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The *dolor*, *ira* and Vengeance Cycle in Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*

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Abstract

This essay explores the role and meaning of the emotional term *dolor* in the scenarios of vengeance represented by the Lombard scholar Paul the Deacon (c.720–799) in his work *Historia Langobardorum*. First, after contextualising the work and analysing the concept of aristocratic honour and vengeance outlined by the author in the text, this essay examines the episodes in which *dolor* is associated with revenge. Second, starting from the work itself, the paper constructs the emotional script of *dolor*, namely the little scenario that a character plays out – as sequences of events, actions and social interactions – when he or she feels this emotion. Finally, it examines how the author evaluates *dolor* positively or negatively in relation to social and gender norms.

Keywords

dolor – vengeance – Paul the Deacon – *Historia Langobardorum* – emotional script

In the panorama of early medieval narrative, the *Historia Langobardorum* (*HL*), written by the Lombard scholar Paul the Deacon (c.720–799), contains a series of dramatic episodes in which the themes of vengeance and preservation of aristocratic honour frequently emerge. Although these topics have been investigated from different points of view, it is only recently that historians have

begun to value their emotional aspects.¹ The studies conducted so far have demonstrated that the emotions accompanying revenge are not identical in every human society regardless of space, time and culture. On the contrary, their representation is strongly conditioned by the ways in which emotions are expressed, evaluated and categorised by a specific emotional community.²

In the *HL*, revenge is frequently linked to the manifestation of a particular emotion that is indicated by the Latin term *dolor*. This emotion is especially interesting when it is felt by a nobleman or noblewoman inflamed by the desire to avenge an offence unjustly received. In order to understand the meaning of *dolor* in revenge settings, it is necessary to contextualise it, namely by analysing it in its specific context rather than studying it through a lexical approach.³ This implies first reconstructing the emotional universe of the characters who experience it in a given situation and examining their social group, their gender, the characteristics attributed to them by the author and, finally, their brief biographies in the text (past actions, temperament, relationships with other characters).⁴ However, this methodological approach requires a further method of analysis, since the *HL* frequently contains anecdotes which do not explicitly mention the presence of emotions, even though they are not totally extraneous to these stories. Confronted with textual silences, Nira Pancer has suggested using the methodology of the emotional script, which was first applied systematically by the historian Robert Kaster in relation to ancient Rome and has been used in the study of emotions in different historical periods.⁵ Kaster described emotional scripts as ‘the little scenarios that

1 See Barbara Rosenwein, ‘Les émotions de la vengeance,’ in *La vengeance: 400–1200 (actes du colloque, Rome 18–20 septembre 2003)*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy, François Bougard and Regine Le Jan (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2006), 237–57; Paul R. Hyams and Susan A. Throop, *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); and Kate Gilbert and Stephen D. White, *Emotion, Violence, Vengeance and Law in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of William Ian Miller* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

2 Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 23–25.

3 See Nira Pancer, ‘Les hontes mérovingiennes: essai de méthodologie et cas de figure,’ *Rives Méditerranéennes* 31 (2008): 2–12.

4 For more detail on reading emotions ‘in situation,’ see Nira Pancer, ‘Histoire des émotions et bricolage méthodologique dans la littérature altimédiévale,’ *Le Moyen Âge* 126, no. 3–4 (2020): 472–75.

5 The notion of script was developed by psychologists Roger Schank and Robert Abelson, who defined it as ‘a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines well-known situations’: see Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, *Script, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* (New York: Halsted, 1977), 41. See also Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); and Daniel J. R. Grey, ‘The Agony of

we play out, as sequences of cause and effect, of perception, evaluation, and response – when we experience any emotion.’⁶ Sif Ríkharðsdóttir has pointed out that in literary texts these scenarios can comprise ‘emotional words ... narrative arrangement, scene construction, gestures, somatic indicia ... verbal coding and repertoire of actions associated with emotional responses.’⁷ All these elements are ‘coded into the cultural parameters and presumptions of any given culture and reflected or reproduced in its cultural products (including literature), thereby becoming emotive scripts.’⁸ In texts, emotional scripts may contain prescriptive emotional behaviour, mirroring those already established in a given emotional community or introducing new ones through the literary representation of behavioural and emotional patterns that are unfamiliar. Prescriptive scripts may also fix or modify expectations of emotional behaviour in relation to social status, gender, age and race. By exposing rules on behavioural codes in texts, authors attempt to convey them to readers or even promote alternative codes of comportment.

Using emotional scripts theory and the concept of the psychologist Nico H. Frijda, according to which every emotion contains a tendency to act,⁹ Pancer has argued that when an emotional actor performs a specific action (or behaviour) in a certain context, it is likely that he or she will experience a specific emotion.¹⁰ In other words, there is a direct correspondence between a particular situation, action and emotion, so there are recurring patterns in texts. If a source should present a truncated and/or incomplete anecdote, the first step is to identify the emotional scripts from the text itself, which means, in short, reconstructing a taxonomy of narrative patterns – as sequences of events and social interactions – because they reflect and model emotional expressions. When a specific emotional script is in action, it is possible that, in some cases, a certain emotion is not explicitly mentioned, but the author and his or her audience, who share a set of emotional norms and a common emotional register, know that it is present. Naturally, this does not mean that there cannot be variations or exceptions within emotional scripts. In order to detect these changes, it is important to pay particular attention to the specific circumstances within which a given script is played.

