Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: The West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)*. Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 19. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishing, 2012. xix + 661 pp. Map, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. $145.00 U.S (cl.); 100.00 €. ISBN 978-2-503-53595-1.

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In the wake of twentieth-century criticism of their discipline's "scientism," historians' transformation of past texts and artifacts into documents has increasingly been considered to involve a problematic redistribution of time, space, and function. In the terms of this critique, historical interpretation has come to be understood as the product of those heuristic decisions that contingently ordered raw data or "sources" and coded the apparatus for their decipherment. This re-appraisal has particularly affected the field of diplomatics, the rather archaically named auxiliary science which, since the seventeenth century, has endeavored to establish the authenticity of medieval charters. The belief was that these textual artifacts, when genuine, held particularly reliable information since they had been officially issued by authorities, in the presence of many witnesses who had attested their legislative and administrative contents. In order to establish authenticity, the observable features of charters, such as material support, ink, handwriting, discursive forms, graphic signs, and seals, were catalogued, serialized, and organized in patterns of general regularities. Thus was formed a grid for verification and judgment. Truth and interpretation were a function of seriality.

In his new monograph *The Politics of Memory*, Geoffrey Koziol advocates that royal charters (diplomas) be situated, not within a discipline's seriality, but within a past "reality." Diplomas are formal documents, grants of privileges, rights, and lands that were issued and sealed by medieval kings in their capacity as rulers. Koziol's goal is to replace the study of diplomas previously constructed as informative sources for the history of literacy, bureaucracy, and law, with an examination of diplomas as concrete phenomena that, in the process of their occurrence and in the materiality of their existence, made things happen and transformed the world around them. In his view of this world, that of Carolingian West Francia (840-987), diplomas were less the products of a spectrum of political activities, and not only the legal records of economic transactions, than they were themselves acts, generators of social relations and culture. Such is Koziol's central argument, the leitmotiv that animates and unifies the swirls of his hyper-dynamic narrative.

The argument is thus fundamentally epistemological in its bold assertion that late Carolingian diplomas have for the most part not been read properly. Koziol thereby contributes significantly to a number of conversations that, for some time now, have animated the practice of historical writing. His repeated challenges to, indeed frequent rejection of, the traditional interpretation of diplomas in terms of the legal and administrative functions their texts' evidence raise questions about theories of language and literacy and the role of these theories in historians' endeavors to make sense of their documents. Historians have always used some version of linguistic models as part of their hermeneutics; Koziol is no exception. Mining interpretive procedures derived from phenomenology, he has embraced the concept of the performative. That concept was born with J. L. Austin who posited that utterances have no truth-value since they do not describe the world but act upon it.[1] In a more nuanced theory of performativity, as practiced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the Münster school of ritual studies, speech events bring to life that which they pronounce, even as they can only be realized through the cultural matrix that governs their occurrences.[2] This dialogic version of the performative, which informs Koziol's treatment of Carolingian diplomas, carries the necessary obligation of establishing

context, since the actuality and creativity of rituals and performances is contingent upon the circumstances of their production.

Context is primary for Koziol, and the necessity for its detailed description is indeed responsible for the length of his study (pp.78, 98, 247).[3] Context, however, is a slippery tool: how to define it; how to deal with the unknown without over-speculating? There are several ways in which, at times, context deflects the argument made in *Politics of Memory*. One difficulty involves the multi-temporalities of context. There is the context in which diplomas were produced. Then, there is the event preserved in the diplomas and within other texts of that period. Then, there is the context that is constructed from the diplomas themselves and from contemporary texts and artifacts. This latter context inhabits the pages of modern historiography, and it is this context that is made to serve as objective reference and benchmark for the interpretation of those very "sources" that had, in the first place, precipitated its form(ul)ation. The circularity of this referential operation obfuscates the way that the (modern, interpreted, selected) historiographical context substitutes for the (past, un-retrieved) historical context. In noting that the performance of Carolingian diplomas is thus situated by Koziol within a context derived primarily from modern scholarship,[4] it must be emphasized that his command of that scholarship is astonishing. He has mastered the French, English, North American, and German literature devoted to matters Carolingian in the past century, and in that respect, his monograph offers a rich (if at time contentious) synthesis of this complex and somewhat embattled historiography.

