

# “Our Affection Contrived to Detain You”: Royal Love Scripts, Favours and Romanness in Cassiodorus’s *Variae*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the role and meaning of love-related emotions in the relationship between the Ostrogothic king and his officials represented by Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580), an Ostrogothic official and a member of the late-Roman elite, in his work *Variae*. First, after contextualising the work, the text outlines the authorial agenda on positive depiction for those kings, who preserved the Roman traditions, the Ostrogothic bureaucratic apparatus and interpersonal ties of love between the ruler and the officials. Second, the paper constructs and identifies five different scenarios of love, which had a social functionality aimed to maintain the continuity of a late-imperial stratified system of favours and court patronage. The article also shows that these scenarios expressed a normative behavioural ideal for an Ostrogothic ruler embedded in the sixth-century intellectual culture and the understanding of Romanness of the Italo-Roman elite. As a result, Cassiodorus departed from the late-imperial codes of emotive expression, but engendered an explicitly affectionate royal persona. And finally, the paper examines how it was possible to represent the ruler’s divergence from the emotional norms of love based on Roman ideal of self-restraint.

**Keywords:** Cassiodorus, the *Variae*, emotive script, love, post-Roman polities, royal favour.

**Rezumat:** Acest articol explorează rolul și semnificația emoțiilor din cadrul relației de iubire dintre regele ostrogot și oficialii săi, reprezentați de Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580), un oficial ostrogot și membru al elitei romane târzii, în opera sa *Variae*. În primul rând, după contextualizarea operei, textul evidențiază interesul autorului privind descrierea pozitivă a acelor regi care au păstrat tradițiile romane, aparatul birocratic ostrogot și legăturile interpersonale de iubire dintre conducător și oficiali.

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În al doilea rând, articolul construiește și identifică cinci scenarii diferite de iubire, care aveau o funcționalitate socială menită să mențină continuitatea unui sistem stratificat de favoruri și patronaj curtenesc din perioada imperială târzie. Articolul arată, de asemenea, că aceste scenarii exprimau un ideal comportamental normativ pentru un conducător ostrogot încorporat în cultura intelectuală a secolului al VI-lea și în înțelegerea romanității elitei italo-romane. Drept urmare, Cassiodorus s-a îndepărtat de codurile de exprimare emoțională din perioada târzie a Imperiului Roman, dar a creat o personalitate regală explicit afectuoasă. În final, articolul examinează modul în care a fost posibilă reprezentarea divergenței conducătorului față de normele emoționale ale iubirii bazate pe idealul roman al stăpânirii de sine.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Casiodor, *Variae*, narațiune emoțională, iubire, politici post-romane, favor regal.

## Introduction

In the landscape of the post-Roman Italian narratives, *Variae*, a collection of the official letters compiled by Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580 CE), offers a variety of emotional displays involving the themes of love and affection and bestowing, expressing, and performing favour by the Ostrogothic ruler. Although the Ostrogothic palatine court and its public rhetoric have been studied from different perspectives, the mentioned emotive dimension has remained virtually unexplored.<sup>1</sup> As the current epistemology of emotions opened the way of understanding emotions as both a biological and, even more importantly, a cultural phenomenon, it also enabled scholars to conceptualise them accordingly as culturally embedded and as capable of assuming different manifestations in different historical and social contexts. Naturally, these depictions of emotions are informed by the “norms of emotional expression

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<sup>1</sup> As far as I am concerned, there are no studies on Cassiodorus’s emotive expression in the *Variae*, but there is a plethora of research that helps to contextualise him in the contemporary discourse about emotions. For a discussion on classical philosophical and early Christian emotive discourse, see Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Damien Boquet – Piroska Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; Medford: Polity, 2018); Rob Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019). For a discussion on classical and early Christian rhetoric and emotions, see Rita Copeland, *Emotion and the History of Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

and value" (in Barbara Rosenwein's words)<sup>2</sup> shared by an identifiable social group or so-called emotional community.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Variae*, love and affection are frequently tied to the public persona of the Ostrogothic rulers and the ideal of the relationship between them and their subordinates.<sup>4</sup> The letters penned by Cassiodorus commonly present these affectionate sentiments as different types of feelings which the king or the queen declared to have felt towards their officials and people and which had to be distinguishable for a receiving audience of the Italo-Roman elite. As Nicole Demarchi points out, for understanding such expressions of emotions they should be properly contextualised, which implies "reconstructing the emotional universe of the characters who experience [them] 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)."<sup>5</sup> However, it is worth noting that, due to the absence of alternative sources, the vast majority of the letters appear as a decontextualized, self-contained narratives in which most of available contextual information could be self-referentially gleaned from the text itself. The analysis of such a source as the *Variae* requires the additional methodological approach centred on the concept of emotive scripts, which conveniently differentiate between experienced emotions and the discursive and literary representations of emotional behaviour.<sup>6</sup> Ríkharðsdóttir defines emotive script as a set of rules which dictate "emotional behaviour within any given text, utilising narrative structures, verbal and behavioural cues and context to convey those rules to the reader." In literary texts, these scripts can include "emotional words, [...] narrative arrangement, scene construction,

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<sup>2</sup> Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of emotional community is coined by Rosenwein by which she implies "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions." Ibid. However, its applicability has its obvious limitations, as it works best for textual or relatively closed communities, such as monastic, which is not my case.

<sup>4</sup> Applying Rosenwein's quantitative analysis of emotionally charged words, I concluded that more than one fifth of the love words mentioned in ruler's letters address this aspect (65 out of 250).

<sup>5</sup> I am very grateful to her for these personal insightful methodological remarks, which I found most valuable for my research.

