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Paul the Deacon – between *sacci* and *marsuppia*¹

Paul has puzzled many historians, although we are reasonably well informed about his basic biography.² He was born in the 720s in Cividale, the capital of the duchy of Friuli, from a Lombard family proud of its lineage. When Duke Ratchis became king in 744, he took young Paul along to the royal court in Pavia, where he received a thorough intellectual education from the grammarian Flavianus.³ We know that Paul eventually became a deacon, and a monk at Montecassino, although we can only speculate about the exact chronology.⁴ In any case, he served as a teacher and adviser of Adelperga, the daughter of King Desiderius and later wife of Arichis II, Duke of Benevento.⁵ After the fall of the Lombard kingdom, Paul's brother Arichis was implicated in the Rodgaud rebellion in 776, taken as a captive to Francia, and his possessions were confiscated. About seven years later Paul wrote to Charlemagne in his favour.⁶ This letter roughly coincides with the king's invitation to Paul, who had meanwhile won a reputation for his scholarship, to come to the Frankish heartlands. Paul spent about four years between Quierzy, Thionville, Metz and Poitiers in the early 780s, and then returned to Montecassino.

He was a prolific writer, and almost invariably worked on commission by members of ruling families, or by leading clerics. As the letter of dedication shows, his Roman History, a revision of Eutropius, was written at the request of Adelperga, duchess of Benevento.⁷ Most of his works were commissioned by noble Frankish

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² See, for instance, Ludwig Bethmann, *Paulus Diaconus Leben und Schriften*, in: *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 10 (1851) 247–334; Felix Dahn, *Paulus Diaconus* (Leipzig 1876); Theodor Mommsen, *Die Quellen der Langobardengeschichte des Paulus Diaconus*, in: *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 5 (1880) 51–103; Donald Bullough, *Ethnic history and the Carolingians. An alternative reading of Paul the Deacon's Historia Langobardorum*, in: *The Inheritance of Historiography*, ed. Christopher Holdsworth/Timothy P. Wiseman (Sidney 1986) 85–105; Massimo Oldoni, *Paolo Diacono*, in: *Montecassino dalla prima alla seconda distruzione. Momenti e aspetti di storia cassinese secc. VI–IX*, ed. Faustino Avagliano (Miscellanea Cassinese 55, Montecassino 1987) 231–258; Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History: Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton 1988) 329–431; Lidia Capo, *Paolo Diacono e il problema della cultura dell'Italia longobarda*, in: *Langobardia*, ed. Stefano Gasparri/Paolo Cammarosano (Udine 1990) 169–235; Walter Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus und die „Historia Langobardorum“: Text und Tradition*, in: *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer/Georg Scheibelreiter (VIÖG 32, Wien/München 1994) 375–405; Rosamond McKitterick, *Paul the Deacon and the Franks*, in: *EME* 8 (1999) 319–339; Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000), especially Walter Pohl, *Paolo Diacono e la costruzione dell'identità longobarda*, in: *ibid.* 413–426; Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale (secc. VI–X) (Atti del XIV Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo 1999, Spoleto 2001), especially Claudio Leonardi, *La figura di Paolo Diacono*, in: *ibid.* 13–24, and Ovidio Capitani, *Paolo Diacono e la storiografia altomedievale*, in: *ibid.* 25–44.

³ This information can be reconstructed on the basis of remarks in his *History of the Lombards*: *Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum* IV, 37; VI, 7 (ed. Ludwig Bethmann/Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Langob., Hannover 1878) 12–187, at 128, 167; or: (ed. Lidia Capo, *Paolo Diacono: Storia dei Longobardi*, Milano 1992); an old English translation by William Dudley Foulke (1907) has been re-edited by Edward Peters (Philadelphia 2003).

⁴ Leo of Ostia writes in the *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* I, 17 (ed. Hartmut Hoffmann, *Die Chronik von Montecassino*, MGH SS 34, Hannover 1980) 52, that Paul was in Pavia until 774 and only became a monk in Montecassino after the death of Arichis II in 787. As this story is linked with the legend of Paul's plot against Charlemagne, and its chronology contradicts the letter to abbot Theudemar (see below), the 787 date seems rather late. Still, it is hard to believe that Paul had established himself at Montecassino before 774.

⁵ See the dedicatory letter of *Paulus Diaconus, Historia Romana* (ed. Hans Droysen, SS rer. Germ. in usum schol. [49], Berlin 1879) 1f.

⁶ *Paulus Diaconus, Versus ad regem precando* (ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Langob., Hannover 1878) 15f., at 15.

⁷ *Paulus Diaconus, Historia Romana*, ed. Droysen 1.

churchmen, or by the king himself. His history of the bishops of Metz glorified the origins of the Carolingian family.⁸ His homiliary was commissioned by Charlemagne himself.⁹ Furthermore, Paul compiled a selection of the letters of Gregory the Great at the request of Adalhard of Corbie, complemented by a Life of Gregory.¹⁰ He was also entrusted with sending a reliable copy of the rule of St. Benedict to Francia, but the Montecassino manuscript that has long been believed to be Paul's version is in fact a commentary by Hildemar wrongly attributed to Paul by a tenth-century hand.¹¹ A revised version of the grammar of Festus was also dedicated to Charlemagne.¹² Besides, Paul epitomized the *Ars Donati*, another classical grammar.¹³ Several letters, epitaphs and poems have also been preserved, mostly exchanged in the circle of Carolingian court intellectuals.¹⁴ Towards the end of his life, Paul wrote his best-known work, a history of the Lombards up to the death of King Liutprand in 744.¹⁵ It is quite probable that this history was left unfinished when Paul died on a 13th of April, sometime after 787 (when he composed the epitaph for Arichis II, his last datable work). The Lombard history must have been written before the fall of the Avar khaganate 795/96 because it states that the Gepids "groan up to the present day" under the yoke of the Avars.¹⁶ 799 as the date of Paul's death, which was celebrated by two conferences in Friuli in 1999,¹⁷ has only entered the reference books because of a series of mistakes. Bethmann believed that the History must have been written before Charlemagne's imperial coronation in Rome, although Charles is not even mentioned in it; the resulting *ante quem* date 799 came to be regarded as Paul's death date, not least by the editor of the Montecassino necrologium who added it to the entry on Paul, which yet other authors took for a confirmation of 799 in the sources.¹⁸

⁸ *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 2, Hannover 1829) 260–268; Walter Goffart, Paul the Deacon's *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, and the early design of Charlemagne's succession, in: *Traditio* 42 (1986) 59–93; Michel Sot, *Le Liber de episcopis Mettensibus* dans l'histoire du genre 'Gesta episcoporum', in: Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 527–550.

⁹ Karl Neff, *Die Gedichte des Paulus Diaconus* (München 1908) XXXII, 131–134 (letter of dedication to Charles); Friedrich Wiegand, *Das Homiliar Karls des Großen* (Leipzig 1897).

¹⁰ Letters: The codex St. Petersburg F.v.I.7 (Pal in Norberg's stemma) contains Paul's letter to Adalhard and a collection of Gregory's letters; for the identification with Paul the Deacon, see Neff, *Gedichte* 126–128; and *Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum* (ed. Dag Norberg, CC SL 140, 1, Turnhout 1982) VIII. The Life: *Vita S. Gregorii* (ed. Hartmann Grisar, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 9 [1887]) 162–173; or: PL 75, 41–59; Lucia Castaldi, *Nuovi testimoni della Vita Gregorii di Paolo Diacono* (BHL 3639), in: Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 75–126.

¹¹ Attributed to Paul in Ludwig Traube, *Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti* (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl. 25, 2, München 1910) 37ff.; attribution challenged by Wolfgang Hafner, *Paulus Diaconus und der ihm zugeschriebene Kommentar zur Regula Benedicti*, in: *Commentationes in Regulam S. Benedicti*, ed. Basilius Steidle (Studia Anselmiana 42, Roma 1957) 347–358. For the manuscript Montecassino, *Archivio della Badia 175*, Walter Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung. Montecassino und die langobardische Vergangenheit* (MIÖG Erg. Bd. 39, Wien 2001) 77–109.

