

The Personality of Queen Clotilde in Early Nineteenth-Century France

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Rather little is known about the life of early medieval Frankish queen Clotilde who was later sanctified by the Catholic Church. She was a daughter of a Burgundian king and married Frankish king Clovis I during the last decades of the fifth century. She was Catholic and also her husband converted to Catholicism right before the turn of the century. Clotilde had at least five children of whom one died as an infant. She founded a monastery together with Clovis where she eventually died in 545.¹ She was buried in the abbey of St. Genevieve, then the Church of Holy Apostles, which was destroyed during the Revolution of 1789 but her remains were saved. Besides these cold facts, all we know about her are probabilities and interpretations, as only very few contemporary sources mention her.

A major turning point in Clotilde's history occurred in the tenth century when she began to be venerated as a saint in the Catholic Church.² There was a clear reason why Clotilde was granted the status of a saint. She was perceived as converting her husband Clovis to Christianity. Despite the lack of sources and information, she was probably one of the most important female figures in the history of France due to her role in Christianising France.

During the tenth century, the *Vita Chrothildis*, Clotilde's hagiographical biography, was also written. The hagiographical text and its subsequent copies

1 See for example GREGORY OF TOURS' *Ten books of Histories* (539-594), Book II. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/gregory-hist.asp#book3>

Gregory's chronicles was by far the most important source about the Merovingian period before and during the nineteenth century.

2 FOLZ 1975, p. 1.

greatly affected the later images of Clotilde, particularly adding Carolingian ideals of a saint queen to the image of a Merovingian queen.³ The texts written about her preserved the Carolingian memories of the Merovingian period and affected how she was perceived in the future. The idea of her role in the conversion survived centuries with only minor modifications and was reinforced during the nineteenth century when the French monarchy was restored after the Revolutionary Years and Napoleon's reign.

The temporal focus of this article lies on the period of French restoration and July Monarchy, from 1815 to 1848, as the interest in Clotilde increased during that time. In re-thinking the royals after the collapse of Ancien Régime, many historians referred to the earlier kings and queens and Clotilde gained great importance in the period's historiographical imagination.⁴ During the years of 1815-1848, French monarchy underwent several changes and saw yet another revolution in 1830. The revolution was followed by a new form of monarchy, the July monarchy. The new king Louis Philip was no longer a king of France but the king of the French. France also received a new queen again fifteen years after the fall of Napoleon I. She was Marie Amalie who differed from previous queens in a sense that she no longer presented herself as a public figure, but identified herself more closely with bourgeois wives and mothers, thus creating a new image of queenship in France.⁵

My aim is to examine the significations Clotilde's figure held in different types of historiography⁶ and how it can be referred to as a "memory box". How can we examine the moment of opening the memory box? Multiple ideas from earlier historians and contexts were transmitted to the nineteenth century through her figure and in a sense were both accumulated by earlier interpretations and as well as recharged with new significations. We are speaking of a cultural transfer from one time to another but not of a transfer in a synchronic sense from one geographic or cultural zone to another. Different epochs are thus understood as cultural zones even though they can be as problematic to define as synchronic cultural areas.⁷

A memory box refers to a physical object transferring or exchanging significations and ingredients from one context to another, both geographically

3 THIELLET 1997, p. 148.

4 See for example AMALVI 2011, p. 28.

5 MARGADANT 1999, pp. 1467-1469.

6 Historiography is understood here in a general sense thus including both academic and popular historical literature, especially biographical literature.

7 See POIRRIER 2004, pp. 355-363. Also ESPAGNE 1994.

and temporally.⁸ Queen Clotilde had no physical form during the nineteenth century: she was rather just an idea. Her figure was not unchangeable during the period in question and it is possible to trace back a certain transformation starting from the revolution of 1789 and leading to the mid-nineteenth century. In my article the idea of queen Clotilde has mostly a temporal or diachronic dimension and, as so many other historical figures, hers has been modified according to the needs of every period and society. She was an *object* without a physical form or an absolute value. Her meaning and value in French history was always related to her husband and her sanctity.