<sup>6</sup> Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translations, Voices, Contexts* (Woodsbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), p. 28.

gestures, somatic indicia, [...] narrative silences, [...] verbal coding and a repertoire of actions associated with emotional responses.”<sup>7</sup> By transcending the limitations of the sheer lexicographic analysis, emotive script as an analytical tool additionally allows to read silences of not explicitly mentioned emotions and access them, relying on both careful formal analysis and the meta-textual framework: societal expectations and historical, socio-cultural, and literary contexts through which scripts could dictate how the audience receives and interprets the representations of emotions. Those scripts, according to Ríkharðsdóttir, can be both descriptive, reflecting communally held values and conventionalised emotional behaviours, or prescriptive, when they aim to institute new behavioural patterns into their respective audience.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Ríkharðsdóttir’s literary-focused conceptualisation, another constitutive component of emotive scripts should be emphasised. Robert Kaster, who was among the first scholars to effectively introduce the concept of emotive scripts into his analysis of restraint in Roman culture, conceived of these scripts as first and foremost “the little scenarios that we play out, as sequences of cause and effect, of perception, evaluation, and response – when we experience any emotion.”<sup>9</sup> Building on Kaster’s definition and Ed Sanders’ script approach, according to which a single emotional concept can be manifested through multiple scenarios, Martin Hinterberger articulated the theory that assumes some emotions as requiring a more elaborate intellectual input from their actors since they are “based on various judgements and on a thorough evaluation of social constellations.”<sup>10</sup> Although I do not concur with this dichotomy of complex and simple emotions, which has attracted a fair amount of criticism due to its universalistic assumptions,<sup>11</sup> Hinterberger rightly observes that emotions heavily depend on the social and intellectual

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Hinterberger, ‘The Neighbour’s Unbearable Wellbeing: Phthonos/Envy from the Classical to the Modern Greek World’, in Margaret Mullett – Susan Ashbrook Harvey (eds), *Managing Emotion in Byzantium: Passions, Affects and Imaginings* (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 60-89, especially pp. 61–64.

<sup>11</sup> In his distinction between basic and complex emotions, Hinterberger relies on the work of Paul Ekman, a critical assessment of whose concept of basic emotions is provided by Jan Plamper – Keith Tribe, ‘Paul Ekman and Basic Emotions’, in Jan Plamper – Keith Tribe (eds), *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 147-162.

structures in which they function, hierarchies of power, and social positioning of their actors. Even more important is that emotions might have several or multiple distinct scenarios differentiated on the basis of social and political preconditions and social identity of the actors involved. Thus, the emotive script of a particular feeling, being the "abstract pattern resulting from the analysis of specific emotional scenarios,"<sup>12</sup> captures a specific social configuration between socially-positioned actors which the author or the audience of the author, even if emotion is not named explicitly, are capable to construe or decipher as containing that emotion.

In what follows, I intend to use the concept of emotive script, as outlined above, to analyse different scripts of love and affection in the textual representations of the relationship between the Ostrogothic rulers and their subjects in Cassiodorus's *Variae*. First of all, we should ask how Cassiodorus, as a member of Italo-Roman elite addressing the Italo-Roman elite, adjusted the existing late-Roman imperial emotive codes to accommodate the new Ostrogothic reality and imbued existing love vocabulary and language with new meanings by using the existing literary and rhetorical discourse. In addition, we should look at the ways in which the rulers negatively appraised by Cassiodorus were presented so that the Italo-Roman audience could perceive divergence from an established emotive script of royal love through the subtle shifts of verbal coding. However, before directly identifying the emotive scripts of love, it is necessary to briefly contextualise Cassiodorus's *Variae* and his discursive representation of love.

### **The *Variae* as a Mirror of Governmental Virtue**

Cassiodorus was a sixth-century Italo-Roman intellectual, a member of the late-Roman elite who served as a high official at the court of several Ostrogothic kings and of queen regent Amalasuntha in a variety of capacities, both officially and beyond his offices, for roughly three decades (from 507 to approximately the late 530s-early 540s). His profile is representative of the Christianised Roman bureaucratic or civil (rather than senatorial) elite who endorsed and reinforced a sense of collaborative social identity predicated

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<sup>12</sup> Hinterberger, 'The Neighbour's Unbearable Wellbeing,' p. 62.

on the institutionalised palatine service, the learned culture acquired through a similar educational experience and intellectual background along with the inculcated deference to the ancient traditions and imperial court ceremonial.

The *Variae*, Cassiodorus's most studied work in modern historiography, is a compilation of 468 official letters, penned by him during his public service, which combine the generic features of learned late-antique epistolography and formalised administrative style.<sup>13</sup> There has been an intense scholarly speculation on the date, place, and the audience for which such a collection might have been arranged. Most researchers come to a consensus that the collection must have been compiled in an interval between 538, i.e., the year of Cassiodorus's latest datable letter composed in Ravenna,<sup>14</sup> and the 540s, which chronologically follow the fall of Ravenna and points to Constantinople as the place of assembling of the work's final edition.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the main issue that arises out of the uncertainty regarding the collection's publication date concerns the audience and the authorial intentions of the work. It was suggested by Shane Bjornlie that the *Variae* could have been an epistolary "apologetic for the bureaucratic elite of the Ostrogothic regime" in order to "make the governmental elite of Ravenna appear suitable [for Constantinople] for return to office after the conclusion of the Gothic War."<sup>16</sup> However, Andrew Gillett has claimed that the true motives behind the elaboration of the work more likely coincide with Cassiodorus's explicit statements in the preface: the *Variae*, in the manner of other fifth- and sixth-century epistolary collections, was a tool for cultivating of *amicitia* within the Italo-Roman senior bureaucratic elite as well as a testimony to Cassiodorus's literary virtuosity

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<sup>13</sup> Christina Kakridi, *Cassiodorus 'Variae': Literatur und Politik im Ostgotischen Italien* (München: K. G. Saur, 2005), pp. 16-142.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Shane Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition: The Case of Cassiodorus' *Variae*', in Katariina Mustakallio – Christian Krotzel (eds), *De Amicitia: Friendship and Social Networks in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Acti Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 2010), pp. 135-154, especially p. 148.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Shane Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae 527-554* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 11–33. Michael Shane Bjornlie, 'The Letter Collection of Cassiodorus', in Cristiana Sogno (ed.), *Late Antique Letter Collections: A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 433-448, especially p. 436.