¹² *Sexti Pompei Festi de verborum significatione quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome* (ed. Wallace M. Lindsay, Leipzig 1913); Neff, *Gedichte* XXX, 122–125 (dedicatory letter); Roberta Cervani, *L'Epitome di Paolo del 'de verborum significatione' di Pompeo Festo. Struttura e metodo* (Roma 1978); Settimio Lanciotti, *Tra Festo e Paolo*, in: Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 237–250.

¹³ *Ars Donati quam Paulus Diaconus exposuit* (ed. Maria Franca Buffa Giolito, Genova 1990). See also Vivien Law, *The study of grammar, in: Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1994) 88–110.

¹⁴ Neff, *Gedichte*; Paulus Diaconus, *Epistolae* (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH EE 4, München 1895) 505–516; see also *La poesia carolingia*, ed. Francesco Stella (Firenze 1995); and more specifically, Stella's review of the manuscript transmission of Paul's poems, which demonstrates that a number of poems that Neff did not want to attribute to Paul should be rediscussed, for instance the verse form of the *Gesta* of the bishops of Metz or the hymn in honour of St. John the Baptist: Francesco Stella, *La poesia di Paolo Diacono: nuovi manoscritti e attribuzioni incerte*, in: Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 551–576.

¹⁵ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Bethmann/Waitz.

¹⁶ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 27, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 69f.; Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus*.

¹⁷ Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio; Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale.

¹⁸ Ludwig Bethmann/Georg Waitz, *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, Introduction, in: Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* (ed. Ludwig Bethmann/Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Langob., Hannover 1878) 22; *I Necrologi Cassinesi 1* (ed. D. Mauro Inguanez, Roma 1947); Angelo Pantoni, *Introduzione agli studi su Paolo Diacono storico dei Longobardi* (Napoli 1946) 100; Carlo Corbato, *Paulus Diaconus*, in: *Studi Cividalesi (Antichità Altroadriatiche 7, 1975) 7–22*; see Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus*.

However, debates about the exact chronology of Paul's life are not my concern here. In spite of his several works that have come down to us, many questions about Paul's attitudes and erudition remain unanswered. This is not only due to simple lack of information. Paul's life and work are full of contradictions. He is a Lombard with a Roman name, and (as a cleric) is the only one in his family to have one. He supplies details of his Lombard lineage but writes of the Lombards and their language in the third person: 'them' and not 'us', *eorum lingua* and not 'ours'.¹⁹ He stops his history in 744 exactly at the point when he himself came to the court at Pavia, and could have started to write *historia* in the ancient sense; this is especially disappointing as already the dedicatory letter of the Roman History to Adelperga promises a continuation *ad nostram usque aetatem*.²⁰ He was one of the leading grammarians of his age and was perfectly able to compose polished poetry, but the Latin of the early manuscripts of the Lombard History is so unclassical that editors have often chosen more correct 11th-century variants.²¹ Paul extensively includes pagan myths and gruesome legends but rhetorically distances himself from them by calling them "ridiculous fables".²²

Paul's Lombard history carefully balances quite contradictory stances: He combines a clear Lombard perspective with a scorn for their pagan past and their endless inner conflicts. In spite of his distinctively Catholic world view, he repeatedly displays a lenient attitude towards Arianism and the Three-Chapters heresy. For instance, he includes a report on the late-sixth-century synod of Marano probably taken from the early seventh-century chronicler Secundus of Trento, which is openly heretical – obviously without noticing.²³ He writes as a monk but lacks interest in Italian monasticism apart from St. Benedict and Montecassino (Bobbio and San Vincenzo are only presented very briefly, and are eclipsed by otherwise unknown holy men).²⁴ Lombard victories

¹⁹ Florus van der Rhee, *Die germanischen Wörter in den langobardischen Gesetzen* (Rotterdam 1970) 274; Nicholas Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy c. 568–774* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series 53, New York 2003) 110–114.

²⁰ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Romana*, ed. Droysen 2; Neff, *Gedichte* III, 11–13.

²¹ "Bethmann hat sich gesträubt, dem Autor zuzuschreiben was seine Handschriften darboten." Georg Waitz, *Über die handschriftliche Überlieferung und Sprache der 'Historia Langobardorum' des Paulus*, in: *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 1 (1876) 535–566, esp. 560. Still, Italian philologists have repeatedly criticized the MGH edition: Dante Bianchi, *Per il testo della Historia Langobardorum di Paolo Diacono*, in: *Atti del Secondo Congresso di studi sull'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto 1953) 120–137, at 135: "Quella del Waitz non è l'edizione critica della Historia Langobardorum: sibbene l'edizione critica dei suoi due più scorretti menanti." No doubt the grammarian Paul the Deacon knew Latin better than the early manuscripts of the *Historia Langobardorum* show; but it is at least possible that he wrote (or dictated) his history in a Latin closer to the spoken Latin of his day, see Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus* 389f.

²² See, for instance, Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 8, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 52 (Lombard origin legend as *ridicula fabula* and *risui digna et pro nihilo habenda*).

²³ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* III, 26, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 105–107: *His diebus, defuncto Helia Aquilegensi patriarcha ..., Severus huic succedens regendam suscepit ecclesiam. Quem Smaracodus patricius veniens de Ravenna in Grados, per semet ipsum e basilica extrahens, Ravennam cum iniuria duxit cum aliis tribus ex Histria episcopis Quibus comminans exilia atque violentiam inferens, communicare conpulit Iohanni Ravennati episcopo, trium capitulorum damnatori, qui a tempore papae Vigili vel Pelagii a Romanae ecclesiae desciverat societate. Exempto vero anno, e Ravenna ad Grados reversi sunt. Quibus nec plebs communicare voluit, nec ceteri episcopi eos receperunt. Smaracodus patricius a daemonio non iniuste correptus, successorem Romanum patricium accipiens, Constantinopolim remeavit. Post haec facta est sinodus decem episcoporum in Mariano, ubi receperunt Severum patriarcham Aquilegensem dantem libellum erroris sui, quia trium capitulorum damnatoribus communicarat Ravennae.* The "damnators of the Three Chapters" who had forced the patriarch into submission were in fact the orthodox side. See Walter Pohl, *Heresy in Secundus and Paul the Deacon*, in: *The Crisis of the Oikoumene. The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean*, ed. Celia Chazelle/Catherine Cubitt (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 14, Turnhout 2007) 243–264, and other contributions in the same volume.

²⁴ Bobbio: Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* II, 16, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 82 (mentioned in the catalogue of Italian provinces); Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* IV, 41, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 134 (emphasizing that *quo in loco et multae possessiones a singulis principibus sive Langobardis largitae sunt*). San Vincenzo al Volturno: Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 40, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 179 (referring to the foundation story written by Ambrosius Autpertus). Further monasteries mentioned: Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* V, 34, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 156 (S. Agata in Monte near Pavia founded by Perctarit); Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* V, 37, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 157 (S. Maria Teodote, where Cunincpert confined his lover Theodota); Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 1, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 164 (S. Pietro fuori le mura at Benevento); Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 17, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 170 (an otherwise unknown monastery of S. Giorgio that Cunincpert had constructed on the battlefield of Coronate); Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 58, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 185 (S. Pietro fuori le mura at Pavia and other monasteries founded by Liutprand). None of these passages go beyond mentioning the foundation, and they show no interest in monastic life. Only Montecassino receives a fuller treatment, see Marios Costambeys, *The monastic environment of Paul the Deacon*, in: *Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio*, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Udine 2000) 127–138. For Italian monasticism of the period, see Mayke De Jong/Peter Erhart, *Monachesimo*

over the Franks are recounted complacently and in detail, although Frankish kings and especially Carolingian majors of the palace receive a mostly favourable treatment. Good and bad rulers appear everywhere; King Guntram or the Emperor Tiberios can serve as model rulers as much as any Lombard king, and no foreign king is depicted in darker colours than the Lombard usurper Alahis, who vowed on a battlefield that after victory he would fill a well with the testicles of clerics.²⁵

