² *CTh* 9.24. on taking a girl away without the consent of parents or guardians and the severe penalties involved. See Evans Grubbs (1989) for an analysis of abduction marriage in late Roman society. For Germanic custom, the *Liber Constitutionum* 12.1-5 sets out the various details with abduction of girls. There is definitely a difference in whether the girl has been 'corrupted' or not in regards to what penalty is paid. *PLS* 15.2 and 3 differentiate between *raptus* and the girl's voluntary elopement.

²⁸³ This fix is actually similar to Sidonius and Pudens fixing the marriage between the children of their nurses and overlooking the *raptus* (*Ep.* 5.19). The king was above the law and made the laws as was Sidonius in his published case of *raptus*.

²⁸⁴ Felix was from an aristocratic Gallo-Roman family from Aquitaine and perhaps the fact that Pappolenus was a Germanic noble was the problem. For the noble origins of Felix's family see McDermott (1975), 3.

²⁸⁵ For an analysis of the relationship between Felix and Gregory see McDermott (1975).

Gregory's brother Peter of causing the death of his own bishop (*DLH* 5.5). Gregory claims that Felix coveted land that belonged to the see of Tours and states clearly what he thought of Felix as a man of *immensa cupiditas atque iactantia*.²⁸⁶ In *DLH* 6.15 as Felix lay dying he attempted to have his nephew consecrated as bishop. Gregory refused to consecrate Felix's nephew stating that it contravened canon law. In the following passage he relates the events around the abduction of Felix's niece. It is probable that this tale is recorded as an indirect criticism of his fellow bishop. This example is illustrative of how difficult it is to judge social customs from the information in Gregory if his motive was to slander an episcopal rival.²⁸⁷

5.11.6. Women and children, death and violence

Gregory does not often mention children apart from the heirs of the Frankish kings. During the chaotic events of the sixth century children were especially vulnerable. Daughters were exposed to violence, rape, and abduction. Keeping them safe was a difficult task with the continual warfare between rival kings.²⁸⁸ Gregory mentions that Guntram Boso had left his daughters in the church at Tours for safety but when the city was captured by Chilperic he came and took them to safety in Poitiers. Poitiers at the time was a city held by Childebert's (2) forces (*DLH* 5.24). Gregory tells us he had to take his daughters by force (*vi abstulit*) from Tours. After Guntram Boso's death (*DLH* 9.10) his sons went to live with the bishop of Verdun but there is no mention of his daughters' fate (*DLH* 9.23). Gregory's portrayal of Guntram Boso as a concerned father illustrates his admirable qualities. The threat posed by

²⁸⁶ *DLH* 5.5 'immeasurably greedy and boastful.' See Geary (1988), 125 on the familial politics that were perhaps behind the animosity between Gregory and Felix. This is not the reputation that Felix left in Nantes where he was known for centuries as the patron saint of the city (McDermott 1975: 2).

²⁸⁷ Another case of attempted abduction has one of Chilperic's nobles trying to abduct the daughter of the bishop of Le Mans. The bishop's widow, Magnatrude, saves her daughter from this attempt (*DLH* 10.5).

²⁸⁸ See Affeldt and Reiter (1986), 197-198, on the dangers facing daughters and why many ended up in monasteries.

Chilperic to these girls and to the city of Tours is condemned.

Children are not discussed in the *DLH* except in terms of their parents. With uncharacteristic sentimentality Gregory mentions a plague that swept through Gaul and killed only the children (*DLH* 5.34).²⁸⁹ The intention here is to link the plague and suffering with the quarrels of kings suggesting that it was a portentous event. The biblical context is confirmed by the citation of Job 1:21, where the Lord destroys all Job's sons because they did not fear God. On a more practical level this illustrates a rare picture of caring parents helpless at the death of their children.²⁹⁰ The debate around caring for children and the attitudes towards the young continues in the secondary material.²⁹¹ The earlier notion that a callousness existed towards young children in the ancient world has been challenged successfully in the last decade.²⁹² Garnsey has pointed out that naturally parents would be more affected by the death of an elder child than a younger one and the comments by Gregory support this conclusion.²⁹³

The disease that Gregory details in one passage causes cholera-like symptoms that are described as *erat his qui patiebantur valida cum vomitu febris, renumque nimius dolor; caput grave vel cervix* (*DLH* 5.34).²⁹⁴ The cause of death is usually from dehydration, and, like

²⁸⁹ *DLH* 5.34 *Et quidem primum haec infirmitas a mense Augusto initiata parvulos adolescentes arripuit, lethoque subegit. Perdidimus dulces et charos nobis infantulos, quos aut gremis fovimus aut ulnis baiulavimus aut propria manu ministratis cibis ipsos studio sagaciore nutrivimus; 'In fact first this illness, having begun in the month of August, seized small children, and it brought on death. We lost the infants, sweet and dear to us, whom we either comforted in our laps or carried in our arms or having served food with our own hand we nurtured them with fond diligence'.*

²⁹⁰ See Garnsey (1991), 53, where he states that the Romans believed that children under twelve months should not be mourned. This attitude probably prevailed throughout the ancient and medieval world where the chances for survival were not high for young children.

²⁹¹ Harris (1994) on child-exposure gives a good general overview on the issues of children, attitudes towards them, and their unbringing in the Roman world.

²⁹² Garnsey (1991), 49-50.

²⁹³ *DLH* 5.34, when Childebert's eldest son dies, it is a cause for general mourning.

²⁹⁴ 'it was to those who suffered high fever with vomiting and excessive lower back pain, and an aching head and neck.'

cholera, this sixth-century plague was not necessarily fatal in adults but killed children on a large scale.

Gregory paints a grim picture of the lives of women in late sixth-century Gaul. The examples of adultery and *stuprum* discussed above depict violent deaths for the women involved. The women were often the victims of rivalries or false accusations. The political situation in Gaul in the sixth century was tumultuous with shifting loyalties, rivalry, and war between kings. The violent behaviour of the kings of the Franks is a literary theme in Gregory's narrative used to portray those he saw as particularly barbaric. Care must be taken to distinguish between purely rhetorical violence and more general statements of the chaotic nature of life in the sixth-century.

In a society in which central control has broken down and violence rules it is women and children who suffer the most.²⁹⁵ Gregory offers us specific evidence that they were the first victims of violence, war, and turmoil at both the royal and local levels of society. Chlothar shows no mercy for the wife and daughters of Chramn when he burns them alive (*DLH* 4.20). This is described to condemn Chlothar's barbaric behaviour but also illustrates a violent end for the mother and her children. When King Theuderic tries to rally the Franks to avenge themselves against the Thuringians he describes how the Thuringians had been taking captives and murdering the inhabitants (*DLH* 3.7). The gruesome death of two hundred young women is elaborated. The women were drawn, quartered, and driven over by carts until all their bones were broken and left to be fed upon by dogs. It is important to recognize the use of rhetorical hyperbole since the women die in a manner very similar to that of Jezebel as described in 2 Kings 33-37.²⁹⁶ It may be that having one's kinswoman die the same dishonorable death as Jezebel was worth avenging. Notwithstanding the rhetoric, this episode illustrates the threat this

²⁹⁵ For the danger to women and children in society see Affeldt and Reiter (1986) 197.

²⁹⁶ This is similar to the way Brunhild was murdered according to Fredegar 4.37-42.

kind of violence posed to women and emphasizes the vulnerability of women and children in warfare.

5.12. Conclusions

On examining the portrayal of women in the *DLH* it becomes clear that the personal and political beliefs of the author shape his representations. Gregory attempts to fold the volatile worlds of the Frankish kings and ecclesiastical politics into the larger context of Christian history. During his tenure as the bishop of Tours, Gregory felt the power God on his side. He relates tales of historical figures and attributes motivations that suit his rhetorical strategies.

In the *DLH* there are three recurrent themes that relate to the status of the Christian church within society and have a direct effect on all the literary portrayals in the narrative. The first theme is Gregory's open hostility to royal interference in church affairs. He condemns the morality and integrity of kings - particularly Chlothar, Chilperic, and Charibert - because of their disregard for canon law and ecclesiastical power. The ideal king is Guntram, presented as obeying church canons and listening to Gregory's wise council. Second, Gregory wages a propaganda war against what he perceives as the great threat to the stability of the Christian church: Arianism and its followers. When Gregory discusses foreign relations with Arian Ostrogoths or Visigoths, or when he relates events in the fifth century, his religious motivations become clear. In these examples, the Frankish kings, even if they do not always respect canon law, are catholic Christians who carry the banner against the barbarian Arians. Individuals whom Gregory perceives as protecting the integrity of the church are the most positively portrayed. The third theme relates to Gregory's observations on life at a local level where he is caught up in the factional world of episcopal politics. The bishop was a powerful man in the community. The position was sought after and Gregory depicts many unscrupulous priests

willing to undermine their superiors for a chance to become bishop. Married bishops are attacked through their wives and priestly rivals condemned for consorting with women. This extends to anyone whose behaviour subverts the authority of the bishop within the community.

These themes underlie many of the characterizations in the narrative and especially affect the representations of women. Women are appraised as a means of judging the quality of a man. Men who were overly involved with women were weak. Men who allowed their judgement to be clouded by unscrupulous women were unworthy of authority and power. The ideal man is really Gregory himself, the celibate bishop. If a man married it had best be to a woman who was modest, chaste and pure in the true religion, like Chlotild (*DLH* 2.28).

There are both positive and negative representations of women in the *DLH* that relate to the themes that repeat throughout the narrative. The positive representations can be divided into three varieties: first there is the saint-queen such Radegund whose pious devotion to the church makes her a model for others to follow. The second positive portrayal is the biblical queen who functions in the secular world but has characteristics related to saintly queens. In this category there is Chlotild (1) and to a lesser degree Brunhild, the Arian princess who converts to catholic Christianity whose portrayal is modelled on the Old Testament queen Esther. The third type of positive portrayal is the missionary, proselytizing princess who makes advances in the battle against Arianism. Examples of this type of woman are Ingund and Chlotild (2) who are Catholic princesses sent to Spain to face the hostile heathens. There are also positive portrayals of women who are not royal but whose Christian faith and piety is recorded. These women appear almost exclusively in the early books of the narrative and their representation is hagiographical, such as the wife of Namatius (*DLH* 2.17).