Whereas contextualization by means of scholarly narratives to verify the performative nature of diplomas is problematic, the co-textualization practiced by Koziol opens up promising alternative venues for the tracking of performativity. Koziol meticulously traces the intertextuality at work among diplomas, non-royal charters, letters, formularies, capitularies, annals and chronicles, *vitae*, obituaries, necrologies, *libri memoriales*, genealogies, and liturgical and legal texts.[5] He appropriately stresses that diplomas integrated other texts (diplomatic, legal, liturgical) even as they were processed into yet other texts (charters, annals, necrologies, etc.). The entire body of Carolingian writing harbors an intense circulatory system; it is alive. Any text, by virtue of its existence and persistence, initiated a series of encounters: it was displayed, touched, read, seen, and might be subsequently ignored, cited, copied, archived, tempered, forged, destroyed. Any text thus continuously wrote itself into the practice of what some would call daily, but what Koziol would call political, life. Against this background of general scribal performativity,[6] the exceptionality of diplomas requires some justification. In part one, Koziol systematically demonstrates that diplomas and the particular political conjuncture of their occurrences were mutually constitutive, so that performativity was the primary, even if not the only, raison d'être and function of diplomas (p. 247). As they forged alliances, manifested status, channeled (or withdrew) favor, spawned memory, and generated continuity, diplomas, in his view, were chiefly relics, souvenirs, and traces of these operations—operations that directly and exclusively involved the king and individual magnates.

Two correlatives of this position appear repeatedly in the book. First, Koziol contends that there is little evidence that diplomas were actually used to prove claims at law (pp. 57, 413).[7] Such a radical conclusion will not sit well with most historians of the Carolingian period. Indeed, Koziol himself does not fully subscribe to it (p. 198),[8] but he does tend to show that, in West Francia, the use of writing was not widespread but was rather restricted to a small elite, and that it had little utility for administrative practice.[9] Second, Koziol further posits that, whatever the explicit purpose of diplomas, they did more than what their language states (pp. 41, 254, 262, 553). Therefore, he sees the content of a diploma as of less importance than its performative meaning (pp. 250-251, 256). Here again, Koziol does not hold himself fully to the requirements of this proposition; in part two especially, he gives the textual content of diplomas its full due. Nevertheless, such a proposition has hermeneutical ramifications. It probes the difference between the use of a diploma as textual evidence, say, of a change of allegiance, and the assertion that the diploma was the very act by which the change of allegiance was effected (pp. 261, 299). Koziol is upfront in admitting that such a difference does not much alter the

historical narrative but changes immensely our understanding of diplomas (pp. 97-98). This admission is correct but somewhat disingenuous, for Koziol's justified claim that he has significantly re-interpreted political events in late-ninth- and tenth-century West Francia rests substantially upon a reading of diplomas as texts. His confidence in dealing with concepts of performativity, however, is not matched when it comes to textual criticism. He oscillates between notions of diplomatic discourse as descriptive, representative, symbolic, coded,[10] paradigmatic, or even as a system bearing no relation to that which it inscribes. The deployment of these various conceptions throughout the book appears to be somewhat arbitrary, driven by the particular point they support rather than resting upon a careful elucidation of those ideologies that govern the use of language both in Koziol's interpretive technique and in the culture being considered.[11] This problem is particularly noteworthy in part two, where his practice of textual analysis leads the author to see diplomatic discourse as indexing a pre-discursive intentional self and thus to infer the psychological state of mind of King Charles the Simple (d. 929). However debatable such an inference might be, the compassionate portrait Koziol paints of a tragic and dignified figure intent on maintaining his doomed dynasty on the glorious path of its past is extraordinarily compelling.

I have focused on the theoretical positions that inform *Politics of Memory* in order to outline the difficulties Koziol faced in his project of transforming *data*, the name we often give to our sources, into historical agents.[12] The execution of his project is in itself something of a tour de force, consisting of an extremely detailed narrative overflowing with political events, places, individuals, and lineages. However, clarity suffers from an incessant accumulation of details, which is only sporadically synthesized into conclusions; confusion is not much alleviated by frequent cross-references and an inadequate index. The single map provided (p. xix) is helpful but insufficient to elucidate the geographic complexity, and the absence of chronological and genealogical tables makes it awkward to keep track of events and people.