Despair: Pain and the Cultural Script of Infanticide in England and Wales, 1860–1960’, in *Pain and Emotion in Modern History*, ed. Rob Boddice (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 204–19.

6 Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community*, 29.

7 Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translations, Voices, Contexts* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 28.

8 Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 28–29.

9 Nico H. Frijda, *The Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 69–73.

10 Pancer, ‘Histoire des émotions,’ 480.

Before reconstructing the role of *dolor* in revenge episodes and comparing the latter in order to identify their emotional script, it is necessary to briefly contextualise the *HL*. By investigating its genesis, sources and multiple levels of interpretation, it is possible to outline some cultural traits of the Lombard society represented by Paul the Deacon in his text.

1 The Lombard World Recounted in Paul's History

Historians have long speculated on where, when and for whom Paul wrote the *HL*. Most historiography agrees that he composed his work in southern Italy – probably at the monastery of Monte Cassino, where he had previously taken his vows – at a late stage of his life, between his return from the court of Charlemagne (c.787) and his death (c.799).¹¹ The main issue that has dominated the field for many years concerns who commissioned the *HL*. It has been argued that, because of the friendly relationship between Paul and the Beneventan dukes, it is likely that he compiled the *HL* to instruct the young duke Grimoald III (c.763–806).¹² However, Rosamond McKitterick has claimed that the work was in fact commissioned for Pippin, King of Italy and son of Charlemagne, and his Frankish-Lombard entourage.¹³ This debate has not offered a satisfactory solution and may never provide one. Consequently, as Lidia Capo has recently suggested, it would be more fruitful to assume that Paul wrote his work for a wide audience, which would certainly include the Lombard-Beneventan community but not totally exclude the Carolingian world.¹⁴ Similarly, Christopher Heath has argued that when reading the text, ‘one does not discover that Paul is either pro-Lombard or pro-Frank per se, but instead that he has a rich and varied response to the experiences and ideas

11 Christopher Heath, *The Narrative Worlds of Paul the Deacon: Between Empires and Identities in Lombard Italy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 109n2.

12 Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 344–46.

13 Rosamond McKitterick, ‘Paul the Deacon and the Franks,’ *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999): 319–39 (338–39).

14 Lidia Capo, ‘Dimensione letteraria e ragioni storiografiche. Il caso dell’*Historia Langobardorum*’, in *I Longobardi a Venezia: Scritti per Stefano Gasparri*, ed. Irene Barbiera, Francesco Borri, and Anna Paziienza (Turnhout: Brepols 2020), 59–69 (66). Capo also notes that, when compared to contemporary Carolingian authors, the Latin used by Paul in the *HL* is less sophisticated than in his poems written at Charlemagne’s court.

that he encountered. ... [the *HL*] reveals a sense of his personality and his own responses to events and individuals'.¹⁵

Divided into six books, the *HL* recounts the history of the *gens Langobardorum* from its mythical origin to the reign of King Liutprand (r. 712–744). Although the text cannot be interpreted as a verbatim copying of its sources, neither does it qualify as a work of pure literary fiction.¹⁶ Indeed, it consists of a reasoned and precise reworking of materials to create an original text. Moreover, Paul's cultural world was certainly different from that represented by his sources, among which the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* is particularly prominent in relation to the first books of the *HL*, he does not totally deny the cultural heritage of the Lombard society of the *Origo*.¹⁷ As Capo has noted, the warrior values that were central in the *Origo* are not totally rejected by Paul. Rather, they are progressively included and integrated into a Christian perspective. The product of this integration is an ideal model of a kingdom that is not merely based on force of arms, but on values such as concord, peaceful coexistence, and justice.¹⁸ Finally, in the *HL*, the common good – and its preservation – is the foundation of any positive or negative judgement by the author, who does not seem to condemn personal faults (as in the emblematic case of the adultery of King Cunipert recounted in *HL* 5.37) if they do not endanger the public good. Indeed, among the episodes explicitly condemned by Paul, the most prominent are the rebellions of dukes and the dangerous intrigues of characters who consciously prioritise personal interests over the general good.¹⁹

To summarise, in the *HL*, Paul's condemnations and praise do not depend on an affiliation with a specific community (Franks or Lombards), but rather on the difference between the good and bad behaviour of the characters in the events described. In light of these considerations, the following section will

15 Heath, *Narrative Worlds*, 256. For a complex reading of Paul's work that goes beyond the traditional dualistic view, see also Walter Pohl, 'Paulus Diaconus und die "Historia Langobardorum": Text und Tradition,' in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1994), 375–405.

16 For a comprehensive table of *HL* sources, see Heath, *Narrative Worlds*, 128–29.

17 The *Origo gentis Langobardorum* (*Origo*) was written during King Rothari's time (r. 636–51). It recounts the history of the Lombards, from their legendary origins to the second reign of Perctarit (r. 672–688). According to Capo, the *Origo* would be Paul's basic reference model in compiling the *HL*: Lidia Capo, 'Dimensione letteraria,' 65.

18 Lidia Capo, 'Paolo Diacono e il problema della cultura dell'Italia longobarda,' in *Il regno dei Longobardi in Italia. Archeologia, società e istituzioni*, ed. Stefano Gasparri (Spoleto: CISAM, 2004), 235–326 (248–49).

19 Capo, 'Paolo Diacono,' 248–49.

explore what role revenge plays in the Lombard society represented in the *HL* and how Paul judges it.