I shall examine Clotilde as a memory box in three different kind of historiographical works. In other words, I shall study three unique moments of opening the memory box. Opening moment therefore refers to the moment of writing the work of historiography, not to multiple readings of the works.⁹ Nor are the books themselves artificial memory boxes, but Clotilde as a personality is one memory box. The works were aimed at different audiences, thus demonstrating how the memory box of Clotilde was not similar for all readers.

The first work is written by Swiss historian and economist Simonde de Sismondi (1773-1842) and the book is entitled *Histoire des Francais*. It was first published in 1821 and only the first part interests us because there Sismondi wrote about queen Clotilde and the Merovingian period. Sismondi was best known for his work on Italian states during the late Middle Ages, *Histoire des républiques italiennes du Moyen Âge* (1807–1818). The second work was written by Jules Dubern in 1837 and it was entitled *Histoire des reines et régentes de France et des favorites des rois*. This work was a collective biography of French queens, regents and “favourites” of the kings. It belonged to a very popular genre during the first half of the nineteenth century that focused uniquely on “women worthy”, women who were worth remembering.¹⁰ The third and final work was written by Caroline Falaize and was entitled *Clotilde, ou le Triomphe du christianisme chez les Francs*. Falaize’s work was published in 1848 and even though the author is quite unknown, the publisher L. Lefort in Lille was very popular in its own time and famous for publishing confessional literature for larger audiences.¹¹

8 See for example ROECK 2007, pp. 11f.

9 There is no way of determining how many times and where certain books were read and therefore one must focus on the moment of writing.

10 SMITH 1998, p. 51.

11 AMALVI 2006, p. 58.

The memory box of Clotilde prior to July Revolution

Before the revolutionary years at the end of the eighteenth century Clotilde was often perceived as God's intermediary for converting Clovis and, following this logic, an intermediary for converting the entire French monarchy to Catholicism. She was seen as introducing the faith to Clovis and, by choosing her God, he won the battle of Tolbiac in 496. However, the main role in the process of conversion was held by Clovis as the father of the first Christian dynasty. For example in the *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France* by famous seventeenth-century historian Mézeray, Clotilde had no other signification in the history of France than as initiating Clovis' conversion.¹² Thus, the memory she carried prior to the Revolution was that of the Christianisation of France as her sanctity was based on the conversion of the first Christian king.

It is, however, important to keep in mind that she was still a minor player in the history of France and in the process of Christianising the Franks during the first years of the nineteenth century. For example, in the text book *Epitome de L'Histoire de France* of French history written by Antoine Sériey's¹³ (1755-1829) in 1804 and reprinted several times during the following decades, Clotilde has practically no role at all in Clovis' conversion. The main reason for Clovis' conversion, according to Sériey's, was his wish to gain more power and his desires to expand his kingdom in Gaul. There was no clear divine intervention nor had he made any promises to Clotilde to converse to Catholicism.¹⁴ This interpretation differed considerably from the later historians' interpretations, which demonstrates well how the opening moment of Clotilde's memory box greatly affects the picture created of her – or whether she is pictured at all.

It seems that Sériey's had a penchant for Republicanism during the French Revolution and in any case did not interpret Clotilde's history or Clovis' conversion from a religious perspective. He opened the memory box at a moment when the general tendency was not proactive to highlight her role in the events that lead to Clovis' conversion. One must remember that had this

12 MÉZERAY 1696, p. 31. Mézeray was also very popular among nineteenth-century historians, for example Augustin Thierry referred to him in several occasions.

13 About Sériey's, see also AMALVI 2001, p. 254.

14 SÉRIEYS 1819, pp. 12f.

text book been written twenty years later, the interpretation would have been completely different. But it is useful to keep in mind that Clotilde was not always popular among historians and that her husband Clovis was seen as the more important figure in French history.