Modern historians have always tended to reduce this complexity. Either they have pictured Paul as a naive storyteller who simply related what he had found and was incapable of arriving at a convincing synthesis²⁶ (Walter Goffart has rightly contradicted that view, perhaps exaggerating Paul's use of sophisticated literary devices on the other hand²⁷). Or they have tried to detect an overarching purpose and message in Paul's Lombard history. Thus, he has been depicted as a Lombard patriot,²⁸ a fierce Germanic nationalist,²⁹ a pious monk and devout catholic,³⁰ an enemy of the Franks³¹ or a supporter of the Carolingian cause,³² or recently, as sympathizing with a Byzantine takeover.³³ Much has been made of the Beneventan perspective of the History, and that was also Walter Goffart's approach: according to him, it was written to "instruct and edify" Prince Grimoald of Benevento. Therefore, his namesake, the seventh-century king Grimoald, had to become "Paul's central hero", a "savior" with a "model reign".³⁴ Indeed, Grimoald receives a generally favourable treatment in the History. But what are we to make of the story how Grimoald once stormed the town of Forumpopuli at Easter and even slaughtered the holy deacons while they were holding the babies in baptism?³⁵ Would a deacon regard that as a "model reign"? Rosamond McKitterick has countered such Beneventan reductionism with the idea that the History may also have been written for Pippin of Italy, and thus, as many other of Paul's works, to a Frankish

tra i Longobardi e i Carolingi, in: *Il futuro dei Longobardi. L'Italia e la costruzione dell'Europa di Carlo Magno*, Saggi, ed. Carlo Bertelli/Gian Pietro Brogiolo (Milano 2000) 105–127; Marios Costambeys, *The transmission of tradition: Gregorian influence and innovation in eighth-century Italian monasticism*, in: *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen/Matthew Innes (Cambridge 2000) 78–101; Ross Balzaretto, *Monasteries, towns and the countryside: reciprocal relationships in the archdiocese of Milan, 614–814*, in: *Towns and their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo/Natalie Gauthier/Neil Christie (Leiden 2000) 235–257; Peter Erhart, *Gens eadem reparat omnia septa gregis – Mönchtum unter den langobardischen Königen*, in: *Die Langobarden – Herrschaft und Identität*, ed. Walter Pohl/Peter Erhart (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 9, Wien 2005) 387–408.

²⁵ Alahis: Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* V, 36–41, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 156–161; esp. *ibid.* V, 40, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 160.

²⁶ Wilhelm Wattenbach/Wilhelm Levison/Heinz Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. Vorzeit und Karolinger 2* (Weimar 1953) 224; Franz Brunhölzl, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters 1* (München 1975) 264. For the following, see Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus* 378–381.

²⁷ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History* 332f.

²⁸ Piero Silverio Leicht, *Paolo Diacono e gli altri scrittori delle vicende d'Italia nell'età carolingia*, in: *Atti del Secondo Congresso di Studi Longobardi* (Spoleto 1953) 57–74, at 70f.; Stefano Maria Cingolani, *Le Storie dei Longobardi. Dall'Origine a Paolo Diacono* (Roma 1995) 171, according to whom the "profound essence" of the *Historia Langobardorum* is that "il significato e la ragion d'essere dei Longobardi e della loro identità – che è poi la profonda essenza della *Historia Langobardorum* – andava ricercata nelle tradizioni etniche".

²⁹ Raffaello Morghen, *La civiltà dei Longobardi nella 'Historia Langobardorum' di Paolo Diacono*, in: *La civiltà dei Longobardi in Europa* (Atti del Convegno internazionale Roma/Cividale del Friuli, Roma 1974) 9–23, at 12; Cingolani, *Le Storie dei Longobardi* 180. This view does not build on any sense of Germanic identity or loyalty in Paul's work but only on modern projections of 'Germanic' virtues and heroism. In a milder form, the 'Germanic' Paul is advocated in Gustavo Vinay, *Alto medioevo latino. Conversazioni e no* (Napoli 1978) 127.

³⁰ John Michael Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 400–1000* (London 1957) 43f.: "The victory of Catholicism, not the victory of the Lombards, is his theme."

³¹ Donald Bullough, *Ethnic history and the Carolingians. An alternative reading of Paul the Deacon's Historia Langobardorum*, in: *The Inheritance of Historiography*, ed. Christopher Holdsworth/Timothy P. Wiseman (Sidney 1986) 85–105, at 97.

³² McKitterick, *Paul the Deacon and the Franks*.

³³ Michael W. Herren, *Theological aspects of the writings of Paul the Deacon*, in: *Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio*, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 223–236. His conclusion that Paul "sided with the pro-Fifth Council Greeks" out of "sympathy for Greek theology and policies" adds a surprising and not very convincing new facet to the many attempts to detect "where Paulus's deepest loyalty lay" (*ibid.* 234f.).

³⁴ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History* 407. For the "Beneventan conception" of the *Historia Langobardorum*, see also Karl-Heinz Krüger, *Zur beneventanischen Konzeption der Langobardengeschichte des Pauls Diaconus*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 15 (1981) 18–35.

³⁵ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* V, 27, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 196.

commission.³⁶ There is a lot to say for that. Still, both Montecassino and Benevento were central concerns in the Lombard History, and in spite of the lack of manuscripts of the *Historia Langobardorum* in Southern Italy, the use of his work is well attested there.³⁷ Paul the Deacon posthumously became something of a Lombard hero of the south, whose works were considered fundamental for the lofty identity of the *gens Bardorum*, as it came poetically to be called. Stories were told of his plot to murder Charlemagne, which failed; but the king, so the legend went, refused to have him executed because he was such a fine scholar.³⁸

On balance, Paul's art did not lie in promoting one specific agenda in the guise of a naive and straightforward chronicler, but in integrating the contradictory fragments of a troubled history in which he had been involved throughout his lifetime.³⁹ Most of the story he had to tell was about conflicts between Lombard kings, dukes of Friuli and of Benevento, and Frankish kings; he had served all of them, and cherished the rare moments of *alta pax* between them.⁴⁰ He had to come to terms with the fall of the kingdom of Pavia at whose court he had spent his formative years, a place obviously steeped in the importance of Lombard history. Paul still remembered Alboin's grisly skull-cup that King Ratchis had once brought out from his treasure chamber, and relates how he had admired the wall-paintings depicting scenes from Lombard history in Theodelinda's palace at Monza, musing about their foreign-looking costumes.⁴¹ His brother risked his life in rebellion against the Franks, and Paul certainly was not an unworldly monk writing about remote affairs from the serene world of his *claustrum*. Papal and Frankish propaganda had pictured the eighth-century Lombards as barbarians and bad Christians (which many modern historians still accept at face value).⁴² But the Lombard kings, however ruthless their politics were, had been benign patrons of the Church for almost two centuries.

It is Paul's balanced panorama of this political landscape that commands respect, in a period in which the writing of history often was a mere embellishment of the Carolingian regime.⁴³ His Lombard history was centered on Italy but included the full series of Byzantine emperors, essential information on Frankish history, the fall of Carthage to the Saracens and the occasional Anglo-Saxon sidekick. A late-ninth-century manuscript which omits all Lombard history from Paul's Lombard History proves that its non-Lombard parts could stand on their own.⁴⁴ To a world that was ambitiously reaching out for a better and more Christian future, Paul provided a historiographic synthesis that allowed the inclusion of an embarrassingly barbarian past in a broader Christian history without obliterating it. This was in line with Carolingian efforts to integrate much of post-Roman history in the success story of Frankish imperial kingship, but it offered a distinctively different focus.

³⁶ McKitterick, Paul the Deacon and the Franks; ead., Paolo Diacono e i Franchi: il contesto storico e culturale, in: Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 9–28.

³⁷ For the use made of the *Historia Langobardorum* in Southern Italy, Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung* 59f., and passim; id., *Paulus Diaconus* 395–399.

³⁸ *Chronicon Salernitanum* 9 (ed. Ulla Westerbergh, *Studia Latina Stockholmensia* 3, Stockholm/Lund 1956) 10f.; Huguette Taviani-Carozzi, *Le souvenir et la légende de Paul Diacre*, in: *Haut Moyen Âge, Culture, Éducation et Société. Études offertes à Pierre Riché*, ed. Claude Lepelley/Michel Sot (Paris 1990) 555–573; Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung* 60.

³⁹ Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus* 382f.; Capitani, *Paolo Diacono e la storiografia altomedievale*.