2 Revenge-Seeking Behaviour in the *HL*

In the *HL*, Paul depicts kings, their relatives, and Lombard dukes as being in constant competition to increase or defend their personal and family honour. This system, based essentially on exchanges of violence and a strong competitive tension linked to honour, required men to constantly assert and protect their ego and extensions of it, namely the people and goods under their protection and authority. Paul provides an emblematic example in order to understand how the preservation of honour turns out to be a question of such fundamental importance that, if pushed to its extremes, it could endanger the general good.

In *HL* 6.24, the author reports that the *schuldhais* Argait (a sort of ducal officer at the head of a minor district), after having failed to pursue some Slavic bandits, was joined by the Duke of Friuli, Ferdulf, who, learning of the incident, became enraged (*indignans*) and thus spoke to him: ‘When could you do anything bravely, you whose name, Argait, comes from the word coward [*arga*]?’²⁰ Ferdulf uses the word *arga*, which means ‘vile’/‘cowardly’, or, according to Ross Balzaretti’s interpretation, ‘sexually passive’, to insult his *schuldhais*.²¹ Argait reacted to the calumny with great wrath (*maxime ira*), announcing to the duke that before he died the others would know which of them had been the most *argait*. The opportunity for a confrontation arose a few days later. Argait challenged Ferdulf to a suicidal military action against a camp of Slavs perched on a mountain, which led to the killing of not only the duke and his challenger, but the entire Lombard army. The author’s final comment on the whole affair can only be negative: ‘there so great a number of brave men were vanquished by the wickedness and thoughtlessness of dissension as could, with unity [*concordia*] and wholesome counsel, overthrow many thousands of their enemies’²²

20 Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 6.24, trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907), 267. ‘Quando tu aliquid fortiter facere poteras, qui Argait ab arga nomen deductum habes?’ All Latin quotations of the *HL* are derived from Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, in *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum, saec. VI–IX*, Monumenta Germaniae Historiae (Hannover: 1878), 12–187.

21 Ross Balzaretti, ‘Sexuality in Late Lombard Italy, c.700–c.800 AD,’ in *Medieval Sexuality: A Case Book*, ed. April Harper and Caroline Proctor (New York: Routledge, 2008), 7–31 (17).

22 Paul, *History* 6.24, 269–70. ‘Tantique ibi viri fortes per contentionis malum et improvidentiam debellati sunt, quanti possent per unam concordiam et salubre consilium multa milia sternere aemulorum’.

In the Lombard society represented by Paul, there were different ways to damage or completely disintegrate the honour of others (from verbal insult to public offence, from physical injury to the murder of a relative and from the deprivation of one's property to the accusation of sexual misconduct). As in the case of Argait, when faced with such defamatory offences, which endanger the public reputation of the offended party, it is necessary to react aggressively in order not to fall into infamy. It is also important to stress that this social dynamic, based on offence – reaction, involves almost exclusively people of high social status. Whenever their ego is threatened, they tend to follow a common behavioural pattern, which generally includes a violent reaction to the offence received (wars between parties, murders, attempted murders and verbal insults) in order to restore their honour.²³ Nonetheless, these vindictive acts could hardly be traced back to the dynamics of the feud as codified by the laws of the Lombard king Rothari,²⁴ but rather to informal procedures implemented by the injured party in specific circumstances (murder, treason, dishonour).²⁵ It should also be noted that Paul's judgement on vengeful acts is not always expressly negative, as it is in the case of Argait. As will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs, vengeance is considered negative only when it endangers the common good or drives the subject to transgress his or her social and gender role.

What role do emotions play within the contexts of revenge represented in *HL*? Unfortunately, Paul does not systematically mention their presence in every scene in which vengeance is involved. Nevertheless, he provides sufficient clues to analyse the emotional performances attached to it. When exploring the scenes in which revenge occurs, the emotional state most frequently mentioned by Paul is *dolor*, on which, while not totally excluding other emotions, this essay focuses.²⁶ In order to reconstruct the script of *dolor*, one should first trace the occurrences of this emotional word in the text and then consider the similarities among such situations, based on the behavioural congruencies which Paul categorised under the label *dolor*.

23 Wars: Paul, *History*, 1.17, 29; 1.20, 35; 1.24, 45; 1.27, 50; 3.7, 100; 3.18, 118; 5.26, 232; 6.45, 286. Murders: Paul, *History*, 1.20, 34; 2.28, 82; 2.30, 86. Attempted murders: Paul, *History*, 1.24, 44; 6.51, 294. Insults: Paul, *History*, 1.20, 34; 1.24, 44.

24 Rothari's Edict, c.143, in *The Lombard Laws*, ed. Katherine Fischer Drew (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973), 74–75.

25 Jon N. Sutherland, 'The Idea of Revenge in Lombard Society in the Eighth and Tenth Centuries: The Cases of Paul the Deacon and Liutprand of Cremona,' *Speculum* 50, no. 3 (1975), 396–99.

26 In the *HL*, *dolor* is the emotion most frequently linked to revenge (five times), followed by *ira* (three times), *confusio* (twice) and *indignatio* (twice). The terms *verecundia* (once), *dedecus* (once) and *ingemesco* (once) are also present.

3 An Unbearable *dolor*

In the *HL*, *dolor* is a polyvalent emotion, which is represented in relation to different situations and can thus assume different emotional nuances according to context.²⁷ *Dolor* – and its verbal form *doleo* – can denote grief, physical pain and, finally, concern about losing one's freedom.²⁸ However, the episodes in which it is most frequently mentioned – and where it has a very specific significance – are those linked to revenge.