The negative representations of women in the *DLH* are more numerous and diversified. First and foremost there is the evil queen on a biblical scale personified by Fredegund who is

portrayed with aspects of the Old Testament queens Jezebel and Athaliah. The next variety of negative portrayal is that of the malevolent stepmother out to destroy her children's rivals. Fredegund again makes an appearance in this category as does Guntram's wife Marcatrude and the second wife of the Burgundian king Sigismund. These are women capable of almost any crime, including poison, treason, and the murder of their step-children, in order that their own sons succeed. The third variation of the evil queen is the immoral Arian capable of the most horrendous crimes, such as Amalasuintha who committed matricide and took a slave as a lover. The Spanish queen Goiswinth is represented in this category when she tries to force Ingund to convert to Arianism. The women of the fourth group can be royal or non-royal. They are the bad wives and often the spouses of Gregory's rival bishops, the influence of these women damages her husband's authority. Fredegund takes first place among the bad wives, rumoured to have committed adultery and there is also the impious Susanna, wife of Gregory's rival Priscus. The worst among wives is the spouse of the bishop of Le Mans whose crimes are so horrendous Gregory finds them unspeakable.

There is a proportionally greater and more detailed portrayal of women in the *DLH* than in other contemporary Latin writing. This is explained in part by the genre of narrative history which naturally expands the descriptive aspects of people and events. The greater number of women is also due to aspects of the contemporary society about which Gregory wrote. The portrayal of women in the *DLH* accurately reflects the late-sixth-century reality of Germanic royal women filling a role in society not previously seen in Gaul. Ideally, that role combined the presence of a Roman empress with that of a Christian patron. It has been shown that real political power for these women was elusive except for a few select ones such as Radegund or Fredegund. The author came from a tradition that portrayed women as examples of virtue or piety and the presence of these women was novel and important.

The queens and princesses described in the *DLH* are, to a large degree, literary

constructs. They are portrayed in a formulaic manner that makes interpretation of the details of women's lives difficult. It has been demonstrated that women are used by Gregory for a larger rhetorical purpose based on his personal and political motivations and aspirations. Gregory deliberately deformed the portrayal of his characters and this extends to the manner in which the behaviours and habits of women are depicted.

The stereotypical roles for royal women range from the queen-saint and princess-martyr to the queen-poisoner and queen-adulterer. These images are employed freely to accuse and condemn women married to kings or bishops Gregory was hostile to including the Arian queens. The important Roman and Christian concept of virtuous wife or queen as a symbol of a virtuous man or king is active throughout the narrative. Therefore to interpret what Gregory tells us about women, the context and connections of each woman must be understood. There are some royal women who were a significant force in sixth-century Gaul but the majority were pawns in a system of political infighting and filial rivalry. Very few were able to break free of this mould and exercise authority over their own future.²⁹⁷ Even women with power were dependent of the good-will of men in times of strife and there was no security or guarantee that a woman's legal rights would be respected. If this was the case for the women of the royal classes, then it was certainly true for women in broader society.

One of the problems with making an assessment on the lives of women from the evidence in the *DLH* is that Gregory often misrepresents and distorts details or seems unaware of the facts. The clearest examples of these distortions are found in the portrayals of the Arian queens Goiswinth and Amalasuintha who are used to persuade the audience of the evils of Arianism. These cases are only recognized because there is comparative evidence available. If Gregory was willing to misconstrue the facts around the lives of these foreign queens to whom he was hostile, then he is likely to have done the same with, for example, Fredegund. In some

²⁹⁷ Fredegund, Brunhild, and Radegund are the only three for whom Gregory provides real evidence.

cases he contradicts himself in order to prove his rhetorical point. The bishop of Le Mans is described as an unscrupulous bishop with a criminal wife who commits heinous acts of sexual mutilation (*DLH* 8.39). The same woman is portrayed, at a later date, as a brave widow fending off an unscrupulous Frankish count trying to steal her daughter (*DLH* 10.5). The count was the right-hand man of Gregory's most hated king Chilperic (*DLH* 5.39). This example illustrates how the portrayal of a woman shifts with the subject of the author's condemnation.

These contradictions suggest that Gregory's evidence is unreliable and illustrates how much his representations rely on a personal agenda. Gregory's disregard for historical evidence is motivated by his religious beliefs and often furnishes an incorrect version of events. Gregory's biases are clear and affect the treatment that women receive in his text. There is a hierarchy of status in the narrative. The most revered women, like the men, are those who were actively involved in spiritual matters, conversions, and the confrontation with Arianism (e.g. Radegund, Ingund and Chlotild 2). Saintry women take precedence over the wives of kings that Gregory supported who are the next tier of women: for this group we are limited to Brunhild. Apart from Brunhild, whom Gregory rarely criticizes, women outside a religious context are generally portrayed in a negative light. Often it is the wives of the kings rather than the kings themselves who are negatively portrayed as an oblique form of criticism.²⁹⁸ Gregory's positive portrayals of women occur mainly in the earlier, non-contemporary books of the *DLH* and are reserved for other bishops' wives, nuns, and dedicated virgins. Frankish royal women receive acclaim when they build churches, monasteries, donate land, give alms, or when one retires to the church and sets up a religious house. Such a woman is, however, swiftly condemned when their husband tries to tax the wealth of the church, for example.

The emphasis on Germanic women highlights the scarcity of Gallo-Roman women in

²⁹⁸ Wood (1993), 256

the narrative. Roman women appear infrequently and usually when Gregory discusses events in the fifth century. When Gallo-Roman women appear in the contemporary books of the history they are associated with the church, either as cloistered nuns or the celibate wives of bishops.²⁹⁹ Society seems to have been divided into church and state. The Gallo-Romans were clustered around the institutions of the church and continued to hold power over many episcopates. Gallo-Romans in the employ of the Frankish kings are rarely mentioned and those who are mentioned, such as Parthenius come to a bad end (*DLH* 3.36).

There are very few examples of late sixth-century Gallo-Roman women in the *DLH*. A Gallo-Roman is usually identified based on onomastic evidence as in the example of Deuteria, *concupina* and wife of Theuderic.³⁰⁰ The problems with making a judgement on onomastic evidence become clear with this example as the name Deuteria is more Christian than Gallo-Roman in meaning. By late sixth-century it is impossible to assume that a Christian name denoted a Gallo-Roman. Another Gallo-Roman woman is the niece of Felix of Nantes. In this case she intermarried with the Germanic Pappolenus against her family's wishes. Other Gallo-Roman women are only discussed in relation to church matters such as Justina, Gregory's niece and the prioress of the Holy Cross monastery at Poitiers. The two cases cited above show that Felix's niece intermarried and Gregory's niece was a celibate nun. It may be more legitimate to assert that the Gallo-Romans disappeared from the centres of secular power and therefore out of our view.³⁰¹

In a general sense there is a great deal to be learned about the bishop of Tours from the

²⁹⁹ These demographic assumptions relies heavily on onomastic evidence and the problems associated with this must be acknowledged. There are many possible reasons for names to have changed although a shift in onomastic trends cannot be entirely responsible for the disappearance of a Gallo-Roman aristocracy.

³⁰⁰ See *PLRE* 3 s.v. Deoteria.

³⁰¹ Epigraphic evidence provides some demographic redistribution. The majority of sixth-century epitaphs seem to honour people with Gallo-Roman nomenclature.

study of women in his narrative. His biases, his concerns for society, and his views on religion are intrinsic in his depiction of women. The consistent rhetorical patterns reveal how Gregory viewed himself and his position in relation to the church and kings. These patterns are visible in the stories of the immoral fornicating priest besieging the pious bishop, or of the king who disrespects the rules the church having an immoral wife. These points are elaborated at every opportunity and it can be argued that they skew Gregory's perception of events. When Gregory provides any detail about women, he portrays them according to the positive and negative female stereotypes discussed above.

It is necessary to express caution when trying to learn more about the reality of women's lives in general. The glimpse that Gregory offers into the lives of women outside the Germanic royalty or cloistered nuns are of those caught in adultery, killed in war, or captured by enemies. These women remain anonymous to us, surrounded by a high level of violence and uncertainty in their lives. Gregory emphasizes the fragility of the female reputation through these anonymous women. They are the victims of political infighting among nobles and among priests. There were few social options for women outside of the Germanic nobility, and, despite changes in the political landscape, one presumes life would have continued very much as it had done for centuries.

Christianity would have made some difference to certain women but life in a sixth-century female monastery was restricted to the upper levels of society. Marcovefa, a dedicated virgin, is an example of a woman who was vulnerable without the protection offered by a wealthy family or a female monastery. The concept and function of the female monastery were still being formulated in the sixth-century. The presence of powerful royal women such as Radegund inside these establishments lent the institutions both credibility and authority. The rebellion led by the nuns at Poitiers after Radegund's death damaged the reputation of the

monastery by exposing the fact that not all the women were necessarily content to devote their lives to God. Notwithstanding the malcontents, the fact that these establishments offered an independence from marriage and secular society to even a few women was a sign of significant change.

Gregory addresses issues that concerned women across all social strata such as betrothal, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. These institutions were in a state of flux in the sixth century. Changes in inheritance laws had altered the status of women and children. Before a Christian marriage ritual had been firmly established the customs around marriage were a mixture of Roman and Germanic traditions. Gregory portrays a society in transition where rules and regulations governing women's lives were changing. It seems sensible to acknowledge the facts and the outline of events affecting the lives of the women but the motivations ascribed to women by Gregory of Tours must be questioned. If caution is used to examine each woman individually, perhaps some insight is possible. Radegund was an extraordinary woman whose influence was felt as far away as Constantinople. It cannot however, be said that religious women in general had this sort of influence since the succeeding abbess, Leuovera, held no such authority. As widows Fredegund and Brunhild were powerful women, but that power derived from their sons, as the heirs to kingdoms. Royal women in general did not wield a great deal of power and were extremely vulnerable to the whims of kings.

Gregory records the lives of the women who inhabited his world of Gaul from a personal perspective. This was a world where Gregory, as a Gallo-Roman bishop, was concerned with religious orthodoxy and the loss of power to the Germanic kings. Gregory designed his history to narrate the good and bad behaviour of those who ruled. The presence of powerful women in the sixth century meant that they were portrayed alongside the men who ruled. Rhetorical strategies that affected Gregory's portrayals of kings and men also applied to

the representations of women. Through his representations of women the personal and political nature of his historical narrative can be established.