⁴⁰ *Alta pace nunc exultat Ausonia regio*: Poem to Adelperga, written in 763: Neff, *Gedichte* II, 10.

⁴¹ *Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum* II, 28, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 87f. (skullcup); *ibid.* III, 22, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 124 (paintings in Theodelinda's palace).

⁴² The most dramatic piece of anti-Lombard rhetoric is found in the letter written by Pope Stephen II to Charlemagne and Carloman in 770, imploring them not to marry a daughter of the Lombard king Desiderius: *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45. Dating and context: Thomas F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter. The Birth of the Papal State 680–825* (Philadelphia 1984) 113f.; Jörg Jarnut, *Ein Bruderkampf und seine Folgen: Die Krise des Frankenreiches*, in: id., *Herrschaft und Ethnogenese im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Matthias Becher (Münster 2002) 235–246, at 240; Janet L. Nelson, *Making a difference in eighth-century politics: the daughters of Desiderius*, in: *After Rome's Fall. Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart*, ed. Alexander C. Murray (Toronto/Buffalo/London 1998) 171–190; Walter Pohl, *Alienigena coniugia: Bestrebungen zu einem Verbot auswärtiger Heiraten in der Karolingerzeit*, in: *Die Bibel als politisches Argument*, ed. Andreas Pečar/Kai Trampedach (*Historische Zeitschrift, Beiheft* 43, München 2007) 159–188. For the anti-Lombard bias in modern historiography: Walter Pohl, *Das Papsttum und die Langobarden*, in: *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung*, ed. Matthias Becher/Jörg Jarnut (Münster 2004) 145–162.

⁴³ In general, see Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge 2004); ead., *Constructing the past in the early middle ages: the case of the Royal Frankish Annals*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series*, 7 (1997) 101–129; ead., *The illusion of royal power in the Carolingian Annals*, in: *English Historical Review* 115 (2000) 1–20.

⁴⁴ Berlin, *Staatsbibliothek Philipps 1885+1896 = SBPK 136/37*; Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus* 391f.

He rendered a rather unpleasant stretch of history meaningful to an educated Christian audience. Maybe that was what accounted for the success of Paul's History of the Lombards, with its more than 100 medieval manuscripts preserved.⁴⁵

But who was the Paul who wrote a history that would help generations to come to terms with their troubled past and present, with barbarians among their forefathers and at their gates? Where did he belong? The first person plural, *nos/noster*, usually is a good guide to the different layers of identity expressed in a text. In Paul's history it is mostly used as an author's plural, and employed in direct speech. Occasions in which it expresses self-identification are comparatively rare. The first person plural can represent his family – Lopichis is called *noster proavus* in the context of Paul's family legend and his *propria genealogia*.⁴⁶ It can be used geographically and refer to his homeland: "our, that is the Adriatic Sea", which reflects the perspective from Paul's childhood Friuli.⁴⁷ It is repeatedly used in a temporal sense for the present (*nostris in diebus*).⁴⁸ It can very generally refer to *nos catholici* who believe in the Trinity.⁴⁹ In a more specific sense, Paul uses it for the community of Montecassino. The context is a question of identity for the monastery. In the beginning of the 8th century, Paul reports, Frankish monks had stolen part of the remains of St. Benedict and Scholastica from the then deserted monastery, which were later venerated in Fleury and Le Mans. Paul, however, minimizes the significance of the theft: "But it is certain that the venerable mouth, sweeter than all nectar, and the eyes beholding ever heavenly things, and other members too have remained to us, although decayed."⁵⁰ In the letter written to abbot Theodemar, Paul refers to "our father Benedict". In the same letter, Charlemagne is called *noster rex*.⁵¹ The first person plural is, however, never used for the Lombards, although Paul clearly says that his progenitor Leupchis came *ex eodem Langobardorum genere*.⁵² At least grammatically, Paul's Lombard history was not "his" history. Bede, by comparison, announces a *Historia ... nostrae nationis* in the preface of his *Historia ecclesiastica*,⁵³ and Widukind professes to describe *principum nostrorum res gestas ... generis gentisque meae devotioni*.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ For a recent overview of the manuscripts, Paolo Chiesa, Caratteristiche della trasmissione dell'Historia Langobardorum, in: Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale (Secc. VI–X) (Atti del XIV Congresso internazionale di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2001) 45–66; see also Laura Pani, Aspetti della tradizione manoscritta dell'Historia Langobardorum, in: Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000) 367–412. For an extensive discussion of the manuscript transmission and the different réécritures, see Pohl, Paulus Diaconus 388–403.

⁴⁶ Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum IV, 37, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 131.

⁴⁷ Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum I, 6, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 51.

⁴⁸ Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum I, 21, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 59f.; cf. *ibid.* V, 6, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 146; *ibid.* VI, 35, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 176; *nostra aetas* is also used twice in the dedicatory letter of the Historia Romana, ed. Droysen 1f.

⁴⁹ Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum IV, 42, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 134 (*nos autem catholici* as opposed to the arians); cf. *ibid.* VI, 4, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 165f., and the remark that Eutropius does not mention *divinae historiae cultusque nostri* in the dedicatory letter of the Historia Romana, ed. Droysen 1.

⁵⁰ Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum VI, 2, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 165: *Circa haec tempora, cum in castro Cassini, ubi beatissimi Benedicti sacrum corpus requiescit, ab aliquantis iam elapsis annis vasta solitudo existeret, venientes de Celmannicorum vel Aurelianensium regione Franci, dum apud venerabile corpus se pernoctare simulassent, eiusdem venerabilis patris pariterque eius germanae venerandae Scolasticae ossa auferentes, in suam patriam adportarunt; ubi singillatim duo monasteria in utrumque honorem, hoc est beati Benedicti et sanctae Scolasticae, constructa sunt. Sed certum est, nobis os illud venerabile et omni nequare suavius et oculos semper caelestia contuentes, cetera quoque membra quamvis defluxa remansisse.* English translation by Foulke 251. See also the commentary in Capo, Paolo Diacono 564.

⁵¹ Neff, Gedichte XIV, 71 (Benedict); *ibid.* XIV, 72 (Charles). Paul also asks the community of Montecassino to pray *pro nostris dominis eorumque exercitu*; *ibid.* XIV, 73.

⁵² Paulus Diaconus, Historia Langobardorum IV, 37, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 131. Paul comes closest to a Lombard 'we' in his epitaph on Ansa, the wife of Desiderius (Neff, Gedichte IX, 47, l. 9–11): *Protulit haec nobis, regni qui scepra teneret, Adelgis magnum, formaque animoque potentem, In quo per Christum Bardis spes maxima mansit.* This must have been written after 774 when Ansa was deported to Francia; most likely, in the context of plans in the years after the fall of the kingdom to reinstate Desiderius' and Ansa's son Adelchis who had escaped to Constantinople. Adelchis' attack on Benevento in 788 already met with resistance from the Beneventan Lombards under the young princeps Grimoald.

⁵³ Beda Venerabilis, Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (ed. John E. King, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge-Mass./London 1979) 10.

⁵⁴ Widukind, Res gestae Saxonicae 1 (ed. Georg Waitz/Hans Eberhard Lohmann/Paul Hirsch, MGH SS rer. Germ in us. schol. separatim editi [60], Hannover 1935) 4; (ed. Ekkehard Rotter/Bernd Schneidmüller, Stuttgart 1981) 22.