In the *HL*, the inability to contain *dolor* in the face of wrongful acts is a characteristic of both male and female characters. Regarding the former, in *HL* 1.20, Paul narrates the revenge of the Herulian king Rodolf against the Lombards, as Rumetruda, the daughter of the Lombard king Tato, had tricked King Rodolf's brother into committing murder. When the Herulian sovereign learned the news, he groaned (*ingemisco*) at the cruel death of his brother and, 'impatient in his rage [*dolor*], burned to avenge that brother's death'.²⁹ Nevertheless, King Rodolf was overconfident in himself: with no doubt that his army would achieve victory over the Lombards, he decided that, instead of fighting alongside his men, he would stay in camp and play draughts. As a result, King Rodolf and his army were massacred.

Another male character unable to restrain his *dolor* is Aistulf, future king of the Lombards and son of the Lombard Duke Pemmo. The episode takes place during the dispute between Pemmo and the patriarch Calixtus.³⁰ The latter was annoyed by the fact that Bishop Amator lived with Duke Pemmo and the Lombards in Cividale, while he, who was a nobleman, lived among the common people.³¹ Calixtus, claiming his nobility, expelled Amator from the city and took up residence in the bishop's house. Duke Pemmo and many

27 The term *dolor* has its roots in classical Latin and is also present in the emotional vocabulary of many Christian authors, especially, but not exclusively, to mean sorrow. It can also indicate physical pain, grief and anguish. See Barbara Rosenwein, 'Emotion Words,' in *Les sujets des émotions au Moyen Âge*, ed. Piroška Nagy and Damien Boquet (Paris: Beauchesne, 2008), 93–106 (99, 103); Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 40, 52, 74, 76, 124.

28 Grief: Paul, *History* 2.29, 84; 6.58, 305. This meaning is present in many epitaphs composed by different authors, including Paul, for the Carolingian court. See Cécile Treffort, *Mémoires carolingiennes. L'épithaphe entre célébration mémorielle, genre littéraire et manifeste politique (milieu VIII^e–début XI^e siècle)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007). Pain: Paul, *History* 3.13, 69. Concern for loss of freedom: Paul, *History*, 4.37, 182.

29 Paul, *History*, 1.20, 35: 'dolorisque inpatients, ad ulciscendam fratris mortem exarsit.'

30 For further detail, see Stefano Gasparri, *I duchi longobardi* (Rome: Istituto storico per il Medio Evo, 1978), 69–71.

31 Paul, *History* 6.51, 294.

nobles then decided to imprison the patriarch, so King Liutprand, having been informed of the duke's actions, 'was inflamed with great rage [*ira*]:³² The king immediately dismissed Pemmo and ordered his son, Ratchis, to take his place. This is a relevant detail: Liutprand's anger, which was probably provoked by Pemmo's abuse of power, signals that an improper act had been committed but did not degenerate into blind revenge. Indeed, the king offered the dukedom to Pemmo's son, an act that could be considered reconciliatory. After his father was deposed, Pemmo's son managed to obtain a royal pardon for him when he appeared in front of King Liutprand together with anyone who had taken part in the misdeed. Liutprand instructed Pemmo and his sons (Ratchis, Ratchait and Aistulf) to stand behind his seat while he arrested the remaining men. Faced with what was happening, Aistulf 'could not restrain his rage [*dolor*]'³³ and decided to draw his sword to kill the king, but Ratchis prevented him from carrying out this act.

In the two episodes mentioned so far, the author does not expressly criticise the behaviour of the two characters, in contrast to cases where the protagonist is a woman, such as the queen Rosamund. Her character is introduced in *HL* 1.27, which is part of a wider narrative concerning the numerous vendettas between the Gepids and the Lombards. Cunimund, king of the Gepids and father of Rosamund, desiring to avenge the old injuries of the Gepids, decided to break the pact of peace that his father, Turisind, had made with Alboin, king of the Lombards.³⁴ The Lombard king and his army violently attacked the Gepids, and Cunimund himself perished in battle against Alboin, who cut off his head and made a drinking cup out of it. After the battle, Alboin took Rosamund as his prisoner.

About three years later, during a banquet at the palace of Verona, Alboin, excessively merry (*laetus*) from drinking excessive amounts of wine, made an inconsiderate gesture: he ordered the queen to pour wine into the cup made from the skull of her father, telling her to drink merrily with her father. Paul reports that Rosamund, after having seen this scene, 'conceived in her heart deep anguish [*dolor*] she could not restrain.'³⁵ The queen, inflamed by a strong desire to kill her husband to avenge her father's death, decided to consult Helmichis, the king's armiger, in order to implement her plan. They tried to involve Peredeo, a member of the king's court in Verona, in the conspiracy, but he initially refused to participate. The queen managed to take Peredeo's lover's

32 Paul, *History* 6.51, 294: 'in magnam iram exarsit.'

33 Paul, *History* 6.51, 294: 'dolorem non ferens.'

34 Paul, *History* 1.27, 50.

35 Paul, *History* 2.28, 81: 'altum concipiens in corde dolorem, quem conpscere non valens.'

place in his bed without being discovered and lay with him for a night, after which she blackmailed him. One day, while the king was sleeping, Rosamund, thanks to Helmichis and Peredeo, succeeded in murdering her husband. Thus, Alboin, 'who was most famous in war through the overthrow of so many enemies, perished by the scheme of one little woman [*muliercula*].'³⁶ After that, Helmichis tried to usurp the throne, but the Lombards tried to kill him, forcing him and his new bride, Rosamund, to take refuge with the prefect of Ravenna, Longinus.