<sup>16</sup> Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition', pp. 149-150; Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 331-332. For the Constantinopolitan debates around legitimacy and tradition, see Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*,.

and talents.<sup>17</sup> Since the debate in these dichotomous categories is rather unproductive for the aim of my research, I consider it more plausible that Cassiodorus addressed a rather broadly-defined Roman educated audience, including members of the Italo-Roman and early Byzantine elite, while aspiring to represent a common virtuous 'persona' of the Ostrogothic officials, an essential generic convention of epistolary collections.<sup>18</sup>

The *Variae* is a rhetorically, thematically and structurally complex work. Within its twelve books, it comprises three distinct voices: the letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of different Ostrogothic rulers, i.e., the letters written in the name of more successful rulers: Theodoric (first five books), Athalaric and Amalasuntha (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> books), and the ones written for Theodahad and Witigis (10<sup>th</sup> book); the letters written in Cassiodorus's name as praetorian prefect (11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> books); and the *formulae* offered as stylistic models for official pronouncements and appointments to public office (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> books). Although the *Variae* is frequently misconstrued as essentially a documentary source given its preoccupation with the diplomatic, administrative, and legal activities of the Ostrogoths, in recent years, its highly rhetorical and literary nature has benefited from increased scholarly attention. As Bjornlie noted, for Cassiodorus, letter collections had the same "moral imperative" as classical historiography in providing ethical *exempla*, and, thus, Cassiodorus's narrative strategy was to depict governmental virtue, both of Amals and of their officials, through the portrayal of Ostrogothic public office and exercise of power.<sup>19</sup> It is this governmental virtue which for Cassiodorus legitimised the Ostrogothic government as a model, one informed by the values of *paideia*, moral discernment (*pura conscientia*), and *reverentia antiquitatis*, i.e., the institutional continuity and upholding of the Roman traditions.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the very rhetorical arrangement of the books reflects the idea of Cassiodorus's discernment between virtuous and inferior government based on such an idea of continuity. The positioning of book 10 between Cassiodorus's appointment

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew Gillett, 'Diplomatic Correspondence in the *Variae* of Cassiodorus', in Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 174-185, especially p. 176.

<sup>18</sup> Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition', pp. 136-142.

<sup>19</sup> Bjornlie, 'The Letter Collection of Cassiodorus', pp. 440-442.

<sup>20</sup> For the importance of demonstration of *paideia* and ideological implications of encyclopaedic knowledge in the *Variae*, see Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 199-207, pp. 269-79.

to the praetorian prefecture (*Var.* 9.24-25) and his acceptance of the office (*Var.* 11.1-3) conveys a subtle rupture in the virtuous government, the reign of Theodahad and Witigis, which is synchronized with the political destabilisation caused by the outburst of the Gothic war.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in the *Variae*, Cassiodorus silenced any discourse on the actions potentially harmful to Theodoric's positive image, such as the condemnation of some members of the Roman senatorial elite, for obvious reasons, but also because, according to the logic of narrative at least, these acts did not endanger directly the social balance and the institutionalised continuity of Romanness. Alternatively, Theodahad and Witigis were the failed rulers whose flawed kingship Cassiodorus evidently blamed as the reason of the Ostrogothic internal and external instability, unlike the civil elite who managed to preserve the governmental virtue irrespective of two unideal kings, which Cassiodorus made apparent in books 11 and 12.<sup>22</sup>

As for the discursive framing of love, Cassiodorus depicts the kings, the officials, the senators, the Romans, the Goths, as being exhorted or exhorting to maintain reciprocity and ancient virtues in their intersubjective relationship.<sup>23</sup> In this system, the rhetoric of love and affection is omnipresent and pervasive as the sentiment of love plays the role of a vehicle for conveying different personal and interpersonal behavioural codes, such as the ruler's and officials' care for the common good, the generous distribution of favours by the king, peace and concord with other rulers, communal loyalty to and cooperation with the government, love for Christians and God, bonds of *amicitia*, and, finally, conjugal and familial ties. The unifying trait of all this extensive repertoire of love is its exclusively positive conceptualisation. The other intrinsic components of Roman love discourse, that is, erotic passion (irrelevant of gender), illicit desires (adultery, seduction, and others) or misplaced love (excessive desire for ephemeral things), even if mentioned in the text, are not construed and expressly

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<sup>21</sup> Bjornlie, 'The Letter Collection of Cassiodorus', pp. 441–442.

<sup>22</sup> For digressions of natural history in the moral characterisation of Theodahad's reign, see Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition', pp. 150-154.

<sup>23</sup> For language of reciprocity and idiom of patronage as crucial traits of Roman society with its openly acknowledged hierarchical relation, see David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love: Affection in Ancient Greece and Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).



labelled as love.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, it is important to stress that expressing love, in Cassiodorus's narrative at least, is an admittedly praiseworthy way of behaviour which is unlikely to receive his negative judgment, however, the specific performance that violates acknowledged Roman sensibilities could be marked as a sign of deviation.<sup>25</sup>

To summarise, Cassiodorus's authorial intentions in the *Variae* were indissolubly tied in with the ideology of the elite of the Ostrogothic kingdom, of representing themselves as legitimate Roman successors. However, I suggest that it was crucial to firmly embed the new reality, including its emotive codes of love, into the intellectual culture of the Italo-Roman elite, who was perceived as a primary audience of this work.