CHAPTER 6

General Conclusions

The representation of women in Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours encompasses a series of issues that reflect a society in the midst of transition. Sidonius represented life in late-fifth-century sub-Roman Gaul as still very Roman. This illustrates a conservatism in Sidonius (in Gallo-Roman aristocrats in general) and his attempt to hold on to Roman ideals in the face of a new Germanic reality in Gaul. Sidonius' representation of women is correspondingly conservative. He refers to women in terms of traditional Roman virtues and images of the dutiful wife. By the late sixth century with the descendants of Clovis well established as rulers of the Frankish kingdoms, Roman Gaul was a distant memory. Gregory of Tours wrote a narrative history about the world as he saw it, from his episcopal see in Tours. This was a Germanic and Christian society, and the women he wrote about illustrate this fact.

Despite these differences there is much that is comparable between the two authors. Sidonius and Gregory had similar motivations for writing guided by a common set of rules and regulations that affected their representations of women. Their similar purpose reflects their status and role as leading men in a changing and unstable society. The validation of their own lives, choices, and traditions in the face of cultural change marks out their literature. Sidonius' glorification of *Romanitas* and Gregory's reaffirmation of the Christian church are constant themes that touch all aspects of their literary portrayals.

There is a continuity between the authors that demonstrates a universality in the portrayal of women found in both classical and Christian traditions. This is the belief that behind every good man there is a good woman and that domestic harmony is a sign of a man's

authority to rule, preach, or govern. These beliefs are prevalent in the representations of women in both writers, even though the women portrayed in Sidonius and Gregory have a very different ethnic identity.

In Sidonius' world women were important as the mothers of children who continued the family line and as the daughters of aristocratic families who inherited wealth and prestige. Sidonius' priorities for a woman were modesty, chastity, prudence, and support of her husband and his endeavours. The values and comparative models that Sidonius used to portray women were traditional and Roman. They illustrate Sidonius' underlying purpose of preserving a *Romanitas* that was fast disappearing in his society.

The vocabulary Sidonius employs in these representations is conservative and based upon traditions from classical Roman literature. He draws heavily on mythology to portray the women mentioned in the poetry and uses a more staid vocabulary for the women in the letters. The attributes of the ideal woman in Sidonius are those exemplified by Lucretia, who was a modest, devoted, chaste, and supportive wife. In his choice of comparative models one can sense some individualization in the women. Sidonius uses mythological enumeration to portray women of a high status. The context he uses to describe women who are closer to his own life is more personal and inventive, as exemplified by his teasing portrayal of Araneola as Minerva.

The women in the *DLH* are represented in an equally rhetorical context but there is far more description. They are credited with motives and behaviours and criticized or praised for their piety or impiety. Gregory wrote to defend the church. Those who protected the traditions and values of the church are portrayed positively, while those who dismissed these principles are condemned. A number of women are counted among protectors of the church and its values. Gregory viewed the world he lived in as intertwined with the actions of God and the battles against heresy. The language used in the *DLH* is that of the Bible and of Christian literature. Gregory's priorities were about Christianity, morality, and the role of a bishop in

society. He uses a vocabulary of praise derived from these concepts to portray his ideal of the pious Christian woman.

Sidonius wrote almost exclusively about women he knew personally or to whom he was related. The manner in which he represented these women reflected upon himself and his family. By nature, epistolography is personal and the almost uniformly positive portrayal of women in Sidonius' letters illustrates this. It would be unlikely for Sidonius to criticize the women in his acquaintance. As an eye-witness to events in the late sixth century, Gregory gives his history a personal perspective, while rarely discussing those closely connected to him. When he does mention his episcopal relations the nature of the writing is often hagiographical. Gregory wrote about women he knew but rarely about those to whom he was related. Therefore his criticisms of women do not reflect back upon his family. Gregory condemns and praises women to convince his audience of his position on issues.

Reginae

The existence of Germanic queens as a force of influence reflects a change in the position of women at the highest level of society. Roman aristocratic women from Sidonius' letters and poems are replaced by Germanic queens in the *DLH*. These new roles for women were only just appearing in Sidonius' Gaul. Sidonius was certainly aware of the presence of Germanic queens but writes about them as traditional Roman wives who advise and support their husbands. The frame of reference for these women looks back to the ideals of Rome. Notably, the Germanic royal women are described by Sidonius as influencing decisions made by their husbands. I would argue that this indicates some continuity with accounts of increased influence for Germanic women in the *DLH* and that Sidonius perceived this difference between Germanic and Roman women. In the late sixth-century, there is more latitude for the

representation of women because the women of the Germanic royalty are portrayed alongside the kings.

Fundamental to Gregory's judgement of kings and queens was their behaviour in relation to patronage of the church and the appointment of bishops. Therefore the behaviour of the royalty is of primary interest to Gregory as a bishop and an author. In this context women were important in both the political and religious realms of society. They represent sanctity and also represent royalty. The political priorities that Gregory portrayed, founded on his ideals of a king and queen, were based on his personal religious convictions. A good queen (like a good king) was one who patronized the church or a specific saint and listened to the wise council of a bishop.

The role of the Germanic queen was perhaps equivalent to that of the Roman empress in relative power and influence, but the world had become much smaller in the sixth century. There was only one empress for all the empire and a proliferation of Germanic queens in sixth-century Gaul. The sheer number of women in a public role created a proportional increase in information. A more visible role for women meant that there was more scope for criticism as well. The Roman women are portrayed behind the scenes and the Germanic women take a more prominent role. The increase in Christian patronage allowed for royal women to exercise influence in a way that had not existed before. The in-home virginity of the fifth century aristocrats does not affect the community in the same way as an ex-queen abbess in her own female monastery. Powerful royal women were exceptional but their presence helps to explain much of the difference in the representation of women between Sidonius and Gregory.

Coniuges et Episcopae

In the late fifth century women in the literature of Sidonius Apollinaris and his colleagues are the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of Gallo-Roman elites. These women

existed only in relation to the men in their *familia*. In the late sixth century there are also wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. They are however, rarely from the Gallo-Roman aristocracy and frequently from the Germanic nobility. For the most part the women mentioned are still placed in the context of the men to whom they are connected although some do exist outside the realm of their families.

Sidonius presents us with idealized wives, in both his poetry and prose. A modest and virtuous wife was an important symbol of domestic harmony, and domestic concord was an integral factor by which to judge the quality of a man. Sidonius' letters to his fellow Gallo-Roman elites often contained an element of flattery and the wives of the men he discusses were portrayed to display domestic harmony. Gregory views wives with more suspicion. He seems to believe that a wife could be an asset if she was Christian, pious, and modest; but most were not. The wives he mentions were mostly deviant and considered to be a bad influence on their husbands. One might expect this from Gregory, whose aims were to celebrate the church and who believed that celibacy was the highest state of existence.

Changes in the status of the clergy and the expectations surrounding their lifestyle are apparent from the evidence concerning married bishops in the two authors. Both Gregory and Sidonius came from families whose maternal line was important in their ascendancy to episcopal positions. How they acknowledged this was quite different. Sidonius emphasizes the importance of the maternal line, whereas Gregory barely acknowledges the fact that his episcopal ancestors were from his maternal connections. The bishop's wife is portrayed by Sidonius as an asset, an example among women. The positive portrayal of a bishop's wife had little part to play in Gregory's representations of women. The *episcopa* is most often represented as a temptress and bad influence on her husband when contemporary married clergy appear in the *DLH*. Episcopal rivalries in the fifth century are only alluded to by Sidonius but in the sixth century they are clearly defined by Gregory. In Gregory's opinion

marriage left a bishop vulnerable and open to attack.

The two authors use the figure of the *episcopa* to illustrate their personal opinions about married clergy. These representations are also indicative of the realistic atmosphere in the sixth-century church. Gregory, as a unmarried bishop, seems biased against married bishops. It is not clear whether Gregory condemns all married bishops or focuses on the marriage of his rivals to undermine their position. The personal condemnation of these men and their wives is so extreme that the validity of Gregory's portrayals of the *episcopae* must be questioned. Sidonius' view of the *episcopae* is personally driven and Gregory's is politically motivated.

The lack of emphasis on maternal connections in Gregory of Tours may reflect the decreased role that the maternal family played in the status of a child. The striking difference stated between the value of the maternal family line in the two authors may be more than just rhetoric. Sidonius' glorification of the female lineage and importance of maternal connections could not be further from Gregory's statement that *quod praetermissis nunc generibus feminarum (DLH 5.20)*.

Sanctae

The choice of retiring to a life of prayer was limited in the fifth and sixth centuries to those whose families could afford to keep a daughter in the family home or endow a female monastery. In the late fifth century this group comprised Gallo-Roman aristocrats and in the sixth century it extended to include the Germanic royalty and nobility. Female monasticism came into its own in sixth-century Gaul. Although the female monastery was always subject to the rule of the bishop Caesarius' *Regula* for women created an independent standard for female monastics. The reality of female sanctity is reflected in the representation of Christian virginity. In the late fifth and early sixth century, Gallo-Roman aristocrats portray female

dedicated virgins as part of the aristocratic family life. Sidonius makes little mention of female sanctity even though his own daughter had chosen an ascetic lifestyle. By the time Gregory became bishop of Tours, female monastics were well established in society. Female sanctity is a powerful force in Gregory's narrative and is described as a powerful force in his society as well. The sanctity of women causes miracles and converts others away from heresy. These sainted women were almost exclusively from the upper or royal classes of society, as exemplified by Radegund, whose authority came from both her position as queen as well as her saintliness. In a society that held women up to standards of ideal behaviour, the saint-queen was an important role.

The pious, remote, dedicated virgins of the late fifth century became full blown holy women and rebellious nuns in the late sixth century. The female monastery, as depicted by Gregory, became a place of worship and a place of refuge. This is a significant shift and one that is preserved in the popular image of the medieval mentality. To shut one's daughter up in a convent to protect her or stop her from marrying against the family's will is part of medieval lore. The beginning of this mentality is visible in a number of examples in the *DLH* where a woman is unwillingly placed in a monastery. The female monastery also played an important role in offering a choice to upper class women in society. It presented a respectable alternative to marriage and children.