The narrative is organized in two sections, whose unequal lengths (400 and 150 pages respectively) are emblematic of the extent to which each represents the author's different treatment of diplomatic production during the late Carolingian period. Part one maintains a dialogue between chronological arrangements and thematic organization. Examining Western Frankish diplomas from the death of Louis the Pious (840) onward, Koziol notes the following patterns. There were particular moments of diplomatic production: accessions to the throne, successions, victories, alliances, reconciliations. The issuance of diplomas by kings required the active participation of petitioners and intercessors acting on behalf of beneficiaries; these intermediaries were typically powerful political figures—magnates and churchmen alike. The beneficiaries belonged to the same small group of mostly monastic institutions mainly located in few regions. Such are the patterns that allow Koziol to argue that all Carolingian writing took place within a tightly-knit aristocratic world of intense political competition, where diplomas, directly tied to relations of power between the king and his allies, were even forged to test that power. Monks in particular, with their extensive use of diplomas to maintain an image of the kingdom as a community faithful to the king, were able to communicate a commitment to the kingdom that was instrumental in maintaining its continuity.

Koziol's diplomatic analysis here is not incorrect, but it is incomplete. The following example will illustrate both the strength and the vulnerability of his treatment of diplomas. In 939 or 940, King Louis IV (ruled 936-954) issued a diploma granting his *fidelis* Alard and Alard's wife, Adela, two monasteries located in Burgundy.[13] The act was given at the request of count Hugh and subscribed by the notary Odilon for the chancellor Héry, bishop of Langres. The diploma has an impeccable tradition. It is still extant as an original, that is, in the material format of its original issuance: a large single piece of parchment bearing (traces of) the royal seal. Though a grant to lay individuals, the diploma is part of the archives of the abbey of Saint-Bénigne of Dijon (France, Burgundy), which it entered most probably when the monasteries passed into the abbey's patrimony. This diploma, as far as I can establish, is not cited in the *Politics of Memory*. Although all known diplomas of the Frankish kings

who ruled between 840 and 987 have been edited, it is perhaps too much to expect that they all should have been considered in the present work.[14] A selection, then, understandably took place, but its rationale has not been made clear. Of the forty known complete diplomas issued during the eighteen years of Louis IV's reign,[15] Koziol considers nineteen.[16] His selection results in patterning diplomatic production into significant clusters, but the unexplained exclusion of half of Louis IV's diplomatic production runs the serious risk of compromising such patterning. For instance, in a convincing analysis, Koziol shows that the only three diplomas King Louis IV issued in the first six months of his reign (936) concretized a complex political agenda. All were granted for Burgundian ecclesiastical institutions, and they affirmed Louis IV as king in Burgundy to spite its hostile *princeps*, Hugh the Black, while acknowledging Louis's supporter, Hugh the Great of Neustria, as the most powerful magnate of the kingdom (pp. 85-91).[17] This system of alliance was in flux as early as 937, but Koziol, having ignored thirteen diplomas, does not pick up the diplomatic trail until late 941 (pp. 295-297). This brings us back to the diploma of 939-940, the remarkable thing about which is that neither its date, nor its place of issuance, nor the petitioner (*inclitus comes Ugo*), nor the recipients, nor the church's temporalities involved can be identified for sure. Thus, *comes Ugo* could be either Hugh the Great or Hugh the Black, [18] at a time when the relationship each had with Louis IV was unstable. This diploma further presents Louis in the act of giving church land to a lay *fidelis*, a gesture that puts in question, though it does not entirely invalidate, Koziol's portrait of the king as supporter of monks and of monastic reform in an effort to construct spiritual alliances (pp. 299-301, 539).