Paul was not one of the writers who hide completely behind their writings; he addresses his audience directly at intervals, in the first person plural or singular, be it to announce a digression, indicate his sources or to talk about his family, education or experience. Very little of this, to our disappointment, is about himself as a political actor and about his career at different courts. We hear of his education at Pavia by the grammarian Flavianus or of the skull-cup shown by Ratchis.⁵⁵ The asides in the History are complemented by his poems and letters, which contain a good number of momentary glimpses at his situation. These, however, raise the usual methodological problems. Firstly, we have to face problems of attribution in a number of cases.⁵⁶ And secondly, can we infer Paul's personal attitudes and problems from these stylized and often topical media of communication?⁵⁷

For instance, Paul, in his longish poem in elegiac distichs in honour of St. Benedict (included in the *Historia Langobardorum*) calls himself *exul, inops, tenuis*.⁵⁸ What does that mean? Is this a direct reference to his condition as an exile after the fall of the kingdom in 774?⁵⁹ Is it, as Walter Goffart claims, “not a personal condition”, but one “shared with all Christians here below”?⁶⁰ Is it simply a topos? In almost the same words, Theodulf of Orléans describes himself in his poem to Modoin after being exiled in 817: *Exul, inops, pauper, tristissimus, anxius, egenus/spretus et abiectus ...*⁶¹ These words have classical precedents. In Ovid's *Heroides*, for instance, Medea calls herself *exul, inops, contempta* as she addresses Iason.⁶² The anonymous verses *De nativitate domini* from an early 9th-century Paris manuscript give a much more inclusive list of those called upon to witness the birth of Christ: *pauper, egenus, inops ... ethnicus, exul/ advena, mendicus, peregrinus*.⁶³ However, using topical speech does not mean that the feelings thus expressed cannot have been genuine. Could Paul feel exiled? The letter to abbot Theotmar written from Francia and quoted below underlines how much Paul felt at home in the community of Montecassino.⁶⁴ Still, he lived far from his home town in Friuli, where, at least after 776, his family's fortunes had been shattered. The notion of poverty conveyed in the *inops*, lacking in means, is reinforced by the line before: *poemata parva dedit famulus pro munere supplex*. Paul wrote poems on St. Benedict *pro munere*, which can mean little else but “for a gift”.

The theme of poverty and of desire for material reward, little noticed among the biographers of Paul, occurs repeatedly in his writings. After all, his teacher's uncle, also a grammarian at the court of Pavia, had been rewarded by the king with a precious golden vessel, as Paul recalls in his Lombard History.⁶⁵ The letter to Adalhard accompanying his collection of Gregory the Great's letters (in the 780s, perhaps still in Francia) apologizes for the slow delivery of the work. Paul was kept in bed by illness from September almost through to Christmas, he writes; and furthermore, *utpote pauper et cui desunt librarii*: he was poor and lacking scribes.⁶⁶ He needed money to hire a scribe – not a commodity always provided by monasteries of the period, as the complaints of Ambrosius Autpertus around the same time seem to indicate.⁶⁷ The background to Paul's dire

⁵⁵ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 7, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 167.

⁵⁶ I have relied here on the selection by Neff, *Gedichte*; see, however, the extensive critique of Neff's methodology by Stella, *La poesia di Paolo Diacono*.

⁵⁷ Cf. Mary Garrison, *The emergence of Carolingian Latin literature at the court of Charlemagne (780–814)*, in: *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1994) 111–140.

⁵⁸ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 26, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 67. On the poem, Kurt Smolak, *Poetologisches zu den Benediktshymnen in der Historia Langobardorum des Paulus Diaconus*, in: *Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio*, ed. Paolo Chiesa (*Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Cividale del Friuli-Udine 1999, Udine 2000*) 505–526.

⁵⁹ Neff, *Gedichte* 23f.

⁶⁰ Goffart, *Narrators* 337.

⁶¹ *Epistula Theodulfi episcopi ad Modoinum episcopum scribens eum de suo exilio* 72 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini* 1, Berlin 1881) 563, written between 817 and 821; cf. Peter Christian Jacobsen, *Il Secolo IX*, in: *Letteratura latina medievale. Un manuale*, ed. Claudio Leonardi (Firenze 2003) 75–158, at 86.

⁶² Ovid, *Heroides* c. 12, v. 1.

⁶³ *Versi de nativitate Domini*, vv. 29–32, BN ms. 8812, fol. 77, ed. by André Wilmart, *Mètres et rythmes carolingiens*, in: *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 15 (1940) 195–211, at 199.

⁶⁴ Neff, *Gedichte* XIV, 72.

⁶⁵ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 7, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 167.

⁶⁶ Neff, *Gedichte* XXXI, 129.

⁶⁷ Ambrosius Autpertus, *Epistola ad Stephanum papam* (ed. Robert Weber, *CC CM 27A*, Turnhout 1975) 3; see Peter Erhart, *Contentiones inter monachos – Ethnische und politische Identität in monastischen Gemeinschaften des Frühmittelalters*, in: *Texts and*

straits can be found in his letter to Charlemagne written in 782/83 on behalf of his brother Arichis.⁶⁸ For seven years, Paul writes, had his brother Arichis been detained, their family possessions been confiscated. This also weighed on Paul and his sister, a nun: *Iamque sumus servis rusticitate pares/Nobilitas periit miseris, accessit aegestas*. Rhetoric apart, this is a clear message: Those who once were part of the nobility, now suffer bitter hardship on a par with serfs. “We deserved worse, I admit”, Paul goes on, “but have mercy, potent lord”.

In a more joking manner, the same topic is treated in a poem in response to Peter of Pisa’s verse letter in the name of Charlemagne: *Nulla mihi aut flaventis est metalli copia/Aut argenti sive opum, desunt et marsuppia/Vitam litteris ni emam, nihil est quod tribuam*.⁶⁹ No gold, no silver, even the *marsuppia*, the purses are lacking. The remark, although topical enough in classical poetry, is a bit awkward for a monk of Montecassino where one of the holiest relics were the *sacci*: the bags in which St. Benedict had received his food from heaven.⁷⁰ “I will not make a living by my learning” – it sounds almost like François Villon. If Paul writes to his fellow-monks at Montecassino from Francia that *nullae me, credite, divitiae, nulla praedia, nulla flaventis metalli copia* could separate him from the community, we get a sense that this was what some of them expected to happen.⁷¹ Paul was not simply a monk. He had many talents to offer and considered it appropriate to have a reward. As he had written in a poem to a friend, the muses tend to flee the narrowness of the cloister, and certainly they desert poverty: *Pauperiem fugiunt deliciasque colunt*.⁷² Paul was proud of his learning, which is also indicated by the way he selected material from Pope Gregory’s Life of St. Benedict for the poem in his Lombard History, which he displayed as an example of his skills. Gregory, in his Dialogues, had pictured Benedict’s conversion above all as a break with learning.⁷³ As Kurt Smolak has shown, Paul omits all references to the abandonment of learning in his verses.⁷⁴ Paul may, in a show of modesty, declare himself unworthy of Peter of Pisa’s “ironic” flattery that he was “a Homer in Greek, a Vergil in Latin, a Philo in Hebrew, a Tertullus in the arts, a Flaccus in metrics, a Tibullus in eloquence”.⁷⁵ But then he diligently moves on to the topic of material rewards once more.

In spite of all the rhetoric of self-deprecation, Paul considered himself a nobleman. This is confirmed by his pupil Hildric, who in his epitaph called Paul *eximio ... Bardorum stemmate gentis*.⁷⁶ Paul’s lineage and family history is treated in a long digression of the History of the Lombards, in the occasion of an Avar conquest of Cividale in the early seventh century: “The topic now requires me to postpone my general history and relate also a few matters of a private character (*privatim*) concerning the genealogy of myself who writes these things.”⁷⁷ This family history, and the probably telescoped genealogy, goes back to the *abavus* Leupchis who arrived in Cividale with Alboin, more than 200 years ago, and to the great-grandfather Lopichis who was

Identities in the Early Middle Ages, ed. Richard Corradini/Rob Meens/Christina Pössel/Philip Shaw (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 12, Wien 2006) 373–387. In general, Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge 1989) 135–164; *Le scritture dai monasteri. II° Seminario Internazionale di Studio ‘I Monasteri nell’Alto Medioevo’*, ed. Flavia de Rubeis/Walter Pohl (Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae, Roma 2003).

⁶⁸ Neff, *Gedichte* XI, 54: *Quantulacumque fuit, direpta est nostra supellex/Nec est, heu, miseris qui ferat ullus opem./Coniunx est fratris rebus exclusa paternis/Iamque sumus servis rusticitate pares./ Nobilitas periit, miseris accessit egestas/debuimus, fateor, asperiora pati./Sed miserere, potens rector, miserere, precamur/Et tandem finem his, pie, pone malis.*

⁶⁹ Neff, *Gedichte* XIII, 66.