In recounting the story, the author portrays Rosamund's vengeful and adulterous actions in an extremely negative way. First, she is an unscrupulous woman, who not only kills her husband (and her king) but also commits adultery with Peredeo and attempts to murder her second husband at Longinus's instigation. In fact, Paul reports that Rosamund was very ambitious, because she plotted to kill Helmichis and marry Longinus to become the *domina* of the inhabitants of Ravenna.³⁷ However, her ambition led to her downfall: while she was pouring out a poisoned cup to Helmichis, telling him it was a healthy drink, he realised the deception and, drawing his sword, forced Rosamund to drink the remaining poison. Thus, 'these most wicked murderers perished at one moment by the judgment of God Almighty'.³⁸

In representing the scene, Paul explicitly states that Rosamund's violent reaction is triggered by a specific action of her husband, which happens in a public place, and, most importantly, Alboin makes this gesture when he is in a particular condition of psychophysical alteration, namely drunkenness, a shameful condition for a king.³⁹ From an emotional point of view, Rosamund is not represented as a totally insane woman who is prey to a presumed feminine impulsiveness, since her *dolor* is primarily a reaction to a flagrant lack of respect in a public context and, most importantly, before it was translated into vengeful actions, a certain amount of time, reflection and planning was

36 Paul, *History* 2.28, 81: 'uniusque mulierculae consilio periit, qui per tot hostium strages bello famosissimus extitit.' In Carolingian times *muliercula* was used in a strongly derogatory sense and indicated frivolity. Cristina La Rocca, 'Paupercula. Una donna sola tra povertà, disabilità e riscatto (secoli VI–IX)', in *Donne e povertà nell'Europa mediterranea medievale*, ed. Laurent Feller, Paolo Grillo, and Maddalena Moglia (Rome: Viella, 2021), 17–40 (25, 31).

37 Paul, *History* 2.28, 85.

38 Paul, *History* 2.29, 86: 'Dei omnipotentis iudicio interfectores iniquissimi uno momento perierunt.'

39 Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 191.

needed.⁴⁰ Consequently, Rosamund's *dolor* per se could seem entirely justified, and it is not explicitly mentioned in order to portray the woman in a negative light. What is strongly criticised by Paul, however, are Rosamund's actions, including the betrayal and murder of the king, which could have provoked internal instability in a leaderless kingdom.⁴¹ Moreover, Rosamund commits a terrible act for a wife against her husband: adultery. In the Lombard society described in the *HL*, female adultery is a crime always strongly condemned by Paul, but male adultery is not necessarily considered blameworthy.⁴² Finally, it is important to note that Paul does not explicitly mention any other emotion related to Rosamund's revenge in the scene. Nevertheless, it is possible to detect the presence of emotion in an episode in which another vengeful woman follows the same behavioural and emotional pattern as Rosamund. Using the method of the emotional script could imply the presence of new emotions not explicitly mentioned in Rosamund's episode.

In *HL* 1.20, Paul recounts the vengeance of Rumetruda, daughter of the Lombard king Tato, against the brother of the Herulian king Rodolf. As in Rosamund's case, the author underlines that the Lombard woman was particularly proud. At first, she decided to invite the nobleman to drink a cup of wine because she noticed that he had a large following – a tangible sign of his importance – but when she noticed that her guest was quite short, 'the girl looked down upon him in contemptuous pride and uttered against him mocking words'.⁴³ The man, full of shame (*verecundia*) and indignation (*indignatio*), addressed unspeakable insults to Rumetruda, putting her in a state of disturbance and embarrassment (*confusio*). Then, 'she, inflamed by a woman's fury [*furor femineus*] and unable to restrain the rage [*dolor*] of her heart, sought to accomplish a wicked deed she had conceived in her mind'.⁴⁴ Initially, Rumetruda 'feigned patience, put on a lively countenance, and stroking him down with merry words' invited the man to sit with his back to a window over

40 On women's violence in Lombard society, see Ross Balzaretto, 'Women and Weapons in Early Medieval Europe,' in *Il genere nella ricerca storica. Atti del VI Congresso della Società Italiana delle Storiche*, ed. Saveria Chemotti and Cristina La Rocca (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2015), 137–50 (146–49).

41 See the violence perpetuated during the ten-year period when the Lombards had no king. Paul, *History* 2.32, 92–93.

42 For example, in the case of King Cunipert and Theodata. Paul, *History* 5.37, 240–41.

43 Paul, *History* 1.20, 34: 'eum fastu superbiae puella despexit, verbaque adversus eum inrisoria protulit.'

44 Paul, *History* 35: 'Illa furore femineo succensa, dolorem cordis cohibere non valens, scelus quod mente conceperat explere contendit.'

which she had previously drawn a curtain.⁴⁵ When she gave a precise signal to her servants, the latter struck the nobleman in the back with their spears, killing him instantly. As mentioned previously, this gesture led King Rodolf to declare war on the Lombards to avenge his brother's death. According to Paul, however, the greatest sin was committed by Rumetruda, who was described as an atrocious beast.