By the early 1820s, when Simonde de Sismondi published his *Histoire des Français*, the situation had changed both politically and socially. The restored monarchy sought justifications for its existence as not all parties were unanimous about having France once again ruled by royals. Louis XVIII was ruling and trying to restore the Ancien Régime- like monarchy. The Catholic Church was the monarchy's close ally since the two institutions had a long common history of one supporting the other in French society. *Histoire des Français* was a long work and it took Sismondi almost twenty years to finish it. It was, however, the first work that can be labelled as French liberal historiography since he looked for impartiality in writing history and especially impartiality towards both living and dead kings and rulers. Sismondi harshly criticised those who allowed politics to dictate what they wrote about history. For him, historical writing was about what we can learn from past kings and events, and for this purpose, he argued, there was no point in embellishing the past actions.¹⁵ Sismondi also wrote that "Our affair is to study only what truly existed and to know why it existed; to collect and present to all eyes the results of all experiences that have been tried on our ancestors and on us."¹⁶ This was very common rhetoric in the period's historiography and should not fool us to believe that Sismondi was completely unbiased. On the contrary, many historians of the period were politically and ideologically motivated.

Sismondi mentioned Clotilde for the first time in the context of the death of her father and made clear she would have an important impact on the entire French monarchy. He wrote that "[...] he [Clotilde's uncle] only took two girls as captives, Clotilde being the other one. Later she became the wife of Clovis and had a major influence on the destiny of the French monarchy."¹⁷ Even

15 SISMONDI 1821, Introduction.

16 "Notre affaire est de rechercher seulement ce qui a réellement existé, et de savoir pourquoi cela a existé; de rassembler ainsi et de présenter à tous les yeux les résultats de toutes les expériences qui ont été tentées sur nos ancêtres et sur nous-mêmes." *IBID.*, p. XVII. All translations are by Heta Aali.

17 "[...] il ne garda prisonnières que les deux filles, dont l'une Clotilde, ensuite épouse de Clovis, eut une grande influence sur le sort de la monarchie française." *SISMONDI* 1821, pp. 172f.

though Sismondi did not write anything else about Clotilde at this point; it is obvious he gave her a major role in French history. The sentence alone proves that her role changed considerably compared with the role given to her by Serieys some fifteen years earlier. But Sismondi also wrote about the medieval tradition of describing Clotilde and criticises very harshly those authors using false sources about Clotilde's marriage with Clovis. Sismondi pointed out that Gregory of Tours, the only near contemporary source about the marriage, did not say anything else other than Clovis wanting to marry Clotilde for her *sang royal*.¹⁸ All the other anecdotal events related to their marriage and meeting are of a later production and according to Sismondi, should be treated like a "roman de chevalerie". Sismondi even gives an example of such an anecdote with respect to their meeting, most likely from Medieval *Chronique de Saint-Denis*.¹⁹ Here Sismondi was thus creating a new moment for opening the memory box and *denying* the old memories attached to the figure of Clotilde. Indeed, Sismondi was intentionally creating a new memory here by refuting the old ones as not real.

The Swiss historian wrote quite extensively about the conversion of Clovis but he left open whether or not he believed that God had in fact intervened in the battle of Tolbiac where Clovis won and consequently converted to Catholicism. According to most narratives, Clovis promised to Clotilde to convert to Catholicism if he won the battle and after the victory, he indeed converted. Sismondi did not see any miracles happening in the battle but rather saw the decision as being at least partly political – Clovis wanted to ally himself with Gallic Catholic churches. But there is no doubt Sismondi saw this as a "right" thing to happen since he frequently called Catholicism the "orthodox" faith. It was "Clotilde's God" that helped Clovis to win, but that is about all there is to her role in the conversion. Her role in Sismondi's narrative ended with the victory in Tolbiac.²⁰

The author of *Histoire des Français* criticised the institution of sainthood and saw the sainthood being characterised by the purity of faith during the sixth century, not so much by the virtues of the person. Sismondi expressed that during that period it was more important to make donations to the Church than to perform good deeds. Miracles marked the blessed ones, not the works of charity. Here Sismondi also defined what he saw as the "good" marks of a

18 SISMONDI 1821, p. 182.

19 IBID., p. 183.

20 IBID., pp. 186f.

saintly person and what these marks were during the Merovingian period.²¹ It is not clear, however, if he intended this to also criticise Clotilde's position or to criticise the loose conditions of sainthood in the sixth century in general. Yet, this was one indication of liberal historiography in the early nineteenth century – to be critical towards the Catholic institutions even though most historians were Catholics or Protestants themselves. It was not, however, very common to criticise Clotilde's saintly position which defined her as “the mother of the French nation” and even Sismondi showed this position to be quite untouchable.