The elements of Christian miracle, purity, and faith that guide the actions of people in Gregory's narrative can be viewed as outside the traditions of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy. Fifth- and early-sixth-century piety in women is rarely commented upon in Sidonius' letters and is represented as moderate in authors such as Avitus of Vienne. This coincides with the portrayal of society as a whole, which reflects a conservative literary style. Women as visionaries and the vehicle for miracles do not factor into life for Sidonius. Gregory accepted a view of life that included miracles and the supernatural in the everyday experience.

Matronae et concubinae

From a legal perspective, there were differences in the status of an upper-class woman between the time of Sidonius Apollinaris and that of Gregory of Tours. A Roman woman, although not independent by modern standards, had the right to inherit equally with her brothers. The control of wealth was an essential aspect of the status of an individual in society. Once that control was limited and the wealth of women was curbed, they became proportionally more vulnerable. Therefore the trend in Germanic society for daughters to only inherit land if there were no sons indicates a distinct change in the status of women from the Roman tradition. It was difficult for a woman in late Roman society to divorce her husband unilaterally but there was some provision for divorce in the laws. In contrast, the Germanic codes provided no option for a woman to divorce her husband. The rights of a Roman *matrona* were entrenched in the law. She had her dowry and her inheritance rights, and her children, if they were legitimate, would inherit. In Roman society, *concubinatus* and relationships outside of marriage were part of life, but the legal codes kept them from interfering with inheritance structures. A woman did not expect her husband's illegitimate children to share in the inheritance of her own legitimate children.

In Frankish Gaul, in the sixth century, the illegitimate sons of kings could inherit, as long as they were recognized by their father. It is assumed that this extended to the nobility and perhaps beyond. The result of these changes was a proliferation of male heirs and a restriction on the independence of women. For a woman this meant that having a son was essential if she was to retain her wealth. The situation made it possible for a woman of the lower classes to become a queen through *concubinatus* if she produced heirs for the king. Increased social mobility was scorned by Gregory, who saw it as an affront to the proper order necessary for legitimate marriage. When faced with the issue of social mobility, Sidonius' sentiments were

similar to Gregory's. Both bishops viewed relationships outside of legitimate marriage as a threat to the traditional structure of society.

Theoretically, in the fifth and sixth centuries, women from Roman families lived under different laws from women of Germanic heritage. Legally the two distinct and different cultures were set apart although they lived side-by-side. It is impossible to tell if a woman of the Roman senatorial class preserved her rights and privileges under the law. It is not possible to discern this detail from our sources partially because of the fact that there is limited evidence for Gallo-Roman women in the sixth century. Gregory's evidence points to a mix of customs and it seems likely that church laws also had an important influence on the basic functions of society. Gregory provides evidence that councils of bishops pronounced judgements on specific cases.

Notwithstanding the larger literary presence for women in the sixth century as compared to the fifth, our evidence does not suggest that women were generally better off under Germanic rule. Wealth brought independence for women and to protect one's wealth was difficult for a widow or single woman. Inheritance battles and the status of helpless widows are mentioned by both authors. When Sidonius writes to defend Eutropia's right to have her daughter-in-law stay with her after the death of her son, the wealth involved was the main reason. To protect wealth in the tumultuous sixth century one needed physical protection. The difficulty for women without this protection is demonstrated in Gregory by the regular occurrence of royal widows left helpless and forced to seek refuge in the church.

The realities of day-to-day life for women in the fifth and sixth centuries are elusive. The evidence allows us to make educated guesses on some specific cases but it is difficult and dangerous to conclude that these are applicable beyond the individual. It is important to keep in mind that individuals and events are often mentioned because they were exceptional.

Ultimately, it must be considered that both Sidonius and Gregory use their

representations of women to put forth their own political views. Sidonius' anti-Gothic message and his strong support of Ecdicius who defended Auvergne from the Goths, has been emphasized. Sidonius was connected to many powerful figures in fifth-century Gallic politics through his wife and mother. His illustrious familial connections play a part in his positive portrayal of women. Sidonius and Gregory shared the belief that the moral behaviour of a woman reflected the character and morality of her male relations. Sidonius describes the wives and daughters of his correspondents as women of great virtue. Gregory's personal biases are clearly outlined by his condemnation or praise of the morals of the men and women of the sixth century. Gregory often portrays women in order to attack the Frankish kings or rival clergy. He attributes motivations to women that are based purely on his own rhetorical intent. This form of condemnation is used repeatedly in the *DLH* and perhaps is the result of an increased presence of women who had power over the lives of the bishops.

The study of women in the literature of Sidonius and Gregory reveals the changing typologies for the ideal woman. The Roman *matrona* based on the model of Lucretia is exchanged for the queen-saint based on a model of the biblical Esther. The stereotypes employed by the authors are illustrative of the contextual changes in society over the century between their deaths. The hard-working, modest chaste wife found in Sidonius is rarely mentioned among the women in the *DLH*.

By studying women in the writing of Sidonius and Gregory, there is much to be learned about our authors and their interests. As sources for social history Sidonius and Gregory must be used carefully. They cannot tell us how women thought or felt or were motivated. They can, however, illustrate the broad changes that occurred in attitudes and ideas about women over the fifth and sixth centuries. These changes have had a profound effect on the status of women and the make-up of the family in society.

The conclusions to this study are cautionary suggestions about the practicality of using

the evidence from Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours for the history of women. Overall, Sidonius' Roman *matronae* tell us mostly about Sidonius and his colleagues, and the way that they perceived women. Similarly, Gregory's women tell us about the kings they were married or related to. Who the women were and what they thought are often elusive facts. The descriptions of women are made to fit the themes of Gregory's history or Sidonius' letter or poem and not to represent the women accurately. It then follows that when anecdotal information on women from these authors is to be used in social history, the context and connections of the authors in relation to each woman must first be understood. The role that women play in the text as a whole must be examined before the peripheral information about their lives can be extracted. This information is specific to perceptions of women and families who lived in Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries. Any application of the evidence beyond these geographical and temporal periods may be misleading.

Much can be learned about the shift in rhetoric between the fifth and sixth century by comparing the representations of women in Sidonius and Gregory. Although there are changes in the basic context of literature visible in the way women are compared and judged, the concerns of a bishop in the late fifth century are similar to those of a bishop in the late sixth century. A bishop worried about Germanic kings, widows, inheritance, church land, morality of the parish, and episcopal selection. A great deal had changed but much remained the same.

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APPENDIX 1

The following is an alphabetical list, for reference purposes, of the people from the fifth and sixth century who appear in this dissertation. I have included the name as it appears in the dissertation as well as the reference in *PLRE* or Duchesne, *Fastes Episcopaux*. At the end of each citation are the passages in either Sidonius or Gregory that I have referred to. The spelling of these names, where the Germanic and Latin languages come together, is a matter of taste. I have tried to be consistent in spelling names the same throughout the dissertation. I have also provided the *PLRE* spelling where it exists.

Adelberg (Bertha) (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Adelberga): daughter of Charibert and Ingoberga; married to Ethelbert, king of Kent. *DLH* 4.26. and 9.26

Albofledis (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Albofledis): sister of Clovis, Lanthechildis, and Audefleda; daughter of Basina; baptised at the same time and died soon after. *DLH* 2.31.

Alchima (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Alcima): daughter of Sidonius; sister of Apollinaris; not mentioned by Sidonius but mentioned by Gregory. *DLH* 3.2 and 12.

Alypia (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Alypia): daughter of the emperor Anthemius, married to the *magister militum* Ricimer in 467, mother was Euphemia. *Sid. Carm.* 2.480-503 and *Ep.* 1.5.10.

Amalaberg (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Amalaberga): niece of Theoderic; wife of Thuringian king, Hermanfrid; called 'wicked and cruel' by Gregory of Tours. *DLH* 3.4.

Amalafrida (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Amalafrida): sister of Ostrogothic king Theoderic; mother of Amalaberg; married to Hilderic.

Amalaric (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Amalaricus): Visigothic king of Spain (511-531); married Chlotild (2) who was the daughter of Clovis and Chlotild (1). *DLH* 2.37 and 3.1.

Amalasuintha (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Amalasuintha): queen regent of Italy for her son Athalaric (526-

534); daughter of Audofleda and Theodoric; on the death of her son Athalaric she was forced to proclaim her cousin, Theodahad, as co-regent. Theodahad took over the kingdom and killed Amalasuintha. *DLH* 3.31.

Anonyma (1) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 10): daughter of Syagrius and mother of Tonantius Ferreolus. Sid., *Carm.* 24.36 and *Ep.* 1.7.4.

Anonyma (2) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 20): daughter of Paeonius. Sid., *Ep.* 1.11.5.

Anonyma (3) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 15): widow of Optantius; gives consent to Proiectus to marry her daughter. Sid., *Ep.* 2.4.2.

Anonyma (4) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 16): daughter of Anonyma 3; her guardian was Sagittarius, a kinsman of her father Optantius. Sid., *Ep.* 2.4.2.

Anonyma (5) and (6) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 13): sisters of Avitus (2); Anonyma (5) bequeathed an estate to her brother and Anonyma (6). Avitus and Anonyma (6) bequeathed the estate to the church at Clermont. Sid., *Ep.* 3.1.

Anonyma (6) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 24): daughter of Vectius; brought up by her father after her mother died young. Sid., *Ep.* 4.9.4.

Anonyma (7) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 14): mother of Aper, sister of Frontina and daughter of Auspacia; mentioned in a letter to Aper from Sidonius. Sid., *Ep.* 4.21.2-4.

Anonyma (8) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 19): wife of a man named Thaumastus. Sid., *Ep.* 5.6.1.

Anonyma (9) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 17): mother of Sidonius. Sid., *Ep.* 5.16.5.

Anonyma (10) and (11). Sidonius' family nurse and her daughter; the daughter had run away with the son of the nurse of Pudens; both mother and daughter were freedwomen. Sid., *Ep.* 5.19.

Anonyma (12) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 29): wife of Simplicius, bishop of Bourges; member of the Paladii family. Sid., *Ep.* 7.9.24.

Anonyma (13): woman living in *contubernium* with young man of senatorial rank who

abandons her when he takes a 'proper' wife. Sid., *Ep.* 9.6.