### Royal Love Scripts of the Affectionate Ostrogothic Rulers

As I have mentioned above, love scripts frequently refer to the person of the rulers and specifically focus on their relationship with officials, subordinates, or on abstract concepts such as equity and justice. Logically, in order to understand the royal patterns of behaviour and the corresponding

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<sup>24</sup> Although there are several cases of adultery represented in the collection, the illicit connection is never conceptualised as any form of love. There is the only one mention of the verb "love" and the noun "money" in one context: "It furthermore constituted a penalty for one who attempted to undertake such a crime, not with injury, since when money is not loved (*cum pecunia non amatur*), then it is the merit of the candidate that is truly sought." Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 9, 16, 1, trans. Michael Shane Bjornlie, *The Variae: The Complete Translation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), p. 374. However, considering the broad applicability of the verbal derivative of *amor*, which in the speech genre of letters, as Williams renders it, should be rather understood as an equivalent of English much less charged English phrase "have a liking for" or "like," it does not really undermine the overall positive connotative penumbra of "love," especially since the phrase is not formulated in a prescriptive manner. Craig Arthur Williams, *Reading Roman Friendship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 174-258. Starting from here, I will be quoting from Bjornlie's translation like: *Var.* 9, 16, 1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 374).

<sup>25</sup> *Var.* 1, 30, 4 (Bjornlie, p. 63) presents a case of public disturbances during the pantomime performances at the chariot races, which were allegedly caused by the members of the senatorial households, who responded in this way to various indignities to which senators were exposed during the games: "Let it therefore be decided between your splendid reputation and more base habits: avoid such servants as would be the bearers of injury, who would strive to ascribe to their love for you (*amoui vestro*) [love to the senators – A. M.] what they commit in crime."

emotive personae meticulously crafted by Cassiodorus, I rely on the so-called royal voice of the *Variae*, that is, the letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of Ostrogothic rulers, as my main group of sources. Apart from their obvious value as sources for an ideological portrait of the ideal Ostrogothic rulers, these texts also offer a unique opportunity to analyse the rhetoric of love and affection towards the members of the palatine administration in the official pronouncements of the quasi-imperial figure of the Ostrogothic ruler, written, potentially performed, and legally enacted through the self-fashioning royal first-person perspective.

First of all, the main source for the narrative representation of the relationship between the Ostrogothic king and his officials are Cassiodorus's letters of appointment addressed to the candidates themselves and the introductions of the newly-installed candidates to the Senate. These letters, although undoubtedly governed by the generic rhetoric of praise as legitimation of promotion, were also embedded in the conventions of ancient letters of recommendation, which routinely harboured love vocabulary (*amor*) and tropes of friendship (*amicitia*) as a means of positive characterization of the recommended candidate.<sup>26</sup> Based on love vocabulary and Italo-Roman discursive tradition, I managed to identify five different scripts of royal love and affection within these letters: ceremonialised royal affection (1), intimate/friendly love (2), love combined with esteem (3), love credited in recognition of service (4), and love of virtues (5).

The first important point is that the social, hierarchical distinction and the distinction in the level of perceived emotional interiority<sup>27</sup> towards other officials was the most apparent between the scripts of ceremonialised affection and intimate/friendly love. As for ceremonialised affection (1), it was frequently signified with words *affectio/affectus* (later just *affectus*) and in the king's case, marked a disposition or attitude of favouring or holding in

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<sup>26</sup> Kakridi, *Cassiodorus 'Variae'*, p. 62. Roger Rees, 'Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise', in Ruth Morello – A. D. Morrison (eds), *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 149–68, especially pp. 156–164.

<sup>27</sup> Here I use the term "emotive interiority" in the meaning introduced by Ríkharrðsdóttir by which she understands a presumed internal experiencing of emotion, which could be enacted through emotive performativity (an action performed), emotive expressivity (an explicit narrative discourse around the emotion), and emotive subtext ("the narrative configuration and the built-in emotional signposts"). Ríkharrðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, p. 71.

favour someone hierarchically inferior, who allegedly deserves it by nobility of birth, actions, quality of service or virtues.<sup>28</sup> As a feeling, it was intertwined with the idea of not just having affectionate disposition towards a member of the elite, that is, a dispositional value, but actually performing it by enacting as concrete "favour" (*gratia*)<sup>29</sup> or "benefits" (*beneficia*).<sup>30</sup> The very act of its performance was also a social action of allocating not only real material rewards and offices but social status and symbolic public honour. Cassiodorus's use of the Latin term *gratia*, which is firmly embedded in Roman ethics of obligation, also points out to the fact this affection is used to designate relationship that are less than private friendship but more a part of culture of reciprocity and patronage and the late-Roman ceremonial of the court.<sup>31</sup> However, I suggest that the explicit use of affective language, such as the term *affectus*, marked a visible departure in the discursive representation of the asymmetrical relationship of the rulers and their palatine subordinates. Although, as far as the extant texts indicate, insofar as the late-imperial emotive rhetoric harboured some cordial vocabulary, it mainly resorted to their formulaic expressions;<sup>32</sup> therefore, in my opinion, Cassiodorus apparently

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<sup>28</sup> Although these motives are co-present in these letters to some extent, some of them are more emphasised: nobility of birth in *Var.* 2.2-3, 3.11; actions and quality of service in *Var.* 2.2-3, 9.8; virtues in *Var.* 1.42-43, 2.2-3.