Transformations during the first decade of the July Monarchy

The 1820s were the last decade when a king of France held power in France. The year 1830 saw another revolution in France when Charles X was dethroned and Louis Philip was invited to become the king of the French. Constitutional monarchy had already been established in 1814 but the king lost his power even after the July Revolution. 1830's and 1840's were truly decades of historians since many historians became politicians and politicians became historians.²² The most famous of these was François Guizot who worked as a Minister of Public Instruction and later as the head of the government.²³ The high hopes carried for the July Monarchy did not last very long due to economic and social problems, even though for many the new monarchy signified a new era in the history of France.

The second historian discussed in this article, Jules Dubern (1800-1880), had quite a different view on Clotilde and on women in general. Dubern's most famous and perhaps the only work *Histoire des reines et régentes de France et des favorites des rois* (1838) started with the biography of Basine who was Clovis I's mother. There are no other known works by Dubern and no knowledge of how frequently this specific work was read. The work was clearly aimed to highlight the virtues of the July Monarchy and this was done

21 SISMONDI 1821, p. 233.

22 About July Monarchy and historians becoming politicians, see for example CROSSLEY 1999, pp. 49-57.

23 THEIS, <http://www.guizot.com/fr/histoire-de-sa-vie/guizot-sous-la-monarchie-de-juillet/>

partly by presenting the earlier queens in a rather negative light. Dubern had a very critical attitude toward women asserting direct power and wrote in the introduction of his work that

[s]ince the reign of unfortunate Louis XVI history does not offer any more stained pages for the glorious female sovereigns who joined all their capabilities with the happiness that has no competitors. And France can now contemplate, with pride and trust, the respected throne where shines the clearest example of marital virtues and of civil virtues ²⁴

In the citation Dubern refers to the situation that there had not been any female regents or powerful queens after the reign of Louis XVI. The passage clearly shows how Dubern perceived women's most ideal role as that of wives and mothers of kings, not as regents using direct power. When interpreting this citation above one must remember that no queen or empress took any part in politics after the reign of Louis XVI and both Louis XVIII and Charles X were widowers by the time they inherited the crown. Marie-Amalie, wife of Louis Philippe and queen of the French, was quite a different case compared to earlier queens. As already mentioned she was almost completely withdrawn from any politics and identified herself with bourgeois ideals, such as devotion to her family and religion. Marie-Amalie was not included in the biography; perhaps because she was still alive when the work was written. Dubern seemed to regard Napoleon's second wife Marie-Louis highly and pictured her quite positively. She did, according to Dubern, take care of politics when Napoleon was away from France but she did it only out of duty, not because she wanted to rule.²⁵ This is noteworthy as Dubern clearly perceived that it was unnatural for women to want to use power and those good queens only used it unwillingly. Using power was thus acceptable as long as women did not want it and did it merely out of a sense of duty.

For Jules Dubern Clotilde was not the personification of the saintly mother of a nation: in fact, he wrote that "Church has been able to name Clotilde

24 "Depuis le règne de l'infortuné Louis XVI, l'histoire n'offre plus que des pages sans tache pour les glorieuses souveraines qui joignent à toute leur illustration le bonheur de paraître à peu près sans rivales; et la France peut contempler aujourd'hui, avec orgueil et confiance, ce trône respecté, où brille d'un si pur éclat l'exemplaire union des vertus conjugales et des vertus civiques." DUBERN 1837 (I), p. IV.