Anonyma (14) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 12): mother of Eparchius Avitus, grandmother of Papianilla (2), Agricola, and Ecdicius. Sid., *Carm.* 7. 164-165.

Anonyma (15) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Attica): perhaps the wife of consul Magnus Felix. Sid., *Carm.* 9.6.

Anonyma (16) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 22): wife of Ecdicius. Sid., *Carm.* 20.3.

Anonyma (17) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 18): wife of Pontius Leontius. Sid., *Carm.* 22. 194-196.

Anonyma (18) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 11): wife of Consentius. Sid., *Carm.* 23. 170-174.

Anonyma (19): daughter of Agricola, married to Ruricius' grandson; mother of Papianilla (3). Ruricius *Ep.* 2.32.9.

Anonyma (20) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Anonyma 31): wife of Namatius, the ninth bishop of Clermont; built a church outside the walls of the city; portrayed in Gregory as the ideal *episcopa*. *DLH* 2.17.

Anonyma (21) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Caretena): Burgundian queen; wife of Chilperic (2); probably a catholic Christian; mother of Chlotild (1). Sid., *Epp.* 5.7.7. and 6.12.3.

Apollinaris (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Apollinaris, Duchesne 2, 35): son of Sidonius Apollinaris; commanded the Auvernian natives who fought on the side of the Visigoths at Vouillé; bishop of Clermont (for three months post 507); brother of Alcima, Severiana and Roscia; married to Placidina. *DLH* 2.37, 3.2.

Araneola (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Araneola): wife of Polemius. Sid., *Carm.* 14. 21-22, 15. 153 and 250.

Arbogast (*PLRE* 1 s.v. Arbogastes): Frankish general; *magister militum* of the West, 388-394. Sid., *Carm.* 5. 354-56; *DLH* 2.9.

Aregund (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Arnegundis): Frankish queen; wife of Chlothar (1); sister of Ingund;

- and mother of Chilperic (3). *DLH* 4.3.
- Armentaria** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Armentaria): mother of Gregory of Tours; grand-daughter of Bishop Gregory of Langres, Gregory of Tours namesake; not mentioned in the *DLH*. *Liber Vitae Patrum* 7.2; *Liber in Gloria Confessorum* 3, 40, 85; *Liber in Gloria Martyrum* 84.
- Ascyla** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ascyla): wife of early Frankish leader Ricimer. *DLH* 2.9.
- Athalaric** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Athalaricus): Ostrogothic king (526-534); son of Amalasuintha.
- Athanagild (1)** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Athanagildus 1): Visigothic king of Spain (555-568); father of Brunhild and Galswinth; husband of Goiswinth. *DLH* 4.27 and 4.38.
- Athanagild (2)** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Athanagildus 2): grandson of Athanagild (1); son of Hermengild and Ingund (2); held captive by the Byzantines and exiled in Constantinople; letters written by his uncle and grandmother (Childebert (2) and Brunhild) concerning Athanagild in Constantinople are still extant. *DLH* 8.28. *Ep. Austrasicae* 43, 44, 45.
- Audentia** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Audentia): mother of Avitus of Vienne, Fuscina, and two other children; dedicated virgin after the birth of her fourth child; wife of Heychius, bishop of Vienne. *Avitus Carm.* 6.
- Audofleda** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Audefleda): sister of Clovis (1), Albofledis, and Lanthechildis; married Theodoric, Ostrogothic king of Italy; mother of Amalasuintha. *DLH* 3.31.
- Auspicia** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Auspicia): wife of Fronto, mother of Frontina and Anonyma (7); native of Clermont. *Sid., Ep.* 4.21.4.
- Austrechild** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Austrechildus): wife of Guntram; mother of Chlothar (3) and Chlodomer (2); was a servant when she married Guntram; died of dysentery. *DLH* 4.25, 5.20, 5.35.
- Avitus (1)** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Avitus 1): friend and relation of Sidonius Apollinaris. *Sid., Ep.* 3.1.
- Basina (1)** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Basina): wife of Basinus, king of the Thuringians; then wife of Childeric, king of the Franks; with Childeric the mother of Clovis (1); also mother of

Audofleda, Albofledis, and Lanthechildis. *DLH* 2.12.

Basina (2) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Basina): daughter of Chilperic (3) and Audovera; sister of Clovis (2), Merovech (2), and Theudebert (2); leader of rebellion at Holy Cross monastery at Poitiers with Chlotild (3). *DLH* 5.39, 6.34, 9.39 and 10.20.

Basinus (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Bysinus): Thuringian king (c. mid fifth-century); wife Basina left him for Childeric; possibly the grandfather of Radegund. *DLH* 2.12.

Baudonivia: nun and author of a *Vita S. Radegundis* written c. 606; lived in the monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers.

Berthefledis (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Berthefledis): daughter of King Charibert; resident of the female monastery founded by Ingeltrude at St. Martin's church in Tours; fled the monastic life. *DLH* 9.33.

Berthegund (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Berthegundis): daughter of Ingeltrude; at her mother's suggestion left her husband (of thirty years) to live as a monastic; Gregory, bishop of Tours threatened her with excommunication for abandoning her family. *DLH* 9.33.

Bonitus (*PLRE* 1 *s.v.* Bonitus): Frankish general of Constantine (316-324); father of Sivanus. Ammianus Marcellinus 15.5.33.

Brunhild (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Brunichildis): Visigothic queen of the Franks; wife of Sigibert; then wife of Merovech (2); daughter of Athanagild (2) and Goiswintha, sister of Galswinth, mother of Chlodosind, Ingund (2) and Childebert (2). *passim DLH* 4.27-10.31.

Caretena (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Caretena): Burgundian queen, wife of Gundobad; a catholic Christian; her epitaph from Lyon still exists. *ILCV* 46.

Caesaria (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Caesaria): sister of Caesarius of Arles; abbess of the female monastery at Arles established c. 508 by her brother the bishop of Arles. *Caes. Regula*.

Ceraunia (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Ceraunia): correspondent of Ruricius of Limoges; wife of Namatius; recipient of letters from Ruricius both alone and with her husband; daughter married Ruricius' son and had died. Ruricius *Epp.* 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 to both husband and wife,

Epp. 2.15 and 2.50 to Ceraunia.

Chalda (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Chalda): daughter of Wilichar; married to Chramn; burned alive with Chramn and their daughters by Chlothar. *DLH* 4.17 and 20.

Charibert (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Charibertus): king of Franks (561-567); son of Chlothar (1) and Ingund (1), brother of Guntram, Sigibert, and half-brother of Chilperic (3); married Ingoberga, Merofled, Marcovefa and Theudechild; father of Chlotild (3). *DLH* 4.26 and 5.48.

Childebert (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Childebertus): king of Franks (511- 558); son of Clovis (1) and Chlotild (1); half-brother of Theuderic; brother of Chlodomer, Chlothar (1), and Chlotild (2); married Ultrogotha and they had two anonymous daughters; invaded Spain to rescue his sister Chlotild (2). *DLH* 3.1, 3.18, 3.29 and 4.18.

Childebert (2) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Childebertus II); king of Franks (575-596); son of Brunhild and Sigisbert; just five years old when his father died; father of Theudebert (2) with a concubine; father of Theuderic (3) with his Queen Faileuba. *passim DLH* 5.1-10.31.

Childeric (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Childericus); early king of the Franks (c. 456-482); married Basina (1); father of Clovis (1). *DLH* 2.12.

Childeric (2) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Childericus): son of Chlothar (1) and Ingund (1); died during his father's lifetime. *DLH* 4.3.

Chilperic (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Chilpericus 1): Burgundian king with brother Gundioc, c. 455.

Chilperic (2) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Chilpericus 2): Burgundian king (c. 470-480); brother of Gundobad, Godigisel, and Godomar; father of Chlotild (1); married to Anonyma 21. *Sid., Epp.* 5.7.7 and 6.12.3.

Chilperic (3) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Chilpericus 3): king of Franks (561-584); son of Chlothar (1) and Aregund; half-brother of Guntram, Sigisbert, and Charibert; married to Audovera, Galswinth, and Fredegund; father of Theodebert, Merovech (2), Clovis (2), and Basina (2)

by Audovera; father of Chlodobert, Dagobert, Samson, Theoderic, Chlothar (2), and Rigunth by Fredegund; died c. 584. *passim DLH 4.22-6.46.*

Chlodio (*PLRE 1 s.v. Chlogio*): legendary first king of the Franks, possibly the father of Merovech (1). *DLH 2.9.* and *Sid Carm. 5.212 (Cloio).*

Chlodobert (*PLRE 3 s.v. Chlodobertus*): eldest son of Chilperic (3) and Fredegund; died of plague. *DLH 5.34.*

Chlodomer (1) (*PLRE 2 s.v. Chlodomer*): king of the Franks (511-524); son of Clovis (1) and Chlotild (1); married Guntheuca. *DLH 3.1- 3.11.*

Chlodomer (2) (*PLRE 3 s.v. Chlodomeris*): son of Guntram and Austrechild; brother of Chlothar (3); died in 577. *DLH 4.25 and 5.17*

Chlodosind (*PLRE 3 s.v. Chlodosinda 2*): daughter of Brunhild and Sigibert; on her father's death in 575 was held in custody in Meaux with her sister Ingund; negotiations concerning the betrothal Chlodosind and Recared (c. 588) took place but the marriage never happened. *DLH 5.1, 9.16, 9.20, 9.25, and 9.28.*

Chlothar (1) (*PLRE 2 s.v. Chlothacharius*): king of Franks (511-561); son of Clovis (1) and Chlotild (1); married Guntheuca, Ingund (1), Aregund, and Radegund; father of Guntram, Childeric, Charibert, Sigibert and Chlothsinda by Ingund (1); father of Chilperic by Aregund; father of Chramn by Chusena; possibly father of Gundovald although denied paternity. *passim DLH 3.1-4.21.*

Chlothar (2) (*PLRE 3 s.v. Chlotharius II*): king of Franks (584-629); only surviving son of Fredegund and Chilperic; four months old when his father died; king of Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy from 613. *DLH 6.41* for birth.

Chlothar (3): son of Guntram and Austrechild; brother of Chlodomer (2); died in 577. *DLH 4.25 and 5.17.*

Chlothsinda (*PLRE 3 s.v. Chlodosinda 1*): daughter of Chlothar (1) and Ingund (1); sister to Childeric, Charibert, Guntram and Sigibert; married Alboin, king of Langobards; dies in

Italy. *DLH* 4.3, 4.41.