<sup>29</sup> *Var.* 1.43.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 73).

<sup>30</sup> *Var.* 2.2.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 81). The relation between *affectus* and its manifestation in the social reality of the Roman emotional community is even more explicit, if we quote the sentence from the letter of the king Theodoric to Felix in full: "Our affection (*noster affectus*) awaits you; the hand fills with advantages (*beneficiis*) and causes what you sought from our imperium to be vowed."

<sup>31</sup> Konstan, *Friendship*, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> Although most of the imperial rhetoric towards the court elite is, unfortunately, lost either due to the editorial processes during the preparation of legal compilations such as the Theodosian Code or due to the specifics of the source preservation, the Sirmondian Constitutions, a unique example of the imperial legislation preserved in its initial state, luckily provide an access to some of the phrases, which could be used in such addresses, among which we could find: *parens karissime atque amantissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 1), *parens carissime at(d)que amantissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 2, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16), *carissime ac iucundissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 3, 8), *parens carissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 4). Theodor Mommsen et al (eds), *Code Théodosien. [Livre] I-XV: Code Justinien, Constitutions Sirmondiennes* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), pp. 470-539. Admittedly, all of them share an expressly formulaic nature, considering that they consistently accompany the name of the official and are used throughout the collection exclusively in vocative case. What differentiates Cassiodorus's use of affectionate terminology from such imperial

attempted to introduce the new, more affectionate pattern of expression into the Italo-Roman audience.

The term *affectus* itself had a wide signifying emotional potential conjointly informed by the Latin philosophical emotional tradition, a pool of culturally meaningful Christian and classical texts, and the epistolary codes. They created an intertextually formed horizon of feelings of the Italo-Roman elite attributing *affectus* as a feeling primarily to parental/familial, amorous/marital and friends' relationships. Such normative horizon of *affectus* is attested in the imperial fifth-century legislation, where it covers both marital and parental/filial relationships.<sup>33</sup> *Affectus* also appears as one of the parental sentiments in the texts, which could be used in late-antique classrooms for reading Virgil, especially by the Italo-Roman elite residing in Rome, such as Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid*.<sup>34</sup> Servius acknowledges the emotional sentiment coming from father to son, Aeneas' paternal affection (*adfectus patris*) to Ascanius, when Aeneas quickly sends the messenger to fetch his son to accept Dido's hospitality, which is synonymous with the Virgilian "paternal love" (*patrius amor*) mentioned a couple of lines before.<sup>35</sup> Finally, this vocabulary was apparently pertinent to Italo-Roman epistolary culture

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instances is its relatively non-formulaic positioning within the narrative which does not possess any easily identifiable patterns and usually complements the argumentative or encomiastic parts of the letters.

<sup>33</sup> Marital : CTh.9.13.6; filial : CTh.9.15.1: "If any person should hasten the fate of a parent or a son or any person at all of such degree of kinship (*omnino affectionis*) that killing him is included under the title of parricide...". Although *affectio* can mean "relation" of some sort, its emotive content should not be completely disregarded considering its choice as opposed to other existing verbal alternatives: homicide of *affectio*, framed as a father-son relationship, was similarly a grave crime, immoral for Roman traditional values, so the use of *affectio*, does not seem completely accidental as it might have had a rhetorical function as well in emphasising the gravity of going against the bonds of paternal affection. Clyde Pharr et al, eds, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Union: Lawbook Exchange, 2010), p. 170, 237.

<sup>34</sup> Servius lived and worked as a *grammaticus*, a teacher of the 'second' stage of Roman education, in Rome around 354-430 CE. Frances Foster, 'Reconstructing Virgil in the Classroom in Late Antiquity', *History of Education*, 43/3 (2014): 285-303.

<sup>35</sup> Servius, 1.644, *Commentarius in Vergilii Aeneidos* ['*Servius Auctus*'], eds Georg Thilo – Hermann Hagen (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1881), vol. 1, p. 186: "RAPIDVM [...] non praemittit, nec enim sequitur ipse, sed praerapidum, quod ex *adfectu patris*, [[id est eius qui mittit,]] intellegendum est, non ex Achaetae velocitate." Virgil's passage, 1.643-644: "neque enim *patrius* consistere mentem passus *amor*."

as well, to generic conventions of which Cassiodorus adapted the royal proclamations, generously using the language of friendship and ties of patronage.<sup>36</sup> Altogether, Cassiodorus's use of, on the one hand, textual models offered by educational texts and, on the other hand, literary conventions of legal imperial and epistolary discourse in which he penned letters with their connotative penumbra firmly grounded the new script of the ceremonialised affection in the distinct Italo-Roman context. Even if the late-Roman expression of imperial liberality shared some similar traits with the script of the Ostrogothic court, Cassiodorus seemingly developed a visibly non-formalised affectionate rhetoric that signalled an adjustment of the imperial formulaic emotive scripts to the emotive mentalities of the no longer imperial Italo-Roman elite.

In the appointment letter to Argolicus, Cassiodorus explicitly fashions Theodoric as a distributor of equal "paternal affection" (*patrio affectu*) to everyone.<sup>37</sup> Apart from the paternal (and, sometimes, friendly) associations mentioned above, it is worth noting that this idea is culturally reminiscent of the Roman metaphor of the emperor's love as a fatherly love, which is, for example, present in the fourth-century epistolography addressed to the imperial chancery. In his letter to the emperors Theodosius and Arcadius, Symmachus, a fourth-century Roman intellectual and holder of high offices,

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<sup>36</sup> In his letter to Ausonius, an imperial bureaucrat and his senior close friend, Symmachus reproaches Ausonius for remaining silent, although his own old affection for him (*amoris veteris*) stays unaltered, and it is because, as he writes, "the more tender [viz., his] affection (*tenerior adfectio*), the readier the complaint." I quote Symmachus's text and the English translation from the edition: Symmachus, *The Letters of Symmachus*, trans. Michele Renee – Salzman Michael John Roberts (Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature, 2011). *Letters*, 1.34 (trans. Salzman and Roberts, pp. 78-79).