⁷⁰ *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* I, 48, ed. Hoffmann 126f.: *Huius abbatis [i. e. Ragemprandus] septimo anno indictione XIII^{ma}, monasterium quo in Teano fratres degere ceperent, occulto Dei iudicio ab igne crematum est cum omnibus opibus suis, ubi etiam et regula quam beatus Benedictus manu sua conscripserat, necnon et sacci in quibus iussu Dei celtus eidem patri Benedicto escae delate sunt.* Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung* 154.

⁷¹ Neff, *Gedichte* XIV, 72: *Nullae me, credite, divitiae, nulla praedia, nulla flaventis metalli copia, nullus quorumlibet affectus a vestro poterunt separare collegio.*

⁷² Neff, *Gedichte* VIII, 39.

⁷³ Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi* II, praefatio (ed. Albert de Vogüé, Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, SC 260, Paris 1979) 126: *Despectis itaque litterarum studiis, relicta domo rebusque patris, soli Deo placere desiderans, sanctae conversationis habitum quaesivit. Recessit igitur scienter nescius et sapienter indoctus.*

⁷⁴ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 26, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 64; Neff, *Gedichte* VI, 27, l. 10: *Sprevit opes Romae flos, paradise, tuus.* Smolak, *Poetologisches zu den Benediktshymnen* 515.

⁷⁵ Neff, *Gedichte* XII, 61: *Graeca cerneris Homerus, Latina Vergilius/in Hebraea quoque Philo, Tertullus in artibus,/Flaccus crederis in metris, Tibullus eloquio.* Paul answered (*ibid.* XIII, 65): *Totum hoc in meam cerno prolatum miseriam,/totum hoc in meum caput dictum per hyroniam./Heu, laudibus deridor et cacinnis obrimor.*

⁷⁶ Neff, *Gedichte* XXXXVI, 153.

⁷⁷ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* IV, 37, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 131.

taken to Pannonia as an Avar captive but escaped on his own, saved by a miraculous wolf who led him back to Italy.

Paul's pride in his Lombard lineage is complemented by his views on the importance of kings, not surprising for a courtier at many courts. In his History, peoples such as the Heruls and the Gepids, who lose their kings, also lose their freedom and their identity.⁷⁸ It is not unlikely that Paul had the fate of the Lombards of his own day on his mind as he wrote that passage. He preserved a fond memory of Ratchis, to whom he owed his transfer to the royal court and the education he received there. Paul's epitaph underlines this, as Ratchis is the only prince among the many that Paul served who is mentioned there: *Omniae sophiae coepisti culmina sacrae/Rege monente pio Ratchis penetrare decenter*.⁷⁹ Ratchis found refuge at Montecassino after his deposition in 749. Although it is unlikely that Paul followed him at this early date in his career, his choice of a monastery was very likely influenced by this fact. Montecassino was also proud of another prince who had retired there, Pippin III's brother Carloman.⁸⁰ Paul had served three successive Lombard kings, but still, his History has no strong pro-Lombard bias. Good and bad kings occur in every kingdom. Eventually, Paul transferred his loyalty to Charlemagne, whom he recognized as a good king. His poems and letters addressed to the king of the Franks are polite or openly panegyric, and the *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* extol him: *De quo viro nescias, utrum virtutem in eo bellicam, an sapientiae claritatem omniumque liberalium artium magis admireris peritiam*.⁸¹ Paul may have had a more sceptical opinion in private, but was certainly flattered by the great interest shown by Charles in his work.

Of course, Paul was a devout Christian. And he had become a monk at Montecassino.⁸² His letter to abbot Theudemar, written from the banks of the Mosel in c. 783, is a strong, if perhaps rhetorically exaggerated statement in that direction: *Hereo, stupeo, lango, nec inter imo pectore tracta suspiria retinere lacrimas possum*.⁸³ Is this a trace of the 'innermost' Paul who can hardly hold back his tears when he thinks of his distant brethren? Floods of tears are also highlighted in the letter to Charlemagne in favour of his captive brother. No doubt Paul belonged to an emotional community in which the reference to strong emotions, to weeping and longing was considered appropriate.⁸⁴ "In comparison with your monastery", Paul goes on in the letter to abbot Theudemar, "the palace is a prison to me". As above, we may infer that Paul was going a little out of his way to contradict voices in Montecassino that may have criticized his long absence and his ambition. Pride, as Peter of Pisa indicates in the course of their exchange of joking poems, was one of Paul's weaknesses.⁸⁵ In any case, Paul seems to have had more hope in the miraculous intervention of saints than in strict obedience of the rules. But even the power of saints was limited. A few vile persons could squander their protection for a whole people. And, as he remarked, even St. Benedict's body at Montecassino had decayed.⁸⁶

A spotlight on Paul's personal beliefs is provided by the central role of St. John the Baptist in his Lombard history. Queen Theodelinda (incidentally, the namesake of Paul's mother and the great heroine in his History) is praised for constructing a basilica of the Baptist in Monza, Gundeperga for the Baptist's basilica at Pavia.⁸⁷

⁷⁸ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 20, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 59: *Ex illo tempore ita omnis Herulorum virtus concidit, ut ultra super se regem omnimodo non haberent*. Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 27, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 69f.: *Gepidorum vero ita genus est deminutum, ut ex illo iam tempore ultra non habuerint regem; sed universi qui superesse bello poterant aut Langobardis subiecti sunt, aut usque hodie Hunnis eorum patriam possidentibus duro imperio subiecti gemunt*.

⁷⁹ Neff, *Gedichte* XXXVI, 155.

⁸⁰ See Mayke de Jong, *Monastic prisoners or opting out? Political coercion and honour in the Frankish kingdoms*, in: *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong/Frans Theuvs/Carine van Rhijn (Leiden 2001) 291–328; Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung* 180–185.

⁸¹ *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, ed. Pertz 265.

⁸² McKitterick, *History and Memory* 68f., is correct that our evidence that Paul was a professed monk is not as strong as generally believed; he may also have found refuge at Montecassino without taking his vows. Still, both the rare *nobis* for the community of Montecassino in Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 2, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 165 (see above), and the letter to Theudemar (addressed as *mi domine et venerabilis abba*, Neff, *Gedichte* XIV, 73) indicate that he was part of the community.

⁸³ Neff, *Gedichte* XIV, 72.

⁸⁴ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca 2007).

⁸⁵ Neff, *Gedichte* XX, 97.

⁸⁶ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 2, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 165: *From Benedict's body, cetera quoque membra quamvis defluxa remansisse. Solum etiam singulariter dominicum corpus non vidit corruptionem; ceterum omnium sanctorum corpora in aeternam postea gloriam reparanda corruptioni subiecta sunt, his exceptis, quae ob divina miracula sine labe servantur*.

⁸⁷ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* IV, 21; IV, 47, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 123, 136.

St. John could even amend heresy. The arian king Rothari was buried in his basilica, and when some time later a man entered to plunder his grave, a vision of St. John scared him away, saying: “Why did you dare to touch the body of that man? Although he may not have been of the true faith yet he has commended himself to me.”⁸⁸ It is therefore quite likely that the hymn “*Ut queant*” in honour of St. John the Baptist, not considered by Neff, was in fact written by Paul. It extols St. John as the holiest of the saints.⁸⁹ The protection by St. John the Baptist was, as Paul believed, decisive for the fate of the Lombard kingdom. When the Emperor Constans invaded Italy in the seventh century, a hermit prophesied that he would achieve nothing against the Lombards: “The people of the Lombards cannot be overcome in any way, because a certain queen coming from another province” – Theodelinda – “has built the church of St. John the Baptist in the territories of the Lombards, and for this reason St. John himself continually intercedes for the people. But a time shall come when this sanctuary will be held in contempt and then the people itself shall perish.”⁹⁰ And Paul adds: “We have proved that this has so occurred, since we have seen that before the fall of the Lombards, this same church . . . was managed by vile persons so that this holy spot was bestowed upon the unworthy and adulterous, not for the merit of their lives, but in the giving of spoils.” It is a clear criticism of the religious policy of Desiderius, and probably a trace of Paul’s own frustrated ambition. Would he have liked to see himself as guardian of the basilica of the Baptist, maybe even as Bishop of Monza, spiritually responsible for the Lombard kingdom? But vile persons had squandered the saint’s protection.