Chlotild (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Chrotechildis 1): Burgundian queen of Franks, wife of Clovis (1); daughter of Chilperic (2); saintly queen given credit for the conversion of Clovis to Christianity; mother of Chlodomer, Childebert, Chlothar (1), and Chlotild (2). *passim DLH* 2.29-4.1.

Chlotild (2) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Chrotechildis 2): unhappy Frankish queen of the Visigoths; married to Amalaric, Visigothic king (526-531); daughter of Clovis and Chlotild (1); sister of Chlothar (1), Theuderic, Chlodomer and Childebert (1). *DLH* 3.1 and 3.10.

Chlotild (3) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Chrodielidis): daughter of king Charibert (mother unknown); led revolt at the female monastery of Poitiers. *DLH* 9.39-43, 10. 15.

Chramn (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Chramnus): son of Chlothar (1) and Chunsena; allied with the Bretons and rebelled against his father; was killed with his wife and daughters by his father. *passim DLH* 4.3-4.20.

Chrona (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Crona): daughter of Chilperic (2); Burgundian princess and sister of Chlotild (1); became a nun. *DLH* 2.28.

Chunsena (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Chunsena): mother of Chramn; wife/concubine of Chlothar (1). *DLH* 4.3.

Clovis (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Chlodovechus); king of Franks (482-511); son of Basina and Childeric; husband of Chlotild (1); father of Theuderic by an unnamed concubine; father of Chlodomer, Childebert, and Chlothar (1) by Chlotild (1). *DLH* 2.27-2.43.

Clovis (2) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Chlodovechus): son of Chilperic (3) and Audovera; brother of Merovech (2), Theudebert (2), and Basina (2); allegedly revolted against his father and was killed; Gregory declares his death was on the orders of his stepmother, Fredegund. *DLH* 4.28, 4.45-47, 5.39.

Dagobert (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Dagobertus 1): son of Chilperic and Fredegund; died of cholera in same epidemic as his brother Chlodobert. *DLH* 5.34 (for his name see Venantius

Fortunatus *Carm.* 9.5.).

Dagulf: an abbot, probably in Tours, who frequently committed adultery and was eventually killed by an angry husband. *DLH* 8.19.

Deuteria (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Deoteria): concubine and then wife of Theudebert 1 (533-540); mother of Theudebald. *DLH* 3.22, 3.26, 3.27.

Ecdicius (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ecdicius 3): brother-in-law of Sidonius Apollinaris; leader of the Avernian resistance to the Visigoths (early 470s); brother of Papianilla (2) and Agricola. *Sid., Epp.* 3.2.3 and 3.3.3-6.

Ennodius (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ennodius 3): Gallo-Roman bishop of Pavia; author.

Eparchius (Duchesne 2, 34): bishop of Clermont († c. 470/71) before Sidonius; member of Aviti family. *DLH* 2.21.

Eparchius Avitus (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Avitus 5): emperor (455-456); native of Clermont; father of Papianilla (2), Agricola, and Ecdicius; father-in-law of Sidonius. *Sid., Carm.* 7.

Eulalia (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Eulalia): cousin of Sidonius; wife of Probus; known for her severity of character. *Sid., Carm.* 24.90, 94-98 and *Ep.* 4.1.1.

Euphemia (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Euphemia 6): daughter of the eastern emperor Marcian († 457); married Anthemius (453); mother of Alypia. *Sid., Carm.* 2. 193-195, 482.

Euprepia (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Euprepia): sister of Ennodius; recipient of seven letters from her brother that we know of; lived in Arles; mother of Lupicinus. *Ennodius Epp.* 2.15, 3.15, 3.28, 5.7, 6.3, 6.26, 7.8.

Eustenia (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Eusthenia): niece of Gregory of Tours; sister of Justina; married to Nicetius. *DLH* 5.14. (*Liber de Virtutibus sancti Martini*, 4.36).

Eutropia: pious widow involved in a law-suit; Sidonius intervenes with a letter on her behalf written to bishop presiding over her case. *Sid., Ep.* 6.2

Failleuba (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Failleuba): queen of Franks, wife of Childebert (2), mother of

- Theuderic (3); Childebert made her protection, her wealth and rights part of the treaty of Andelot. *DLH* 9. 20.
- Filimathia (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Philomathia): daughter of Philomathius, died at age thirty leaving five children. *Sid., Ep.* 2.8.
- Fredegund (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Fredegundis): queen of the Franks; originally of servile status rose to become powerful queen; wife of King Chilperic; mother of Chlodobert, Samson, Dagobert, Theuderic (2), Chlothar (2), and Rigunth. *passim DLH* 4.28-10.31.
- Frontina (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Frontina): daughter of Fronto and Auspacia; Sidonius praises her piety and virginity. *Sid., Ep.* 4.21.4.
- Fuscina (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Fuscina): sister of Avitus of Vienne to whom he dedicated *Carmen* 6; fourth child of Audentia and Hesychius; a dedicated virgin from birth. *Avitus Carm.* 6.
- Galswinth (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Galsuintha): short-lived Visigothic queen of Franks; married to Chilperic (3), sister of Brunhild; daughter of Athanagild (1) and Goiswinth; murdered by her husband. *DLH* 4.28.
- Garivald (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Garibaldus 1): duke of Bavaria; married to Vuldegrada, the widow of King Theudebald. *DLH* 4.9.
- Germanus (Duchesne 2, 466): twentieth bishop of Paris (c. 556-573); excommunicated Charibert when he married the dedicated virgin Marcovefa. *DLH* 4.26.
- Godomar (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Godomarus 2): last of the Burgundian kings, ruled 524-534; successor of Sigismund. *DLH* 3.6.
- Goiswinth (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Goisuintha): Visigothic queen of Spain; wife of Athanagild; mother of Brunhild and Galswinth; married Leuvigild after Athanagild's death; step-mother of Hermengild and Recared. *DLH* 4.38
- Gundobad (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Gundobadus 1): Burgundian king (474-516); son of Gundioc; king while Avitus, bishop of Vienne; was almost converted by the bishop. *DLH* 2.3 and 3.5.

Gundobad (2): son of Guntram (1) and his concubine Veneranda; killed by step-mother Marcatrude. *DLH* 4.25.

Gundovald (1) (PLRE 3 s.v. Gundovaldus 2): pretender to the throne; claimed to be son of Chlothar (1); possibly supported by Childebert (2) and Brunhild. *DLH* 6.24, 7.32-34.

Gundovald (2) (PLRE 3 s.v. Gundovaldus 1): duke and military commander under Sigisbert (1); saved Childebert (2) from Chilperic (3) after Sigisbert's death 575. *DLH* 5.1.

Guntheuca (PLRE 2 s.v. Guntheuca): wife of Chlodomer; married by Chlothar after Chlodomer's death. *DLH* 3.6.

Guntram (PLRE 3 s.v. Guntchramnus): king of Franks (561-592), son of Chlothar (1) and Ingund (1); brother of Sigisbert (1), Charibert, Childeric, Gunthar and Chlosind; half-brother of Chilperic (3); married Marcatrude and Austrechild; father of Gundobad (2) by Veneranda (his concubine); Chlothar (3) and Chlodomer (2) by Austrechild; all three sons died before their father. Styled *rex bonus* (*DLH* 4.25) by Gregory. *passim DLH* 4.22-10.31.

Hermengild (PLRE 3 s.v. Ermenegildus): son of king of Spain Leuvigild; married Ingund (2); revolted against his father but was captured and then eventually killed (580-584); his wife and son (Athanagild 2) were left as captives of the Byzantines (c. 583). *DLH* 5.38, 6.18 and 8.28.

Hiberia (PLRE 2 s.v. Hiberia): wife of Ruricius; daughter of Ommatius (1); mother of Ommatius (2). Sid., *Carm.* 10, 11. 52-54, 86-90.

Ingeltrude (PLRE 3 s.v. Ingeltrudis): mother of Berthegund and Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux; established a monastery in the atrium of St. Martin's church at Tours; Gregory tells us she lived to be eighty. *DLH* 9.33 and 10.12.

Ingoberga (PLRE 3 s.v. Ingoberga): queen of Franks; wife of King Charibert (1); dismissed by Charibert who then married Merofled; mother of Adelberg (Bertha) who married the

king of Kent (*DLH* 4.26); devoted her life after marriage to religious works and left money to the church at Tours. *DLH* 4.26 and 9.26.

Ingund (1) (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Ingundis 1): queen of Franks; wife of Chlothar (1); mother of Sigisbert (1), Guntram, Charibert, Childeric, Gunthar and Chlothsinda; sister of Aregund. *DLH* 4.3.

Ingund 2 (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Ingundis 2): daughter of Brunhild and Sigibert (1); married to Hermengild, Visigothic prince whom she converts to Catholic Christianity (579); left captive with the Greeks when Hermengild was taken by his father; died at Carthage; son Athanagild (2) was living in Constantiople as hostage. *DLH* 5.38, 8.18 and 8.21.

Justina (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Iustina 2): niece of Gregory of Tours; sister of Eustenia; prioress of the Holy Cross monastery at Poitiers (589). *DLH* 10.15; Venantius Fortunatus *Carm.* 8.13, 9.7.81-4.

Lanthechildis (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Lentachildis): sister of Clovis; sister of Albofledis; was an Arian but converted and was baptised a catholic Christian at the same time as Clovis. *DLH* 2.31.

Leuba (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Leuba): agent of Fredegund and Visigothic king Leuwigild; mother of duke Bladast. *DLH* 8.28.

Leuovera: abbess of the monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers after Radegund; nuns led by Chlotild (3) and Basina (2) led rebellion against her (589). *DLH* 9.39 and 10.15.

Leudast (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Leudastes): count in Tours (576-580); enemy of Gregory of Tours who accused him of slandering Queen Fredegund and of handing Tours over to king Childebert. *DLH* 5.49 and 6.32.