The words *adfectio/adfectus* make infrequent appearances throughout the corpus of Symmachus's letters. Overall, he showed a conscious preference for other verbal expressions of love and affection in epistolary friendship: specifically, *amor* (*Letters*, 1.14, 1.15, 1.16, etc.) along with *dilectio* and its variants (1.31, 1.34, 1.41, etc.).

<sup>37</sup> Var. 3.11.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 129). Kamil Cyprian Choda – Maurits Sterk de Leeuw – Fabian Schulz, *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour in Late Antiquity: Representation and Reality* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), p. 174. Furthermore, this affectionate language is already present in the early-second-century principate historiographical discourse of Suetonius's *Life of Titus*: "In the face of calamities of such magnitude, Titus offered not just the concern of an emperor but the love which only a parent can provide (*parentis affectum*), giving consolation in his edicts and as much practical help as his resources allowed." Suetonius, *Titus*, 8, *Lives of the Caesars*, trans. Catharine Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 278.

persuades the emperors that they “occupy the secret recesses of all hearts [of their subjects], those places reserved for noble family affections (*adfectio*) wherein dwells the love of children for parents and of parents for children.”<sup>38</sup> I presume that in his letters of appointments, Cassiodorus thus reveals the authorial manipulation of existing emotive codes of affection from several discursive contexts as a means of engendering a paternal royal persona, and for that he must have expected the educated Italo-Roman elite to be capable of deciphering the underlying emotive content of these letters. Furthermore, the ceremonialised script of promotion explicitly imbued with such parental affection to officials aligns with Theodoric’s the Great ideology of political representation, which embraced a close association with the principate, that is, the period of the Early Roman Empire, when the emperor was perceived as the first among others and as a “father figure” for *populus Romanus* that could be traced to the historiographical discourse as well.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the social performativity of this script as ceremonial imperial generosity, on the one hand, and affectionate patronage, on the other hand, performed a function of reinforcing the Ostrogothic self-fashioning rhetoric and post-Roman social structures which imitated the principate, however, inescapably adapting it to the figure of the Ostrogothic king, who was less sacred and less symbolically as well as physically distant than a late-Roman emperor. The shift in sociopolitical and ideological structures enabled the shift in emotive mentalities in which the socially prescribed performance of distributing favours for the king, a rather politicised action, created the social and political context to which paternal and emotively charged language was applicable.<sup>40</sup>

However, suggested emotive interiority of the paternal feelings did not signify the factual emotional intimacy and proximity to the ruler. The

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<sup>38</sup> I quote Symmachus’s text and the English translation from Symmachus, *Prefect and Emperor: The Relations of Symmachus A. D. 384*, trans. Reginald Haynes Barrow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). *Relationes* 9.4 (trans. Barrow, pp. 68–69).

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 72–77.

<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that such ceremonialised affection did not accompany all appointments of officials, such affection apparently was acknowledged and established as a normative and expectable code and pattern of the Ostrogothic royal behaviour, since in the formulas in 6<sup>th</sup> book, stylistic and moral models for the officials who followed Cassiodorus, he speaks of affection (*affectus*), which is demonstrated through the attention of the ruler devoted to the official and his service. *Var.* 6.5.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 251).

script of intimate type of love (2) was conventionally marked with the word *amor* and its derivatives and emphasised physical (and not symbolical) closeness to the Ostrogothic court. Thus, in the letter to the Senate, Theodoric emphasises that Artemidorus, a relative to the emperor Zeno by marriage, demonstrated that he deserved "our love" (*amorem nostrum*) because not only he abandoned the career perspectives at the Eastern court and performed his duties, but also:

This man, beyond this exceptional fidelity (*eximiam fidem*), has shared with us the comfort (*solacia*) of his conversation, so that he would sometimes disperse with the sweetness (*suavitate*) of his speech the stormy cares (*curas*) of the republic, which we undertake according to the necessity of emerging affairs ... This man has made himself famous by the great purity of his intentions (*qui tanta se animi puritate clarificavit*) [the bold font is mine – A. M.], so that when he deserved from us the dignities of court, he satisfied himself with the pleasant duty of arranging the spectacles, so much that he seemed to willingly prefer serving under the guise of pleasure, even to the extent of withholding himself from duties, but estranging himself from us in no portion. For even as a cheerful dinner companion, he has adorned the royal table, here striving to attach himself to us (*se nobis studens iungere*), where we are most able to take pleasure (*gaudere*).<sup>41</sup>

Although this passage requires a more detailed contextualisation of the emotional concepts, which is beyond the scope of this paper, what strikes a distinctive note is a provided glimpse into the emotive interiority of the king, which, considering an elaborate rhetorical structure, Cassiodorus expected that at least some part of the Italo-Roman audience could be able to decipher through several narrative signs.<sup>42</sup> Firstly, a sort of cumulative structure, with

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<sup>41</sup> *Var.* 1.43.2-4 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 73): "*Qui* super hanc eximiam fidem solacia nobis suae confabulationis adiecit, *ut* asperas non numquam rei publicae curas, quas emergentium rerum necessitate suscipimus, sermonis suavitate deliniret. blandus alloquio, supplicantium fidelis patronus, accusare nesciens, commendare praesumens. *qui* tanta se animi puritate clarificavit, *ut* cum apud nos mereretur aulicas dignitates, spectaculorum ordinationem laetissimam sibi militiam vindicaret, quatenus sub specie voluptatis libere videretur velle servire, a laboribus quidem temperans, sed in nulla se nobis parte dissocians. Regalem quin etiam mensam conviva geniatus ornavit, ibi se nobis studens iungere, ubi nos certum est posse gaudere."