25 DUBERN 1837 (II), p. 325.

among the saints but history should remember her among the worst queens.”²⁶ In another paragraph he described Clotilde as an “evil queen”. Furthermore, he wrote that the Salic law started to exclude women from inheriting the throne of France during the sixth century and that even if this had not been the case, Clotilde would have been “unworthy of the throne”.²⁷ In the second page of Clotilde’s biography Dubern stated that she was “happy to be queen” which can be interpreted to be a negative sign as in the citation above Dubern clearly shows desire of power as being a negative feature in women. Perhaps this happiness of becoming a queen could be interpreted as a desire for power as the position did hold some power, at least morally, in the eyes of the early nineteenth-century historians. Why then was Dubern so critical towards Clotilde? One must remember that it is not this image that made Dubern critical towards Clotilde; he created such a negative image because he considered her to be a bad queen. He decided to highlight all negative aspects of Clotilde, yet without citing any sources or revealing the reasons for his interpretations. He presented his interpretation as the truth but did not justify how he had found it. The negative image was so different from other contemporary interpretations that one can suspect he had a specific reason to create it.

The new layer of Clotilde’s memory box created by Dubern is very different from the other contemporary representations and, in fact, emphasises how the writer’s own background affects it as well as the society and culture. Jules Dubern’s political views are not known other than his support for July Monarchy and there is very little information about Dubern’s background except that he came from a rather wealthy family, had a degree in law and was member of *Institut Historique*.²⁸ Was the reason for creating a negative image of Clotilde the will to highlight the contemporary role of the bourgeois queen? Perhaps he considered that French monarchy did not need Clovis to justify the return of the monarchy and only used the early royals as negative mirrors to reflect the superiority of his own time. It is not only due to the sources, which are most likely the same for all, but how the sources are interpreted at a specific moment. According to his source list, Dubern used *Grandes*

26 “L’Église a pu placer Clotilde parmi les Saints; mais l’histoire doit la mettre au rang des plus mauvaises reines.” DUBERN 1837 (I), p. 9.

27 DUBERN 1837 (I), p. 8.

28 *Revue Britannique* (T. 14, 1838), p. 399. *Institut Historique* was founded in 1833. The review in *Revue Britannique* praised Dubern’s work and expressed similar negative views about the early Middle Ages as Dubern had expressed.

Chroniques de France as one of his sources but this source does not explain his hostility as Clotilde is presented there in a highly positive context.²⁹

Dubern was obviously not satisfied with Clotilde's saint position and was clearly not a fervent Catholic since criticising saints indirectly equalled criticising the Church. In fact, he presented Clotilde as taking advantage of religion when stating that "Clotilde considered her enemies as the enemies of God".³⁰ But was Dubern criticising Clotilde, queens in general or the early medieval saints? It seems he was not criticising all queen in general because when one examines the biography of Radegonde, a saint and Clotilde's daughter-in-law, one sees much more positive image of early medieval queen. Whereas Clotilde, according to Dubern, had a certain lust for power and vengeance, two defects that seemed to be very common in bad women in early nineteenth-century historiography, Radegonde had only hoped to retreat from her husband's court in order to become a nun.³¹ Thus the criticism was not aimed uniquely at early medieval saints either. Dubern's picture of Clotilde was thoroughly negative; perhaps he just wanted criticise her actions as a queen without having a more general view about the early medieval queens or saints. Clearly though he perceived the early Middle Ages as rather barbaric when he stated in the biography of Basine, mother of Clothar I, that "The cradle of France is still wrapped in the darkness of barbarism which ruled then."³²

In order to understand the representation of Clotilde one must look at the intended audience of Dubern's work. Biographies were often read by women and especially by young women. The bourgeois ideal nevertheless often required readings to be suitable and religious, or at least in concordance with the Catholic tenets.³³ Dubern's work presented no such ideas; he even

29 I do not know exactly which version Dubern was using but the only version I have in my disposal is the one edited by Paulin Paris and Édouard Mennechet in the 1830s. It is in Gallica:

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k62269377/f137.image.r=Crotilde.langEN>

30 "[...] Clotilde considérait ses ennemies comme ennemies de Dieu [...]" DUBERN 1837 (I), p. 6.