Leuwigild (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Leovigildus): king of the Visigoths (568-586); capital at Toledo; married Goiswinth who was the widow of king Athanagild; father of two sons from another marriage, Hermengild and Recared. *DLH* 4.38, 5.38, 6.29, 30, 33, 43,

Livia: mother of Leontius. *Sid., Carm.* 8.11.3

Magnatrude (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Magnatrudis): wife of Badegisel, bishop of Le Mans; saves her

daughter from armed abduction; after her husband's death Gregory gives the impression that she was running the family estate. DLH 8.39 and 10.5.

Malarichus (*PLRE* 1 s.v. Malarichus): Frankish general in imperial service, c. 355. Ammianus Marcellinus 15.5.11.

Mallobaudes (*PLRE* 1 s.v. Mallobaudes): Frankish military leader and Roman general described as *rex francorum*. Ammianus Marcellinus 31.10.6.

Marcatrude (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Marcatrudis): wife of Guntram (1); step-mother to Gundobad (2) whom she killed; daughter of Magnachar. DLH 4.25.

Marcovefa (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Marcovefa): wife of Charibert (1); dedicated virgin; excommunicated for her marriage by bishop Germanus of Paris; sister of Merofled. DLH 4.26.

Maroveus (Duchesne 2, 83): bishop of Poitiers c. 585-590; hostile to Radegund and her monastery in Poitiers; many complaints against him from the nuns at the abbey during the revolt in 589. DLH 9.40 and 10.15

Melanthia (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Melanthia): correspondent of Ruricius; she and her husband Eudomius received a letter of condolence from Ruricius when their son died. Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.39.

Merofled (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Merofleda): wife of Charibert (1); had been a servant of his first wife Ingoberga; sister of Charibert's third wife Marcovefa. DLH 4.26.

Merovech (1) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Merovechus): early Frankish leader; descended from Chlodio; father of Childeric; grandfather of Clovis (1); Merovingian dynasty takes its name from him. DLH 2.9.

Merovech (2) (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Merovechus 1): son of Chilperic (3) and Audovera; married his aunt Brunhild after his uncle king Sigibert died (575); accused of open rebellion against his father; killed at his own request by a servant rather than be captured. DLH 5.2-18.

Miro (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Miro): king of the Sueves (570-583); after his death his kingdom is taken over by the Visigothic king, Leuvigild; according to Gregory, Miro allied himself with

- Hermengild against his father Leuwigild. *DLH*6.43
- Mummolus (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Mummolenus): duke accused of sorcery in the death of Theuderic, son of Fredegund and Chilperic (3). *DLH* 6.35.
- Namatius (Duchesne 2, 34): ninth bishop of Clermont; known for bringing the relics of Vitalis and Agricola from Bologna to the cathedral at Clermont; married to Anonyma (20). *DLH* 2.16, 2.17, and 2.21.
- Ommatius (1) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ommatius 2): Gallic senator; father of Hiberia; father-in-law of Ruricius. *Sid.*, *Carm.* 11. 51-4 and 17.
- Ommatius (2) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ommatius 2, Duchesne 2, 302-303): son of Ruricius and Hiberia; fifteenth bishop of Tours (522-525). *DLH* 3.17 and 10.31.
- Paeonius (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Paeonius): low born acquaintance of Sidonius' who rose to become praetorian prefect of the Gauls (456-457); his daughter (Anonyma 2) married well by means of a good dowry. *Sid.*, *Ep.* 1.11.
- Papianilla (1) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Papianilla 1): wife of Tonantius Ferreolus; relative of Papianilla (2), the wife of Sidonius Apollinaris. *Sid.*, *Carm.* 24. 34-38, *Epp.* 2.9.3 and 7.12.1.
- Papianilla (2) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Papianilla 2): wife of Sidonius Apollinaris; daughter of Emperor Eparchius Avitus; sister of Agricola and Ecdicius; mother of Apollinaris, Roscia, Severiana and Alcima. *Sid.*, *Carm.* 23.430, *Epp.* 5.16, 2.2.3, 2.12.1-2, and *DLH* 2.21-22.
- Papianilla (3) (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Papianilla 3): wife of Parthenius; daughter of Agricola; neice of Sidonius; murdered by her husband on suspicion of adultery. Ruricius *Epp.* 2. 32, 2.37, and *DLH* 3.36.
- Parthenius (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Parthenius): married to Papianilla (3); killed his wife on suspicion of adultery; grandson of Ruricius; *patricius* of Provence; served under Theudebert (1) and ended up a tax collector under the Frankish king; killed by mob in Trier (c. 547/48). Ruricius *Epp.* 2.36, 2.37, and *DLH* 3.36.

- Pelagia** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Pelagia 1): wife of Bonifatius († 432); wife of Aëtius (†454); origins from barbarian/visigothic royalty; had one son, Gaudentius, with Aëtius. Sid., *Carm.* 5. 128-139, 203-207; *DLH* 2.7.
- Peter** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Petrus 12): elder brother of Gregory of Tours; priest who was deacon of Langres; accused of sorcery in the death of his own bishop; killed during an episode of episcopal infighting. *DLH* 5.5.
- Placidina** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Placidina): wife of Apollinaris. *DLH* 3.2 and 3.12.
- Proiectus** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Proiectus 2): betrothed to daughter of Anonyma (3); Sidonius wrote a letter of reference for him to the *tutor* of his intended. Sid., *Ep* 2.4.2.
- Priscus** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Priscus 3, Duchesne 2, 168): twenty-ninth bishop of Lyon c.573; married to Susanna. *DLH* 4.36.
- Pudens** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Pudens): correspondent of Sidonius over issue of *raptus*. Sid., *Ep.* 5.19.
- Radegund** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Radegundis): queen, saint, founder of the monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers; daughter of Thuringian king; taken captive and married by Chlothar (1) (c. 540); died 587. *DLH* 3.7, 9.40, 9.42 (copy of letter of foundation for her monastery).
- Ragnahilda** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ragnahilda): Visigothic queen; wife of Euric; mother of Alaric (2). Sid., *Epp.* 4.8.1-5 .
- Reccared** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Reccaredus 1): Visigothic king (586-601), son of Leuvigild; betrothed to but never married Rigunth; brother of Hermengild. *DLH* 4.38, 6.34, 9.15.
- Ricimer** (*PLRE* 2 s.v. Ricimer 2): *magister militum* (west) 456-472; *patricius* 457-472; right hand man to Majorian and Anthemius; married Alypia, daughter of Anthemius (467).
- Riculf**: priest in Tours; enemy of Gregory of Tours; charged Gregory with the slander of Queen Fredegund. *DLH* 5.49.
- Rigunth** (*PLRE* 3 s.v. Rigunthis): daughter of King Chilperic and Fredegund; betrothed but not married to Reccared; fasted on behalf of Gregory of Tours when he was on trial for

slander; never married. *DLH* 5.38, 6.45, 7.9-10, and 9.34.

Rosamund (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Rosimunda): daughter of Gepid king; wife of Langobard king Alboin; accused of killing her husband. *DLH* 4.41 and Paul the Deacon *Hist. Lang.* 1.27

Roscia (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Roscia): daughter of Sidonius and Papianilla. Sid., *Ep.* 5.16.5.

Septimima: woman accused of witchcraft and plotting against King Childebert (2). *DLH* 9.38.

Severiana (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Severiana): daughter of Sidonius and Papianilla (2); lived as dedicated virgin in family home of Audentia. Sid., *Ep.* 2.12.2 and Avitus *Carm* 6.80.

Sigibert (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Sigibertus): king of Franks (561- 575); son of Chlothar (1) and Ingund (1); husband of Brunhild; father of Childebert (2), Ingund (2), Chlodosind; appointed Gregory to position of bishop of Tours; Gregory claims he was murdered by assassins sent by Fredegund. *DLH* 4.22-51.

Sigismund (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Sigismundus 1): king of Burgundians (516-523); son of Gundobad; killed with his wife and children by Chlodomer (1). *DLH* 3.5-6.

Silvanus (*PLRE* 1 *s.v.* Silvanus 2): son of Bonitus; Frankish military commander in Roman imperial service; revolted and was killed; death resulted in the Franks sack of the city of Cologne. Ammianus Marcellinus 15.5.16.

Simplicius (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Simplicius 9, Duchesne 2, 27): bishop of Bourges, friend of Sidonius; married to Anonyma 12. Sid., *Ep.* 7.9.

Suavegotha (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Suavegotho): Burgundian princess; daughter of Sigismund; married to Theuderic. *DLH* 3.5.

Susanna: wife of Bishop Priscus of Lyon; attributed with bad behaviour by Gregory. *DLH* 4.36.

Theodahad (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Theodahadus): king of Tuscany; becomes king of the Ostrogoths (534-536); cousin of Amalsuintha who she was forced to proclaim him co-regent; he seized

power and had Amalsuintha killed. *DLH* 3.31.

Theudebald (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Theodebaldus 1): king of Franks (547-555); son of Theudebert and Deuteria; married Vuldetrada who was the daughter of Wacho, king of Langobards. *DLH* 4.9

Theudebert (1) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Theodebertus): king of Franks (533-547); son of Theuderic (1) and Suavegotha (daughter of Sigismund); married his concubine Deuteria and then Wisigard, daughter of Langobard King Wacho; father of Theudebald by Deuteria. *DLH* 3.22 and 26.

Theudebert (2) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Theodebertus II): king of Franks (596-612); son of Childebert (2) and a concubine (born 585); grandson of Brunhild; half-brother of Theuderic (3); Gregory does not mention that his mother was a concubine (Fredegar 4.27); murdered by his half-brother in 612 (*LHF* 38). *DLH* 8.37 and 9.9.

Theudechild (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Theudechildis 2): queen of Franks; wife of King Charibert; daughter of a shepherd; sought out King Guntram when Charibert died (567); Guntram seized her treasure and banished her to a monastery in Arles; she tried to escape but was caught and died in the monastery. Gregory first says that she was only Charibert's concubine, but later calls her his queen. *DLH* 4.26.

Theuderic (1) (*PLRE* 2 *s.v.* Theodericus 6): king of the Franks (511-533); married Burgundian princess Suavegotha; son of Clovis and a concubine; father of Theudebert (1). *DLH* 2.28, 3.1, 3.5 and 3.6.

Theuderic (2) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Theodericus 3): son of Fredegund and Chilperic; died young at one year. *DLH* 6.27.