<sup>42</sup> I gained this expression from Ríkhartósdóttir, and I understand it like the specific narrative or discursive indicators that guide the reader's interpretation.

*anaphoras* (*qui...*, *ut...*), emotive words, and an argumentative sequence of personal features, typical for recommendation letters, however, quite personalised and attached to the person of Theodoric in our case, conveys a sort of emotive intensity even without much of the love vocabulary involved. Secondly, this sensibility of the Italo-Roman elite would be also informed by the classical ways of thinking about love between friends as a shared activity, which originated from Aristotle and offered a perception of friendship as a matter “manifested through a flow of acts of affection that continually reaffirm and sustain the love”.<sup>43</sup> There are also other popular Roman tropes of friendship interwoven into the letters surrounding the appointment of Artemidorus: appeal to the benefits (*fructus*) and shared pleasures (*gaudere*), fidelity (*fides*), and the motif of the union in life (“...but estranging himself from us in no portion”).<sup>44</sup> In his letter to Artemidorus, Theodoric explicitly refers to their connection as “consecrated friendship” (*sacrae amicitiae*), however, in the letter to the Senate, this verbal characteristic is communicated in a rhetorically more powerful and implicit empathic way, which would engage the audience with the king’s feelings through a discursive arrangement and could be deciphered as a code of intimate friendship. It is also important that in this panegyric to Artemidorus, Cassiodorus purposefully omitted the description of the moral virtues of Artemidorus, except *puritas animi* “purity of his rational soul,” the existence of which, in my view, could have appeared evident for the audience through the intimate king’s love and friendship because the ancient ideal of friendship founded itself on the idea of “union by regard of virtue.”<sup>45</sup> The curious downplay of social distance between Artemidorus and Theodoric also aligns with a more radical sense of moral egalitarianism provoked by the shift in the perception of friendship under the empire, as the vertical relations between nobility became considerably more

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<sup>43</sup> Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>44</sup> Benefits: *Var.* 1.42.1; pleasure: *Var.* 1.43.3; fidelity: *Var.* 1.42.4; 1.43.3 (twice), the motif of the union in life: *Var.* 1.42.2, 1.43.3 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 72–73). For the analysis of Roman tropes of friendship, see Williams, *Reading Roman Friendship*.

<sup>45</sup> Cassiodorus, in fact, uses the rhetorical device of *praeteritio*: “But what more must be said concerning his morals, which suffice to thoroughly demonstrate that he has always deserved our affection (*amorem nostrum*)?”. *Var.* 1.43.4 (trans. Bjornlie, 73). For more on friendship as a union by virtue, see Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love*, p. 64; C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 27–28.



openly hierarchical and asymmetrical.<sup>46</sup> What is notable is the supplanting of moral arguments for the social advancement of the desired candidate by the affectionate argument of ruler's attitude, which stands out from late-Roman imperial emotional codes.

Certainly, Artemidorus is rather a notable exception, but such a script of royal intimate love also implied the constant intimacy underlying such a relationship. For example, Senarius, an official with long proximity to Amals, is said to have "locked away our secrets with the probity of good morals (*bonarum iussiorum*), being privy to many things."<sup>47</sup> The long-term trustworthy service combined with particular characteristics of the court official also served as a precondition to prove being worthy of *amor*.<sup>48</sup> The crucial element for the establishment of these bonds was also the virtue of fidelity (*fides*) to the Ostrogothic king. Characteristically, such high moral standards were not a prerequisite for receiving ceremonialised affection: Liberius, a patrician and former partisan of Odoacer, could have "feigned hatred" (*odium*) for his master to "procure the affection of another" (*affectus alterius*), that is, the Ostrogothic king Theodoric. The fidelity to the king could be performed through either civil service or manifestations of male *virtus*, as in the case of Tuluin, a Gothic heroic general, who performed his love for the devout king (*amor piissimi regis*) when he risked his life re-entering the stormy sea in order to rescue Theodoric.<sup>49</sup>

Apparently, the last three scripts played a much less prominent and strictly circumscribed role in the emotive codes of the royal behaviour, at least quantitatively, nevertheless, substantially complemented the performative range of royal affection. Although love credited in recognition of service (4) makes only two proper appearances, both cases portray the appointments of the officials who, lacking in proximity to the royal court, still required a

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<sup>46</sup> Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, p. 148.

<sup>47</sup> *Var.* 4.3.3 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 168).

<sup>48</sup> *Var.* 3.28.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 142).