The *dolor* felt by Rumetruda was accompanied by a form of *furor* connotated by the adjective *femineus*, which leads to a desire for revenge. The *furor femineus* is mentioned by Paul in two other episodes, in his *Historia Romana*. Although he never gives an expressly negative judgment on this emotion, it seems to allude to a state of momentary female madness,⁴⁶ which involves the killing of children by the mother.⁴⁷ By contrast, in Rumetruda's episode, despite her *furor* she was able not only to conceal her emotional state, but also to simulate different emotions. In fact, she feigned patience, assuming a happy expression and sweetening the man with lovely words. As in the case of Rosamund, the same *dolor* does not degenerate into totally improvised gestures but is channelled into the conception of the crime. The female ability to simulate emotions is openly condemned by the author, and even though in the *HL* both sexes are protagonists of frauds that involved the momentary suppression of their feelings of hostility, only in Rumetruda's case does Paul clearly explain how a wicked woman dissimulates her own emotions in order to obtain revenge. He emphasises how, through her body and words, typical weapons of female seduction, she manages to convince her guest that she is not angry, thus drawing him into her trap. As in Rosamund's case, the sexual element is relevant: faced with female seduction, the Herulian nobleman, forgetting the serious insult he has just received, accepts the invitation to sit with Rumetruda, a decision that will prove fatal shortly afterwards.

To summarise, Paul's negative judgement on female characters concerns their vindictive and adulterous actions, but not their *dolor* per se. Indeed, as Barbara Rosenwein has noted, in the early medieval context the problem was

45 Paul, *History* 1.20, 35: 'Simulat patientiam, vultum exhilarat, eumque verbis iocundioribus demulcens.'

46 Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, 351. This nuance of 'mad anger' derives from classical Latin, and it is also present in the writings of the Western church fathers. This usage seems to have persisted among early medieval authors, such as Bede. See Catherine Peyroux, 'Gertrude's *furor*: Reading Anger in an Early Medieval Saint's *Life*,' in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 36–56 (45).

47 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. Amedeo Crivellucci (Rome: Istituto storico Italiano, 1914), 4.12, 61; 5.2, 72.

no longer emotions themselves – they are neither intrinsically good nor intrinsically bad – but the will's ethical bent. Emotions are acts of the will (*voluntas*), and if the will is directed towards God, emotions are praiseworthy. But if the will is driven by dishonest and wicked intentions, emotions are evil.⁴⁸ Therefore, Rumetruda and Rosamund are not criticised for feeling *dolor* or any other emotion, but for directing their wills (and along with them their emotions) towards selfish purposes that resulted in actions that threatened the community. Moreover, according to Paul's perspective, their comportments transgressed traditional gender norms.⁴⁹ Indeed, female behaviours in the face of outrage differ from male ones because they always involve the element of sexuality (adultery and seduction). Finally, in relation to the female gender, Paul mentions the existence of a 'feminine' rage (*furor femineus*), which cannot, however, be compared to a state of pure insanity.⁵⁰

4 The Script of *dolor* and a Possible Variation of It

Despite gender differences, it is possible to outline a common emotional script:

1. The perception that a harmful act reputed to be unjust has been done directly to one's own person or indirectly to a relative by an individual of the same social rank
2. A state of *dolor* that one is unable to contain, suppress or bear
3. The need to repair the damage through a violent reaction exerted directly or indirectly by the injured party, which, however, is implemented after a certain period of time and planning.

The first important point is that this script involves emotional actors of extremely high social rank: a queen (Rosamund), a daughter of a king (Rumetruda), a king (Rodolf) and a future king (Aistulf). At the same time, in each anecdote the offending act is perpetrated by a character of high social status (King Alboin, King Rodolf's brother, Rumetruda and King Liutprand), and, in

48 This theory of emotions was introduced by St Augustine; see Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 63–64.

49 Indeed, the two women embodied a feminine model totally opposite to the ideal one sketched by Paul in the *HL*. This positive model includes the female virtues of modesty, sexual continence, piety, and devotion to God. For some remarks about Paul and gender see Ross Balzaretto, "'These are Things that Men Do, Not Women': The Social Regulation of Female Violence in Langobard Italy," in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Guy Halsall (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), 175–92.

50 In the early medieval context, the expression of *furor* by a woman could be considered legitimate in some cases. See, for example, Peyroux, 'Gertrude's furor'

most cases, the person who insults the offended party has the same social rank as the latter (the only exception seems to be Aistulf, who, at the time of the events recounted in *HL* 6.51, was not yet king but became king in 749). The outrage can also be of various types: it can result from a public offence (Rosamund and Aistulf), from a verbal insult (Rumetruda), or from the killing of a relative (Rosamund and Rodolf). The injured party generally reacts in an extremely violent way to the devaluation of his or her own self: the revenge is carried out through murder (Rosamund, Rumetruda), attempted murder (Aistulf) or the unleashing of a war (Rodolf).