In part two, Koziol's sympathetic focus on King Charles III the Simple (879-929) rests upon a treatment of diplomas that is particularly attuned to textual content and the rhetoric of diplomatic discourse. Penetrating the opacity of formulae, Koziol discerns a political *mentalité*, invisible in narrative sources, by which newly to account for the strife that bitterly opposed Charles the Simple and Robert of Neustria (d. 923). In a significant re-interpretation of the deposition of the Carolingian dynasty by the Robertian-Capetian lineage, Koziol argues that Charles the Simple inhabited an imperious vision of royal majesty and of its attending ecclesiastic principles. This vision, Koziol asserts, was actualized by diplomas, which set monastic reform on an irreversible path toward independence from lay control. Charles's political culture thus is said to have clashed with the magnates' aspirations to consensual leadership and lay abbacies. Buttressing Koziol's interpretation of Charles's persona is the grandiose vocabulary used in the king's diplomas, particularly in one issued in Trier for its metropolitan church in 913, two years after Charles had become king of Lotharingia.[19] Koziol sees in this diploma a personal expression of the king's sense of dignity and prerogatives. It may well have been, but Koziol's contention would have been on firmer ground if he had noted that the diploma, still extant as an original,[20] was in fact redacted and written by the scribe who had drawn up an earlier diploma issued for the same church in August 908 by Louis the Child (d. 911), then king of Lotharingia. The similarities between the two diplomas include handwriting, honorific titles, rhetorical devices, and graphic symbolism typical of the writing bureau at the Trier cathedral.[21] Most significantly, Charles the Simple's diploma is not sealed with the seal traditionally used by the king during his reign, but with a seal that is very reminiscent of that used by Louis the Child.[22] Attention to the diploma's physical features therefore complicates the question of intentionality. It points to a scribal strategy whereby the Trier staff inscribed Charles the Simple's written output firmly within the diplomatic traditions of his predecessors in the eastern Frankish kingdom. It may also point to Charles's endorsement of such a strategy. In general, Koziol has neglected the materiality of diplomas, in particular the use of seals, whose imitations, re-use, titles, and iconography shed significant light on Carolingian strategies of royal identity.[23] As the example of the diplomas for the cathedral of Trier demonstrates, this material could have re-enforced Koziol's argument about the importance of diplomas in orienting the West Frankish political *habitus* toward the past.

Against the background of a Caroligian historiography dominated by German scholarship and largely concerned with the empire and its eastern kingdoms, Koziol has re-balanced the focus by concentrating on Western Francia as a distinct political and cultural unit characterized by the use of performative

diplomas. His innovative argument will attract controversy, as any important argument would, but Koziol's enterprise is heroic. Though the abundance of details is distracting and may well expose the narrative to the critique of specialists, the overall vision that emerges from this volume, unscathed, is riveting.

NOTES

[1] J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962). For a clear and succinct presentation of performativity and of its critics, see Kira Hall, "Performativity," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (2000): 184-187.

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). Works representative of the Münster School and relevant to Koziol's project include Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2003); and Hagen Keller, "Hülderweis durch Privilegien: symbolische Kommunikation innerhalb und jenseits des Textes," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 38 (2004): 309-321.

[3] The author acknowledges that "much detail is required to establish the precise contexts that substantiate" the performative uses of diplomas (p. 247).

[4] Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, for instance, 143 and n. 80. Discussing eleven diplomas issued by Charles the Bald between 843-845 and involving the monasteries of Saint-Martin and Marmoutiers, Koziol announces that "some context is essential before proceeding to the analysis," and in note 80 lists the studies upon which his narrative is based. For another of many similar instances, see 229-230.

[5] See for instance, Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 150-154, 246-247, 413, and 481-492.

[6] For Koziol, performativity characterizes the overall culture of charter writing, *Politics of Memory*, 52; other written texts are also granted performativity, 333, 340.

[7] I made this argument for eleventh- and twelfth-century charters in Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, "Diplomatic Sources and Medieval Documentary Practices: An Essay in Interpretive Methodology," in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. John Van Engen (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 313-343, and revised it in light of recent scholarship in *When Ego was Imago. Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 9-36.

[8] Here, Koziol discusses an investigation of suspicious titles ordered by Charles the Bald; for other instances of diplomas treated as containers of rights, see *Politics of Memory*, 161.