Paul’s interest was not so much in ascetic practice or monastic discipline but in the personal and institutional authority of the cleric, and in the protection afforded by truly Christian rulers and powerful saints. The confrontation of spiritual authority and violence is one of Paul’s central topics, and quite a few passages in his Histories echo the concerns of Gregory the Great’s Dialogues.⁹¹ How can holy men, and holy places, resist violence? When do supernatural powers help? For instance, Paul inserts the story of the Gallic hermit Hospitius from the Histories of Gregory of Tours.⁹² Hospitius foresaw the Lombard invasions in Gaul and interpreted them as divine punishment for the sins of the population. He told his monks to seek refuge in the city and waited for the Lombards alone. When one of them raised his sword to kill the hermit, his arm became stuck, and he could only move it again when he was blessed by the holy man. Thus, the barbarian was instantly converted and became a monk. Paul, who renders Gregory’s whole passage almost verbatim, inserts a telling detail. Gregory simply writes: *Ille autem in eodem loco conversus, tonsorato capite, fidelissimus monachus nunc habetur* – monastic conversion is all that counts here. Paul differentiates between three steps in the barbarian’s conversion: *Langobardus autem qui sanatus fuerat ad fidem Christi conversus, statim clericus, deinde monachus effectus est atque in eodem loco usque ad finem vitae suae in Dei servitio permansit*. It is striking that the man should become a cleric before entering the monastery. The change in the text implies that Hospitius, besides being the head of a monastic community, was also a priest who could ordain clerics. And it constructs an image of double authority, clerical and monastic, that corresponds to Paul’s own position, deacon and monk.

Deacons play an important role in Paul’s History. One of the strangest stories is about the deacon Seno, the guardian of the basilica of St. John the Baptist in Pavia. Before the battle of Coronate against the usurper Alahis, the deacon offers to borrow King Cunincpert’s armour to fight Alahis in single combat, for, as he says, “our whole life lies in your welfare”. The king first refuses but is then moved to consent by the tears of his followers. Alahis slays the deacon, but then discovers that it is not the king’s head that he triumphantly wants to raise on a pike. In the ensuing battle, Alahis is killed. After his victory, “king Cunicpert commanded that the

⁸⁸ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* IV, 47, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 136.

⁸⁹ *Versus in laudem sancti Iohannis baptistae* (ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini* 1, Berlin 1881) 83f., at 84: *Non fuit vasti spatium per orbis/sanctior quisquam genitus Iohanne,/ qui nefas saeculi meruit lavantem/tingere limphis*. For the probable attribution to Paul, Stella, *La poesia di Paolo Diacono* 559 and 565 (manuscripts both in the Beneventan area and Metz). That Paul wrote a hymn on St. John is already claimed in his 12th-century biography in Petrus Diaconus, *De viris illustribus Casinesibus* (ed. Giuseppe Sperduti, Cassino 1999) 56.

⁹⁰ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* V, 6, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 146f.

⁹¹ For the role of the holy man in the Dialogues, see Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1988) 99–104; Robert A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge 1997) 61–67; Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford 2000) 136f.; Walter Pohl, *Gregorio Magno e il regno dei Longobardi*, in: *Gregorio Magno, l’Impero e i regna*, ed. Claudio Azzara (Firenze 2008) 15–28.

⁹² Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* III, 2, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 94f.; Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* VI, 6 (ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH SS rer. Merov.* 1, 1, Hannover 1937) 272–276.

body of Seno the deacon should be buried in great splendour before the gates of the church of St. John which the deacon had governed”.⁹³ Taken straightforwardly, the deacon’s sacrifice had been pointless. But once again, the central motif is the protection afforded by St. John the Baptist, here personified by a deacon well versed in spiritual and secular combat. It is complemented in the narrative by a vision of St. Michael the Archangel that scares Alahis during the battle.⁹⁴ There is a strange echo of Paul’s concerns with deacons at war in one of Charlemagne’s letters, where the king jokingly asks: “How are you, soldier, who was ready to cut the throats of my enemies, Paul, with a knife?”⁹⁵

In his contradictions, we get closest to Paul’s personality. He was proud of his Lombard lineage, but otherwise, there is no trace of a Lombard *Wir-Gefühl* in his writings (most of them, however, written after 774). His sense of status and nobility was threatened by the sanctions against his rebellious brother, and veiled by the rhetoric of modesty required from a monk and a scholar working on commission. He was a cleric and a monk but openly strove for worldly rewards. Although he believed that military success ultimately depended on protection by saints, he regarded it as particularly praiseworthy that a deacon should go out to fight for his king on the battlefield. He made deacons matter in his histories, and obviously cherished his own clerical status, but was frustrated in his career. He underlined his sense of belonging to the monastic community of Montecassino, but otherwise, he cared little for the problems and for the beauty of monastic life. Individual holy men get much more attention in his work than the benefits of regularly-working spiritual communities or ecclesiastic institutions. The supreme authority on St. Benedict’s rule in his day shows no concern for the requirements of monastic discipline in his writings. Where churches matter – most notably, the two basilicas dedicated to St John the Baptist at Monza and Pavia – they do so because of the miraculous protection of their patron saints, who can act on their own, and not because of the merits of their communities. Although Paul was a member of the court circle and entrusted with authoritative editions of some key reform texts, Carolingian *correctio* was a remote concern in much of his narrative. Likewise, and in spite of some general disclaimers, he was at best lukewarm against heretics. He made no attempt to disentangle orthodoxy and heresy in the Three-Chapter schism, and valued the protection by St. John the Baptist for Rothari higher than the king’s arian creed. As a scholar and poet, Paul was also susceptible to a degree of pride in his erudition that echoes his classical models more than his monastic discipline. His distychs composed in honour of St Benedict, of which he was proud enough as to insert them in his History, are a technical play with words and motifs from Gregory the Great’s Life of the saint that only a connoisseur would have been able to understand.⁹⁶

The text of the *Historia Langobardorum* makes some of these contradictions very apparent, for instance in the way in which Paul distances himself from the *ridicula fabula* about Lombard origins or in his treatment of King Grimoald.⁹⁷ In the text, he clearly strove to relieve many of these tensions by employing narrative means. The Lombard invasion is a case in point: Gregory of Tours, one of Paul’s principal sources for the period, stresses that the Lombards had killed priests and plundered churches.⁹⁸ Paul neither mentions nor explicitly contradicts that, but glosses it over with pious legends. Like Moses, Alboin climbs a mountain to see the promised land. This is one of the instances when eye witnesses are called upon to defend Paul’s assertions; a *veracissimus senex* had told Paul that wisents lived on that mountain, the *mons regis*.⁹⁹ When the Lombards take Pavia, a legend originally connected to the Emperor Aurelian underlines that due to a miracle, Alboin

⁹³ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* V, 40–41, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 160f.; transl. Foulke 247–249.

⁹⁴ On the role of St. Michael under Cunincpert, see Panagiotis Antonopoulos, King Cunincpert and the Archangel Michael, in: *Die Langobarden – Herrschaft und Identität*, ed. Walter Pohl/Peter Erhart (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 9, Wien 2005) 383–386.

⁹⁵ Neff, *Gedichte XXIII, 107: Quid modo miles agis, cultro qui colla secare/ Hostibus a nostris, Paule, paratus eras?* On the debate on clerics going to war in the Carolingian period: Friedrich Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im früheren Mittelalter. Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 2, Stuttgart 1971); Walter Pohl, *Liturgie di guerra nei regni altomedievali*, in: *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 5, 1 (2008) 29–44. The phrase comes in the context of mockery about Paul’s old age; on this theme, see also the contribution by Kurt Smolak, in this volume.

⁹⁶ Smolak, *Poetologisches zu den Benediktshymnen*.

⁹⁷ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 8, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 52; *ibid.* V, 27, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 196. For this and the following, Pohl, *Paulus Diaconus* 383–388.

⁹⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* IV, 41, ed. Krusch 174.