A further characteristic of *dolor* performed in the script analysed so far is that it is uncontrollable. This peculiarity could be erroneously understood as a sign of the inability of the emotional actor to control his or her own passions and as suggesting that *dolor* is a sign of impulsiveness and irrationality. In some cases, the behavioural reaction of the character receiving the offence is instantaneous (Aistulf), but in most episodes, there is a certain amount of time between the *dolor* and the vindictive reaction of the character, which includes a phase of preparation (sometimes extremely accurate) and/or meditation on the event. Moreover, the offended party may decide to involve one or more persons, sometimes by force. Rumetruda's and Rosamund's revenge requires the elaboration of a laborious plan to neutralise their offenders, while King Rodolf's revenge implies the call to arms and organisation of an army. Even in the case of Aistulf, in which the gesture of drawing his sword to kill Liutprand is immediate, his action does not imply that his uncontrollable *dolor* is the manifestation of his emotional instability, but, rather, that it represents a wholly rational response in relation to the male aristocratic code of honour. Therefore, this overwhelming *dolor* may be understood as a signal that the integrity of one's ego is being seriously undermined, that the offence perpetrated by one's peer is extremely unjust and that this deep *dolor* must be transformed into proactive action in order to respond to the offence. In other words, *dolor* could be conceived as a feeling that not only allows the character to become aware of the fact that his or her ego is being publicly questioned, but also to react appropriately to the offence because its intensity is such that the person, rather than succumbing to it, decides to channel that emotion into concrete actions to try to change the situation.

What, then, is the uncontrollable *dolor* felt by the protagonists? Since the latter are persons of high social status and the themes of personal honour and revenge are involved, it is likely that such *dolor* can be interpreted as a state of affliction linked to the deep and painful humiliation experienced by the protagonists in public. However, such *dolor* appears not to be associated with a state of despondency and sorrow but, rather, with a kind of anger, a 'painful

rage', which leads the person to react energetically and often through the use of violence. Paul the Deacon, who was educated by studying texts in the Latin tradition, might have derived this meaning from the classical use of the Latin word *dolor*. Indeed, in classical Latin, this term not only signifies grief, physical pain and sorrow, but also indicates a form of 'painful anger' or 'angry pain', a meaning that seems to have been maintained over time in other languages.⁵¹

Faced with the offence, the subject could react in two different ways: he or she could abandon himself or herself to interior withdrawal and remain in a state of self-pity, or he or she could react energetically by relying on a series of vigorous and hostile emotions, such as anger, which is usually followed by the desire for revenge. Indeed, within this emotional script, anger can be understood as a reaction to unjust suffering caused by a lack of respect, and a clear signal that an illegitimate act has been committed against the offended party, who will act accordingly, through usually violent actions. Moreover, as suggested previously, it is plausible that the same *dolor* evoked by Paul in these particular contexts must have included a dimension linked to anger.

Although anger is not mentioned explicitly by the author – the case of the *furor femineus* of Rumetruda is to be considered separately – this emotion does not seem to be extraneous to the emotional script analysed so far. Indeed, this emotional state is repeatedly evoked by Paul as a typical emotional reaction to an act perceived as illegitimate. For example, after the Gepids were insulted by the Lombards during a banquet, they became full of *ira*,⁵² and the *schuldhais* Argait, as soon as he was called *arga* by Duke Ferdulf, felt a great *ira*.⁵³ It is also important to point out that in the early Middle Ages, *ira* was an extremely ambivalent passion. Certainly, in continuity with the Stoic tradition, it was condemned and perceived as extremely dangerous, but in some contexts, it could be considered a legitimate reaction that was perfectly inscribed in specific rituals, rules and conventions.⁵⁴ Therefore, the anger evoked in the episodes involving the offence – reaction dynamic should not necessarily be

51 This meaning is present in authors such as Virgil, Ovid, and Livy, on whose texts Paul was educated during his years at the court of Pavia: Lidia Capo, 'Introduzione,' in Paolo Diacono, *Storia dei Longobardi*, ed. Lidia Capo (Rome: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 2013), xii–xx. On the classical use of *dolor*, see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), s.v. 'dolor.' As noted by Stephen D. White, in the emotional vocabulary of Latin and ancient Occitan, anger and grief may in some cases coalesce into a single emotion that could be classified as 'a kind of sad anger, angry sadness, or grief': Stephen D. White, 'The Politics of Anger,' in *Anger's Past*, ed. Rosenwein, 127–52 (135).

52 Paul, *History* 1.24, 45.

53 Paul, *History* 6.24, 267; more examples at 1.27, 50; 6.51, 295.

54 See *Anger's Past*, ed. Rosenwein.

understood as a manifestation of an impulsive and uncontrollable passion, but, rather, as a reaction that Paul could consider motivated, neutral or occasionally condemnable if it leads to catastrophic consequences, as in the case of Argait. Finally, it should be pointed out that in the episodes in which the protagonist is a woman, the author seems to refer not to *ira*, but to *furor femineus*, an emotional state that drives the subject to commit atrocious acts that are always condemned.

Dolor, anger and feelings of revenge thus seem to be closely intertwined, as they are often mentioned in relation to the dynamics of offence – reaction. Although Paul does not explicitly mention the presence of anger in every relevant passage, it is likely that this emotion is not extraneous to this particular emotional script. The absence of emotional words may be explained by the fact that the author and his readers shared the same emotional register; consequently, there was no need to mention this emotion each time the same dynamic recurred, since it was taken for granted by both parties. If the *dolor* due to a lack of respect may be accompanied by anger, one could also hypothesise the opposite: if a person of high rank is wrongly offended and reacts by expressing his or her anger, this emotional condition is not totally unrelated to a state of uncontainable *dolor*.