[9] Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 30, 140 (where diplomas are declared to have "no uses apart from politics"), 162-164, 172, 178 (on capitularies), 184-187. Koziol's positions about Carolingian lay literacy and documentary practices are likely to be challenged by the substantial group of Carolingian historians who have been developing arguments in favor of a Carolingian society deeply committed to and dependent upon the written word.

[10] I find the notion that diplomas were coded unsatisfactory. See Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 414, 440, 503, 540.

[11] See Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 423-424, where we are enjoined not to take Charles the Simple's diplomas for Robert of Neustria "as evidence of their good relations and mutual trust" and at 435, 438, 549, where the positive attributes of the Robertian petitioners are dismissed as language of diplomacy.

These instances are puzzling, since most of Koziol's earlier analyses of such diplomatic language had taken it as performative of status recognition. See also, 423-424, 472-473, 517-518, where affectionate epithets are arbitrarily used as evidence of deep affection or discarded as language of politics.

At 511-513, Koziol abstains from interpreting the theme of consensual rulership deployed in the diplomas of Charles the Simple as evidence that Charles sought the counsel of magnates, but accepts the evidence of narrative sources that assigned Charles's downfall to his refusal to listen to his magnates' counsel. Although Koziol's interpretation of this discrepancy is insightful, one would wish to understand the criteria by means of which one text is read literally.

[12] Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 355, analogizes charters to persons.

[13] Archives départementales de la Côte-d'Or, H 1, II, n° 13; see, Philippe Lauer, *Recueil des actes de Louis IV, roi de France, 936-954* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1914), n° 12, 35-37, and lxxii for the difficulties in dating the diploma precisely.

[14] Charles the Bald (d. 877) issued over 400 diplomas in the course of his thirty-seven year reign.

[15] Lauer, *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, xi. Lauer edited 53 diplomas, taking into consideration those that, though lost, are mentioned in other texts.

[16] The numbers used to designate Louis IV's diplomas refer to Lauer, *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*. Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 85-91 (acta nos 1-3), 549 (no 4), 300 (no 5), 310 (no 10), 295-296 (nos 16-19), 300 (no 20), 254 (no 21), 258 (nos 27-29), 304 (no 32), 310 (nos 35, 37), 305 (no 47). Act n° 35 (at 310) was not issued by Louis IV for Cluny but for a *fidelis*, Aquin.

[17] Hugh the Black was the brother of King Raoul (d. 936) who had preceded Louis IV on the throne by overthrowing Charles the Simple, Louis IV's father.

It is unfortunate that no mention is made of the fact that the two first diplomas issued by Louis were produced under the responsibility of the archchancellor Anseis, bishop of Troyes, who had served King Raoul in that capacity. The third diploma in this series, known only by a copy in a cartulary, lacks its final subscriptions.

[18] Lauer, *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, n° 12, 35-37, identified Ugo as Hugh the Black, *princeps* of Burgundy. In her analysis of this diploma, Jean Dunbabin, points out that both the text and what is known of Louis IV's political situation make Hugh identifiable as either Hugh the Black or Hugh the Great. See, Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843-1180*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

[19] Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 512-513; Philippe Lauer, *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple, roi de France, 893-923* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1949-1950), n° 74, 135. The notion that Charles established a different chancery for Lorraine has been squashed by Robert-Henri Bautier, "La chancellerie et les actes royaux dans les royaumes carolingiens," *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 142 (1984): 5-80, at 21-22; reprinted in Robert Henri Bautier, *Chartes, sceaux, et chancelleries. Études de diplomatique et de sigillographie médiévales*, 2 v. (Paris : Ecole des chartes, 1990), 2:461-537, at 477-478.

[20] Coblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, Abt 1A no 10.

[21] Lauer, *Recueil des actes de Charles III*, xxxvii-xxxviii; Bautier, "Chancellerie et actes royaux," in *Chartes, sceaux, et chancelleries*, 1:21-22.

[22] Martine Dalas, *Corpus des sceaux*. T. II: *Les sceaux des rois et de régence* (Paris: Archives nationales, 1991), n° 42, 119.

[23] Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego was Imago*, 75-94; and Ildar Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c.751-877)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

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