⁹⁹ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* II, 8, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 76.

abandons his intentions to kill the inhabitants and spares them all.¹⁰⁰ The prophecy of the hermit about the end of the Lombard kingdom is another example. As many other stories in the History, it provides Lombard identity with a Christian meaning. Its explanation for the fall of the kingdom is perfectly compatible with such an essentially Christian view of Lombard identity, very unlike the papal position propagated in the Codex Carolinus.¹⁰¹ Here, but also elsewhere Paul seems to be talking about himself and his identity crisis after 774 by telling stories about others.

All these observations allow the establishment of a rather individual profile of Paul the Deacon, especially if we confront him with the spirit of *renovatio* propagated during his later years at the Carolingian court. But do they help us to understand his Ego? Not in the Freudian sense of the term that is at the basis of Erikson's conception of identity. Every society, Erikson argues, offers many options for identification to a child, but only a limited range of models to integrate these fragments of identity. Using these models, the Ego sets out to construct a more or less homogeneous personality, an identity.¹⁰² This requires a degree of self-reflectivity, which George H. Mead sees as a key criterium for the Self.¹⁰³ To what extent a coherent Self, or successful Ego integration, can really be expected from modern (or post-modern) individuals is open to debate.¹⁰⁴ But these classical theories of social psychology may help us, by contrast, to interpret the evidence about Paul the Deacon.

There is hardly a trace of self-reflexion in Paul's writings; he certainly was no "genius of reflection" as Rather of Verona.¹⁰⁵ What we have from Paul's pen are different discourses of identity between which he subtly moves. We meet Paul in the guise of the classically-trained historiographer, the admirer of the asceticism of Saint Benedict and Pope Gregory, the Lombard patriot, the high-worded moral advisor, the busy scholar who skilfully balances the rhetoric of modesty with open demands for reward, the subtle poet who can convey emotions as well as any of his Roman models. This collection corresponds to the various social roles that he had fulfilled in his life: the Lombard nobleman, the courtier, the cleric, the scholar, the monk, the poet. He had learned to master all the respective languages and registers. In none of the texts that have been preserved does he contemplate his problems with all these roles. Sometimes, the contradictions become obvious, for instance between his sense of belonging to a monastic community and his wordly ambition in the letter to Abbot Theudemar, or in the complaints that the muses flee the narrowness of the cloister in his poem to a friend.¹⁰⁶ But in most cases, Paul seems to move with relative ease between different models of identity.

For us, Paul is mainly accessible through his writings, and we hardly know how he actually behaved in situations where his loyalties and identities were put to the test. For instance, where was he when his brother joined the rebellion against Charlemagne? Most likely, at Benevento, and we only know that he cared from his letter written seven years later. But it is perfectly possible that Paul shared his brother's anti-Frankish feelings in the first years after 774, and that the legends about his plot against Charlemagne go back to an actual political position that he changed only later.¹⁰⁷ Or, did his abbot ever reproach him for his material ambitions, like Gregory the Great did with the monks in 'his' monastery?¹⁰⁸ We only have the letter to Theudemar in which Paul goes out of his way to take the edge out of the argument. Some of the tensions that Paul had to live through must have posed difficult challenges to his loyalties and moral standards. It is hard to imagine that he was able

¹⁰⁰ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* II, 26–27, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 87. Aldo Settia, Aureliano imperatore e il cavallo di re Alboino, in: Paolo Chiesa, *Paolo Diacono – uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio* (Udine 2000) 487–504.

¹⁰¹ Pohl, *Das Papsttum und die Langobarden*.

¹⁰² Erik H. Erikson, *Identität und Lebenszyklus* (Frankfurt am Main 1973) 22; English original: *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York 1959). See also Peter Conzen, Erik H. Erikson, *Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart 1996). For a critique of Erikson's concept of identity: Lutz Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* (Reinbek 2000) 267–313.

¹⁰³ George H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society. From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago 1934). See also my Introduction, in this volume.

¹⁰⁴ For a sceptical post-structuralist view, see, for instance, Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe* (Paris 1972).

¹⁰⁵ See the contribution by Irene van Renswoude, in this volume.

¹⁰⁶ Neff, *Gedichte* XIV, 72; *ibid.* VIII, 39.

¹⁰⁷ *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* I, 17, ed. Hoffmann 52. The epitaph of Ansa (Neff, *Gedichte* IX, 47, l. 9–11) seems to point in the same direction.

¹⁰⁸ Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi* IV, 57, 9–15 (ed. Albert de Vogüé, *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, SC 261, Paris 1980) 188–193; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities* 89–91.

to cope with these conflicts without a sense of self, and a measure of self-reflection. But obviously, this was not what the eminent men who commissioned his works wanted him to write about. Nor did it fit in the erudite game of riddles and allusions in the poems exchanged in Charlemagne's literary circle. No consistent ego can be found in his extant works. Models for a more outspoken discourse of the self would have been available, as they were for Rather of Verona: for instance, classical satire or rhetoric, Augustine or Boethius. But Paul did not use them, at least not in public exchange. Thus, we know little about whether and how he dealt with his 'ego troubles'.

This does not mean that Paul was only a well-trained chameleon without a strong sense of self, capable of catering to all the needs of his age. That would have required a degree of cynicism of which there is no trace in his writings. Rather, he 'was' all of his models. Caroline Bynum has argued that the 12th century "discovery of the self" can only be "understood in the context of 'discovery of model for behavior' and 'discovery of consciously chosen community'."¹⁰⁹ Paul (at least after 774, when most of his works were written) certainly had an acute sense of the different models and communities available, and of the limits up to which he wanted to get involved. He also knew that wherever one belonged, right and wrong actions did make a difference, and this was what his writings sought to demonstrate. It is easy to picture Paul as an author incapable of transcending the limitations of a dark age. But he was not at all caught within a single, overwhelming collective identity which hampered his individuality, as conventional images of early medieval life assume. Maybe he could have, had his life moved on smoothly along the lines a courtier and cleric at Pavia could expect. But already under Desiderius, this straight line was broken. The fall of the Lombard kingdom and the failure of the Rodgaud rebellion, 774/776, seem to have resulted in a crisis of identity. But language was Paul's medium, and he could fall back on a variety of forms of linguistic self-assurance.

Discourses of identity tend to reduce alternatives and curb complexity, nowadays as in the early Middle Ages.¹¹⁰ Whoever is a Christian must not be a pagan, a Frank is not a Lombard, and a monk should not behave like a cleric. Such models of exclusion have had more or less of an impact in the course of history, and there is no straight line in which their incidence has developed. The early Middle Ages were neither a period in which a totalitarian Christian discourse suffocated all alternatives, nor a time when any attempt to control an archaic and barbarian existence was bound to fail. One reason why Paul the Deacon is so interesting is because he was instrumental in an ambitious Carolingian attempt to enhance control and to reduce contingency by bringing canonical texts to bear. He contributed a monastic rule, a sermon collection, two books of grammar, a life of the supreme monastic authority and a letter collection by the model pope, besides two books of history that "pioneered the interpretation of the periods that he discussed."¹¹¹ That was no mean achievement. At the same time, he did not quite comply with the standards that he helped to set. Paul had clear ideas what was right and what was wrong, but in his view, that did not depend on being a member in the 'right' community, and on following the right rules. He had learned from his personal experience, and from the centuries of history that he knew better than any of his contemporaries, that particular social identities have their limits. He respected the identities of his day, but his historical narrative represented them in their plurality. This openness accounts for some of the success of Paul's Lombard History. Identities also require a multiplicity of possible identifications as their basis, between which they can establish a balance. Paul successfully contributed to widening the range of contemporary discourses of identity, with visible impact, for instance, on Southern Italian authors of the following centuries.¹¹² This corresponded to Paul's own, manifold experience between many courts, churches and cloisters. There was room for complex personalities in the early Middle Ages, and it seems that Paul the Deacon was one of them.

¹⁰⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, Did the twelfth century discover the individual?, in: *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980) 1–17, here 17.

¹¹⁰ That power seeks to reduce complexity and contingency in a process of code-governed communication is the model that Niklas Luhmann, *Macht* (Stuttgart 2003) has developed. In this process, it is essential to exclude options and alternatives for action among dependent actors. This model may offer attractive points of view for Carolingian reform.

¹¹¹ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History* 436.

¹¹² Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*.