31 IBID., pp. 13-17.

32 "Le berceau de la France est encore enveloppé dans les ténèbres de la barbarie qui régnait alors." IBID., p. 2.

33 About good reading for French nineteenth-century school girls, see BELLAIGUE 2013, pp. 207, 209. Bellaigue shows that historiographical texts were read more and more during the nineteenth century, not only confessional literature. IBID., p. 216.

suggested that saint Radegonde was not as chaste as presented by religious authors. The same idea was also presented by liberal historian Augustin Thierry, but he is not mentioned in the list of sources in the second part of Dubern's biographies. Thierry's work, *Récits des temps mérovingiens*, was first published in the 1830s and was highly popular though also criticised by Catholic authors for its image of Radegonde. Thierry also suggested that Radegonde might have had carnal relations with a priest in her community, an idea refuted by the religious historians.³⁴ This might signify that Dubern's work was not approved among all religious circles and therefore perhaps not so celebrated in general, taking into consideration that confessional books were still very popular among all social classes in France.³⁵ Perhaps it was read by the bourgeoisie among whom biographies were well-liked, especially among women readers.

1840s and new layers in Clotilde as a memory box

The 1840s saw a lot of political and social problems in France and the situation became more aggravated towards 1848, causing another revolution that overturned the monarchy for the last time. Constitutional monarchy came to its end in the early months of 1848 and the Second Republic was created. Even though the July Monarchy had been more liberal than the Restoration Monarchy between 1815 and 1830, inequality in society was still striking and unemployment rates were high.³⁶ Despite the political uncertainty and the slow fall of the monarchy during the July Monarchy, early royals were as popular among authors and readers as before. In fact, history interested readers more than ever and the amount of historical literature grew constantly. In addition, after the revolution of 1830 France had witnessed a Catholic intellectual revival which induced young clergies to educate themselves further and take

34 THIERRY 1851, p. 164. Interestingly, according to Bellaigue, Augustin Thierry's *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1825) was perceived as suitable reading for young women at least in some schools. BELLAIGUE 2013, p. 216.

35 Dubern's work might not have been much read even though *Revue Britannique's* review was very positive. See note 28.

36 For the reasons of 1848 revolution, see for example ALMOND 1999, p. 98.

part in intellectual and historiographical discussions of contemporary France. Religious historiography was revived after years of silence.³⁷

My last example of a new layer in Clotilde as a memory box comes from 1848 and represents the genre of historical novel. One must, however, remember that the historiographical works and novels were still quite similar on a narrative level and presented quite similar actions from history and the Merovingian period. Caroline Falaize's *Clotilde ou le Triomphe de Christianisme* of 1848 was clearly, unlike Dubern's work, aimed for young female readers for whom Clotilde was presented as a role model. Falaize seemed to have been quite a popular author and wrote several works of historical literature. In addition, one finds for example an educational work written by her entitled *Leçons d'une mère à ses enfants sur la religion* from the catalogue of Bibliothèque National de France. The work *Clotilde* seems to have been quite well-liked as it was reprinted at least three times, which signifies that there was a demand for such a literature. In any case, it seems that *Clotilde* was read more widely than Dubern's work and most likely presented a broader picture of queen Clotilde.

When considering Falaize's work and the author's creation of new layers in Clotilde as a memory box, one should also take into consideration the context in which the work was written. The genre of religious historical novels was indeed highly popular and it is impossible to know whether Falaize wrote such novels because she wanted to or because she needed to make a living for her family and therefore, for practical reasons, chose this genre.³⁸ Women did not have the same opportunities to publish what they liked, but the genre options were much more limited than in the case of male authors. Biographies and educational novels, such as *Clotilde*, were an accepted genre whereas writing for example historiographical works such as the Sismondi's *Histoire des Francais*, were perceived as not suitable for women. Furthermore, women were not seen capable of writing such works.