Naturally, this does not mean that there cannot be variations within the emotional scripts and that, in the case of the *HL*, every unjust offence necessarily triggers a reaction of *dolor* and anger followed by revenge. For example, discussing the *dolor* of the Gepid king Turisind, Paul the Deacon introduces some clues that should have immediately signalled to his readers that Turisind, despite having before him the man who had previously killed his son in battle, would not react with violence. After he killed Turismond, Turisind's son, King Alboin took part in the banquet held by Turisind, who invited him to sit on his right where his dead son's chair stood. Turisind contemplated for a long time the chair on which his son used to sit in the past, which was now occupied by his murderer, and, 'drawing deep sighs, could not contain himself, but at last his grief [*dolor*] broke forth in utterance. "This place", he says, "is dear to me, but the person who sits in it is grievous enough to my sight".⁵⁵ Following this utterance, one of Turisind's sons (maybe Cunimund?) insults the Lombards, who reply with similar invectives. In the face of such disrespect, 'the Gepids, unable to bear the tumult of their passions [*confusio*], are violently stirred in

55 Paul, *History* 1.24, 44: 'alta trahens suspiria, sese continere non potuit, sed tandem dolor in vocem erupit: "Amabilis" inquit "mihi locus iste est, sed persona quae in eo residet satis ad videndum gravis."

anger [*ira*] and strive to avenge the open insult,⁵⁶ but the situation did not degenerate, thanks to the intervention of Turisind, who threatened to punish anyone who started to fight, because, in the eyes of God, it is absolutely reprehensible to win by killing a guest in one's own house.

The emotional and behavioural pattern of Turisind does not align with those previously analysed. First, when Alboin appears before him, the king of the Gepids has him seated *ad suam dexteram* (on his right) – that is, in a position of favour and honour. Consequently, despite the strong *dolor*, he respects his guest and avoids a clash between the Gepids and the Lombards. Second, although theoretically Turisind could have taken revenge for the murder of his son, his *dolor* does not prompt him to carry out a violent action, but, rather, to express verbally the fact that it is a serious matter for him to face the murderer of his son, who is, nevertheless, his guest and consequently sacred. Finally, the king of the Gepids prevents his warriors, enraged by the insults received, from attacking the Lombards, thus avoiding the perpetuation of unnecessary violence. Therefore, Paul's judgement on Turisind's behaviour at the end of the episode is absolutely positive.

Although in the case of both Rosamund and Turisind their *dolor* itself seems to be entirely justified, what distinguishes the two characters is the different ethical bent of their wills. Rosamund's will was driven by worldly desires and appetites of the flesh, which then led her to commit treason, adultery and murder. Therefore, if the will is perverse, emotions are vices. On the contrary, Turisind's will was directed towards virtuous purposes that resulted in avoiding the perpetuation of the conflict between the Lombards and the Gepids. In this case, the will is good and thus emotions are virtues.

5 Conclusion

If one analyses the episodes related to revenge, whose mechanism is generally based on an aggressive response in the face of a peer's disrespect, it should be noted that such scenarios are mainly present in the first three books of the *HL*.⁵⁷ The scenes in which *dolor* is explicitly connected to revenge – with the exception of the Aistulf story – also belong to this group. If, as Capo has argued,

56 Paul, *History* 1.24, 45: 'Gepidi confusionem ferre non valentes, vehementer in iram commoti sunt manifestasque iniurias vindicare nituntur.'

57 Paul, *History* 1.17, 29; 1.20 35; 1.24, 44; 1.27, 50; 2.28–30, 81–86; 3.7, 100; 3.18, 118; 6.24, 266–70; 6.45, 286; 6.51, 294.

the *HL* can be read as a cultural history of the *gens Langobardorum*,⁵⁸ who progressively abandoned some of the old Germanic values and integrated the remnants with Christian ones, the presence of extensive descriptions related to revenge contexts in the first books – within which the Lombards were particularly attached to pagan traditional values – should not be surprising. While revenge episodes partly reflect this set of values, in which the preservation of honour was central, on some specific occasions Paul criticises those who place their desire for vengeance ahead of the common good or concord within the kingdom, as in the case of Argait or Rosamund. Generally, the characters explicitly condemned by him are described as extremely prideful and arrogant, two traits opposite to the ideal model of the good and Christian king represented in the *HL*.⁵⁹ Indeed, in the eighth-century monastic environment, pride (*superbia*) was considered the root of all evil, from which the other deadly sins derived.⁶⁰ In addition, Paul's negative judgements are not about emotions themselves. He criticises those individuals who committed evil actions because their wills (and with them consequently their emotions) were oriented towards worldly desires. According to Paul, the adulterous and vengeful actions of Rosamund and Rumetruda transgressed gender norms and seriously threatened the internal stability of the kingdom. Therefore, their behaviours are judged more negatively than those of male characters. Finally, Paul does not hesitate to indirectly praise the behaviour of individuals who, in spite of the offences they have suffered, decide not to resort to violence if it might imply the transgression of important social norms and values, as in the case of King Turisind.

In recounting the social dynamic of revenge based on the offence – response mechanism, Paul added a new emotional nuance to it, namely that of *dolor*, which was perhaps also familiar to his readers. Probably, Paul's intention was to offer to his audience – among whom it is highly probable there were lay magnates and female readers⁶¹ – positive or negative emotional scripts related to vengeance. In doing so, he narrated to his contemporaries a distant past while proposing models of emotional behaviour and codes of comportment that could be valid for the present.

58 Capo, 'Dimensione letteraria,' 66–67.

59 Capo, 'Paolo Diacono,' 266. See, for example, the celebration of Grimoald's clemency in *HL* 5.2, or the praising of Cunipert's defence of loyalty and care for the common good in *HL* 6.58.

60 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 81.

61 Pohl, 'Paulus Diaconus,' 404.