Theuderic (3) (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Theodericus 4): king of Franks (596-613); son of Childebert (2) and Faileuba (born 586); younger half-brother of Theudebert (2); grandson of Brunhild; died in 613; *LHF* 39 says he was killed by Brunhild. *DLH* 9.4 and 9.9.

Ultrogotha (*PLRE* 3 *s.v.* Ultrogotha): queen of Franks; wife of Childebert (1); she and two

daughters were exiled by Chlothar (1) when he took over Childebert's kingdom (558).

DLH 4.20.

Veneranda (*PLRE 3 s.v. Veneranda*): concubine of Guntram; mother of Gundobad (2). *DLH*

4.25.

Vuldetrada (*PLRE 3 s.v. Vuldetrada*): Langobard princess married to Theudebald; sister of Wisigard (who was married to Theudebert, Theudebald's father); daughter of Waccho; after Theudebald's death she is married to Garivald, the duke of Bavaria by Chlothar (1) who took over Theudebald's kingdom. *DLH 4.9.*

Wisigard (*PLRE 3 s.v. Wisegardis*): Langobard princess married to Theudebert (1); sister of Vuldetrada; daughter of Waccho; intervenes on behalf of Asteriolus (one of Theudebert's advisors) to have him pardoned by the king. *DLH 3.20.*

APPENDIX 2

Germanic laws and the Theodosian Code

The late fifth and early sixth centuries in Gaul saw the promulgation of legal codes by the Franks, Visigoths, and Burgundians. When describing the creation of an ethnic identity Geary states that '(a) critical mass of warriors under a successful commander is converted into a people through the imposition of a legal system.'¹ These legal codes are a significant indication of the development of a specific identity in the Germanic kingdoms of Gaul. The Germanic law codes were heavily influenced by their Roman precursor, the Theodosian Code. Both legal documents are important historical sources for the social history of the fifth and sixth centuries in Gaul.

In the later Roman empire, the emperor was the source of all law and the imperial rescript was the source of the emperor's opinion; it was his response to a specific case.² The rescript would then go on to be applied as universal law. This trend was overturned by the emperor Arcadius in 398, who decreed that rescripts could only apply to the specific cases they were written for.³ Therefore the trend in the late fourth and early fifth century was for the generalization of laws and the use of the imperial edict rather than the rescript as the source of legal text.⁴

The *Codex Theodosianus* (otherwise known as the Theodosian Code and here referred to as the *CTh*) is a compilation of imperial legislation dating from 311-437 that was promulgated in 438 under the direction of the emperor Theodosius II.⁵ The intent of the code

¹ Geary (1999), 108.

² Harries (1993), Millar (1977), Jones (1964).

³ *CTh* 1.2.11.

⁴ Harries (1993), 2.

⁵ For the most recent views on the Theodosian code, its impact, and how it came about, see articles in Harries and Wood (1993) and the recently published study on the Code and its application by Honoré (1998).

was to clarify and structure the application of Roman law. In the east, the sixth-century legal reforms of the emperor Justinian rendered the *CTh* obsolete.⁶ In the west and specifically in Gaul, the *CTh* became the main source of Roman law and the foundation for a series of Germanic codes that were promulgated in the early sixth century.

The Germanic law codes can be divided into two categories. First there are the Roman law codes of the Germans such as the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*, otherwise called the *Breviary of Alaric*, dated to 506, and the *Lex Romana Burgundionum*, dated to the reign Sigismund (516-523).⁷ These codes are collections of Roman law intended to be applied to the Roman population of Gaul who lived under Germanic rule. The codes appeared within a century of the *CTh* and relied heavily on it as a foundation. The *Breviary of Alaric* is the closest in form to Roman law and the first part of Theodosian Code is substantially preserved in its text. It became, under the Franks, the chief source for Roman law.⁸ The *Lex Romana Burgundionum* was a short-lived law code replaced by the *Breviary* when the Franks conquered the Burgundian kingdom in 534.⁹

The second type of law code promulgated in Gaul in the sixth century was composed in order to record customary Germanic law and was meant to be applied to the Germanic populations. The *Pactus Legis Salicae* (the *Laws of the Salian Franks*, here referred to as the *PLS*) is the earliest of the Frankish codes promulgated some time in the early sixth century under the authority of Clovis. There is some disagreement over the exact date of the *PLS*. A distinct lack of Christian legislation in the code has led some to believe that it must have appeared before the baptism of Clovis (an event dated by the latest scholarship to c. 506/7). References to territory beyond the Loire (*PLS* 47.3) makes it possible that the *PLS* appeared

⁶ Wood (1993), 159.

⁷ Drew (1991: 24) who gives 517 as the date for the *Lex Romana Burgundionum*.

⁸ Wood (1993), 162-163.

⁹ Drew (1991), 24-25.

after the battle of Vouillé in 507.¹⁰

The Germanic code of the Burgundians is known as the *Liber Constitutionum* or the *Lex Gundobada* after the Burgundian king Gundobad, who ruled from c. 474 to 516. The name is slightly misleading as the majority of its laws were issued under Sigismund, Gundobad's successor.¹¹ With the Frankish conquest of the Burgundians in 534, the right of the Burgundian people to be governed by Burgundian law was upheld by the Franks and the *Liber* was left in place.¹² During the fifth and sixth centuries the concept of 'personality of law' applied to Romans and to Germans. This means that, in theory, a Gallo-Roman was judged under Roman law and a Visigoth under Visigothic law.¹³ The mechanisms that distinguished between ethnicities at this time are not clearly understood but the laws certainly make a distinction.¹⁴

Law and Women

Reference to legal evidence provides us with important comparative material that allows the anecdotal literary evidence on women to be more clearly understood. The evidence from the literature of Sidonius and Gregory raises issues about marriage, inheritance, and divorce that were governed by law. When held up against the literary evidence the legal material is, by nature, less rhetorical, but analysis of the function and application of the law in late Roman and

¹⁰ Drew (1991), 25 and 112 n. 52. For the opposite interpretation of clause 47.3, see Wood (1994: 112). It is possible that 47.3 was a later addition to laws promulgated earlier in the century. The consensus is that the *PLS* appeared before the death of Clovis in 511. The prologue of the *Pactus* claims that its authors were Wisogast, Arogast, Salegast, and Widogast. It also states that these men came from settlements on the other side of the Rhine called Botheim, Widoheim, and Saleheim. The prologue is thought to have been written later than the original body of laws (c. late sixth century) and the reality of these individuals and places may be challenged, if nothing else on onomastic grounds. See Drew (1991: 28-52), for background on the laws. Wood (1994: 112-113), dates the prologue to the late seventh or early eighth century.

¹¹ These laws were issued in several parts between 483 and 532, see Wood (1990), 54.

¹² Drew (1991), 24.

¹³ See Drew (1991), 8.

¹⁴ See Wood (1990) for the case of the Burgundians.

early Germanic society in Gaul is by no means straightforward. The legal evidence can be used to supplement the information provided by the literary sources but the legal view on issues concerning women is complex and often contradictory.¹⁵ There was no one law that governed marriage, divorce, or dowry in the fifth and sixth centuries. The important elements that regulated women's lives in the ancient world were as much about local custom as about legal texts.¹⁶ For example, there were laws that banned intermarriage between Germanic and Roman populations in both Germanic and Roman law codes.¹⁷ When discussing these issues one must not lose sight of the fact that many Germans became Romans through citizenship and many others, notwithstanding any ban that existed, intermarried.¹⁸ Who was Roman and who was German after the end of the western Empire and exactly how distinctions were made is

¹⁵ See Evans Grubbs (1995), Treggiari (1991), and Arjava (1994) for surveys of women in law. The laws of the *CTh*, which are the most relevant in this study, are often contradictory and case-specific. The applicability of these laws in Gaul is questionable but they do provide a framework from which to assess the material in Gaul.

¹⁶ Regional variation must always be taken into consideration, with laws especially. Marriage customs, as an example, changed from region to region and custom may not have factored into general Roman law issued from Constantinople.

¹⁷ *CTh* 3.14.1 *Nulli provincialium, cuiuscumque ordinis aut loci fuerit, cum barbara sit uxore coniugium, nec ulli gentilium provincialis femina copuletur. Quod si quae inter provinciales atque gentiles adfinitates ex huiusmodi nuptiis extiterint, quod in his suspectum vel noxium detegitur, capitaliter expietur.* No provincial, of whatever class or rank he may be, can marry with a barbarian wife, nor may a woman of provincial status be joined with any barbarian. But if any relationships among the provincials and barbarians emerge from such marriages, what among them is detected as suspicious or harmful shall be atoned for capitally.

The only Germanic code to reiterate this law was the Breviary of Alaric, issued for the Roman population of the Visigothic kingdoms. Epigraphic and onomastic evidence suggests that intermarriage occurred at all levels of society.

¹⁸ Intermarriage between Romans and Germans occurred at the highest level of society in the late fourth and early fifth centuries (Stilicho and Serena being just one of many high level, political marriages). It seems legitimate to argue that intermarriage took place at lower levels of society as well and became more common over the fifth and sixth centuries as divisions between Roman and Germanic cultures faded. See Blockley (1982) for an interpretation of the law and the extent to which it was intended to apply to the general population. The use of the term *gentiles* for Germans serving in the Roman military led to the assumption that this is a specific and not a general ban on intermarriage. See also Soraci (1965) for the basic study on marriage between Romans and 'barbarians'. For a background to Roman attitudes towards intermarriage in the Republic and Empire see Cherry (1986). See James (1998) for a discussion on the use of the term 'Frank' in Gregory of Tours.

unclear.

Legal evidence is the foundation for two important books on marriage and the family in the late Roman empire.¹⁹ The laws illuminate the lives of different women from those in the literary sources. The literary sources in most cases describe individuals from the Gallo-Roman aristocracy and Germanic royalty. The laws record the rules that affected a wider stratum of society and do not present a view of just the aristocracy.²⁰ For our purposes they can help to clarify what was acceptable and what was unacceptable in the realms of courtship, betrothal, marriage, and divorce, and how this was different in Roman and Germanic tradition. The women Gregory and Sidonius write about are, to a large degree, literary creations, but underlying these literary portrayals there is an inherent reality. The legal evidence is used here as background to provide a better understanding of the sources and their usefulness as material about women's lives.

¹⁹ Evans-Grubbs (1995) and Arjava (1996).

²⁰ Evans-Grubbs (1995), 2.