Falaize's work follows the same chronological narrative of all contemporary works about the Merovingian period, even those written by professional historians. Since there are very few sources left about Clotilde and not one where her emotions would have been examined or described, this indicates the level of fiction in this work. Radegonde, Clotilde's daughter-in-law appeared

37 About the Catholic intellectual revival, see DEN BOER 1998, p. 25.

38 About women writing to make a living in the nineteenth century, see SMITH 1998, pp. 40, 44.

also in the novel and Falaize wrote about the meeting of these two women: “Clotilde surrounded this poor child with the most gentle interest; she pitied her destiny, supervised her from afar like a providence and ensured to give her a religious education. The court of this great queen was even more disposed toward tenderness and pity as she had made a great sacrifice [...]”³⁹ There are no sources telling Radeconde was ever raised by Clotilde even though she was only a child when Clothier, Clotilde’s son, intercepted her as a war booty from Thuringia.⁴⁰ The advantage of Clotilde as a representation is that due to the lack of sources, there is almost no negative material about her left and she can be shaped to fit all interpretations.

The new layers added to the memory box of Clotilde in this work are aimed to instruct and guide the readers. Of course, almost all historiographical works in the early nineteenth-century were written for educational purposes, at least implicitly, but the moral values were clearly emphasised in this work to create a role model in queen Clotilde. The representation of the queen presents specific values which were seen as atemporal in the mid-nineteenth century. The most important values were obedience toward the Catholic Church, husband and family, tenderness, pity, humility and modesty. And furthermore, according to the novel, Clotilde did not want to be a queen but was presented as being afraid of the role.⁴¹ This is a similarity to Dubern’s work – the lust for power, or what was perceived as such, did not fit the image of an ideal queen. Dubern, however, presented Clotilde as the opposite; yet the basic structure of the interpretation was the same.

It is rather problematic to distinguish the items of diachronic cultural transfer in *Clotilde* since the author practically mentioned no sources at all. However, one can deduce that at least the hagiographical sources were used, either directly or indirectly through other literature. Several scenes, especially from Radeconde’s life and Clotilde’s grandsons’ death are from Gregory of Tours’ *Histories* but again, it is only possible to guess where Falaize had

39 “Clotilde entoura cette pauvre enfant de l’intérêt le plus tendre; elle plaignit ses destins, veilla de loin sur elle comme une providence, et s’occupa de lui faire donner une éducation chrétienne. Le coeur de cette grande reine était d’autant plus disposé à la tendresse et à la pitié, qu’elle venait elle-même d’accomplir un immense sacrifice.” FALAIZE 1848, p. 266.

40 “Saint Radegunda”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition*. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488379/Saint-Radegunda>.

41 FALAIZE 1848, p. 192.

learned these scenes. *Clotilde* includes a lot of items that were clearly not based on any sources such as the following dialogue between Clovis and Clotilde about a construction of a basilica:

[...] - Dear husband, she said to Clovis, I dreamed last night that a magnificent basilica dedicated to apostles saint Peter and saint Paul would be elevated to this solitary place. - G enevi e had no doubt the same dream? The king answered smiling. - [Clotilde:] It could be, would it please you to fulfil the dream? - [Clovis:] *Did Clotilde think the magnitude of such attempt?* - [Clotilde:] The bigger, the worthier of my husband. - [Clovis:] Oh woman! You know the words to conquer the hearts; and you know your wishes are commands. - [Clovis:] It would be cruel of me to prove otherwise when the wishes are for saintly purposes. - [Clovis:] As I have no choice but to obey you, I will earn less good graces. [...] ⁴² (My italics)

G enevi e mentioned in the text is saint G enevi e who was pictured in the narrative as Clotilde's dear friend and a type of a mentor. In the narrative level it is interesting that Clovis was made to refer to his wife in third person (see the italics), a style that has no foundation in any sources. Nineteenth-century transfer is visible in the way Clotilde was pictured persuading her husband by flattering him and in the way her husband obeyed her for her saintly intentions. The message seems to be that women with true faith can lead their husbands to better actions and guide them morally receiving good grace simultaneously.⁴³ Ever since the eighteenth-century women started to be seen as morally better than men, even though simultaneously as morally weak, and this idea of women's higher moral is visible also in this text. Of course this position greatly restricted women's ideal behaviour as they were obliged to uphold their position by their everyday actions.

42 "Cher  poux, dit-elle,   Clovis, j'ai r ev  cette nuit qu'une magnifique basilique d edi e aux ap tres saint Pierre et saint Paul s' levait en ce lieu solitaire. - G enevi e a fait le m me r ve sans doute? R pondit le roi en souriant. - Cela pourrait  tre, te plairait-il de le r aliser? - Clotilde a-t-elle song    la grandeur de l'entreprise? - plus elle sera grande, plus elle sera digne de mon  poux. - O femme! Tu sais les paroles gagnent les couers; mais tu sais trop aussi que tes d sirs sont des lois. - Il serait cruel de me prouver le contraire, quand ces d sirs ont pour objet une oeuvre sainte. - Puisqu'il faut comme toujours t'ob ir, j'aurai du moins le m rite de me rendre de bonne gr ce." FALAIZE, 1848, pp. 221f.

43 DE GIORGIO 1993, p. 168.

Conclusion

In this article I have examined three different ways of presenting and three different moments of opening the memory box of queen Clotilde each creating a new layer there. The three early nineteenth-century works, Sismondi's, Dubern's and Falaize's, present three different genres; one being a purely historiographical work, one a biography and one a novel. One should however avoid making deductions based solely on the genres because no explicit or implicit correlation exist between genres and ways of representing a historical figure even though for example Falaize's work can be categorised in the subcategory of religious novels where all representations are quite established. Yet on a level of popularity one must recognise that Falaize's interpretation was most likely the best-selling as it was aimed to larger audiences than Sismondi's work. An early nineteenth-century phenomenon is in fact the lack of unanimity in the representations – the growing number of works led to various interpretations and to multiple openings of the memory box. The number of openings was larger than could have been in the past century which inevitably leads to more conflicting representations.

Considering the representations of Clotilde as a memory box leads to a problem related to uniqueness of the works. Are the works to be considered as unique and individual moments of opening the memory box or a part of larger models and traditions of representations? It seems that every opening is a unique moment and this is visible when looking at one later productions of Simonde de Sismondi, a work called *Histoire de la Chute de l'Empire Romain et du Déclin de la Civilisation, de l'an 250 à l'an 1000* from 1835. There he was very critical towards Clotilde being a saint and presented her quite revengeful and full of hatred.⁴⁴ Is this change in Sismondi's tone due to changed political situation or due to some personal features impossible to trace? This only proves that a memory box was very unique and even so unique that it only survived one work, or furthermore, only one instant of reading.

If we aim at making generalisations, interestingly the most important item of Clotilde's history, her sanctity, was questioned in both Sismondi's and Dubern's works. Was this a new signification related to Clotilde's figure or a transfer from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment? Questioning Clotilde's

44 SISMONDI 1835, p. 267.

sanctity could also be related to the general negative attitude towards the Merovingian period because historians often saw it as a period of decadence. In addition, one must consider that the 1830s differed quite a lot from the 1820s especially in terms of monarchy and freedom of press. Ideas that could not be published earlier found publishers some 15 years later. A separation between two poles of interpretations, between the liberal historiography and the confessional historical literature, seems to best designate the historiography during the July Monarchy as the interpretations the two genres increasingly estranged from each other.

One must acknowledge that the representation of Clotilde as a saint mother of nation did not exist as a unique interpretation in the early nineteenth-century France, even though the saint motherhood was very strong. Interestingly though her sanctity was not a new invention in the nineteenth century, her memory box got a new saintly layer which was a new product of the early nineteenth-century and included both ideas of nationalism and bourgeois idealism. But in addition, a new type of queenship born in the early nineteenth century is also visible in the representation of Clotilde and once again added one layer to her memory box.

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