<sup>49</sup> Fidelity in civil service: "...which he knows that public servants (*servientes*) please us. This fidelity (*fides*) in former years promises blessings he will produce in the future." *Var.* 4.4.2; the episode with Tuluin is described in *Var.* 8.10.9-10. Although there are no explicit verbal mentions of Athalaric's affectionate sentiments to Tuluin or his fidelity, he enjoyed specific proximity to the king being a royal page in his youth and, then, retained a sufficient affinity to the Amal court due to his kinship with Amal dynasty. *Var.* 8.9.8; 8.10.3 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 269, 325).

separate script less devoid of emotional content than mere affection. Thus, Cassiodorus describes the virtues of Liberius, who is mentioned above as a servant unwaveringly loyal to Odoacer until his undeniable defeat – ironically, as Bjornlie suggests – but who quickly shifted his fidelity to Amals with the symptomatic for the period malleability of loyalties in pursuit of the benefits for his palatine service.<sup>50</sup> Despite Liberius’s duplicity, Theodoric, in Cassiodorus’s quill, rather explicitly states that Liberius’s faithfulness to Odoacer is precisely an activity, which gained him Theodoric’s respect and loving disposition:

Indeed, you recall, conscript fathers, the patrician Liberius had been praiseworthy even in his rivalry with us (*in aduersitate nostra laudabilem*), when he thus offered unwavering (*integerrimis*) service to Odoacer, so that after he was known to accomplish so much against us as an enemy, he was even more worthy of our esteem (*dilectione nostra*).<sup>51</sup>

It is worth noting that the royal attachment is primarily signified by the noun *dilectio*, which is a weaker, less passionate and less intimate equivalent of *amor*.<sup>52</sup> Irrespective of whether we interpret this fragment ironically or literally, the emphasised intensity and seeming effectiveness of Liberius’s service seems to be crucial in attaining Theodoric’s *dilectio*, which is conflated with his political loyalty. This complex hermeneutics of fidelity and committed service reappear in other central themes in this script, that is, the virtue of integrity (*integritas*) and extreme dedication to the public service, an inherent value of the traditional Roman elite. Thus, Liberius “increased the fisc and advanced public weal without loss to private concerns”.<sup>53</sup> The second example, Athalaric’s letter of appointment for Cassiodorus as praetorian prefect (ironically, penned by Cassiodorus himself) contains the same elements,

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<sup>50</sup> Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>51</sup> *Var.* 2.16.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 93).

<sup>52</sup> For *amor* as the stronger affectionate word compared to *dilectio*, see TLL 1.1967.48-1973.77.

<sup>53</sup> Integrity: *Var.* 2.16.2 (twice); 2.16.4; public service: *Var.* 2.16.4-5 (trans. Bjornlie, pp. 93-94). Apart from increasing the public finances, Liberius was also in charge of successful division of the land and settlement of Gothic army on Italian property. For the dedication to public service as a defining quality for the Roman elite’s way of life see: Laurens Ernst Tacoma, *Roman Political Culture: Seven Studies of the Senate and City Councils of Italy from the First to the Sixth Century AD* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele (ed.), *Late Roman Italy: Imperium to Regnum* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

although, unsurprisingly, it is twice as long and contains an elaborate encomiastic account.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, per se this script marks a relationship based on the ruler's recognition and honouring of the official's actions that contributed to the public welfare or direct services provided to the ruler, the relationship, which is manifested, similar to intimate and ceremonialised affection in concrete favours: the favours provided to the son of Liberius, in the first case, and Cassiodorus's promotion under the new ruler, in the second.

Unlike the three affectionate scripts mentioned above, which were mainly addressed to individuals, the addressed actors concerned with the script of esteemed love (3) were commonly a collective body of royal subjects or a particular social class. The script's underlying emotive meaning of reverence came from the traditional Roman terminology, specifically, the word *caritas*. In late-republican Rome, love in the form of *caritas* was considered one of the main virtues on which social life was grounded. Cicero associated this feeling with the respectful disposition towards parents, fatherland and people, prominent in wisdom or power.<sup>55</sup> With the gradual adoption of Christianity in the Roman Empire and Latin translation of biblical textual canon, *caritas* as a feeling was re-conceptualised within patristic literature as an equivalent of Greek *agape*, love of God and charitable love to the neighbour.<sup>56</sup> However sparse is Cassiodorus's use of *caritas* in the association with the *princeps* in the context of his relationship with his subjects, it seems to neglect the layer of biblical Christian hermeneutics by reviving the Roman emotive code and applying it to the contexts involving the Senate to signify a subjective attitude of respect, "esteem," a sentiment of appreciation, not necessarily requiring exact actions.<sup>57</sup> However, while referring to people and regnum as an addressee of

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<sup>54</sup> Integrity: *Var.* 9.24.7; 9.25.12; public service: "May heavenly powers witness his arrangements, so that one whose wisdom we have tested by long association shall be found fortunate in his own affairs, most faithful to us (*fidelissimus nobis*) and useful to the republic (*utilis rei publicae*)."  
*Var.* 9.25.12; and, most importantly, *dilectio*: "Hence it is that you [Cassiodorus] used to be publicly associated with the affection of the most gloriously just Princeps [Theodoric] (*principi gloriosa dilectione*), because you were separated from vices by a known reserve". *Var.* 9.24.4 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 386, 389).

<sup>55</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Partitiones Oratoriae*, 88, 12 (Teubner: W. Friedrich, 1907), p. 410.

<sup>56</sup> Carter Lindberg, *Love: A Brief History through Western Christianity* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 51–65.

<sup>57</sup> In the letters to the Senate concerning the appointment of Artemidorus, Theodoric displays his special *caritas* to the Senate (*caritatem vestri praecipuam*) by the fact that he does not disregard

such respectful love, Cassiodorus playfully blurred the boundaries between Christian and traditional Roman understandings of *caritas*, and he could have expected his audience to decode subtle narrative signs for this, such as positioning of *caritas* in the old-Roman meaning of respect towards the kingdom between two consequent mentions of God:

Now, rouse your courage (*animos*) and with God's grace (*deo propitio*) always choose better things, so that, just as we have commenced upon royal power with affection (*a caritate potestatem regiam*), thus by God (*deo*) will we pursue peaceful tranquillity in following years [the bold font is mine – A.M.].<sup>58</sup>

Finally, as Graeco-Roman tradition treated love in any public discourse as an ethical subject,<sup>59</sup> the script for love of virtues served as a tool for voicing and performing the moral values prescribed for the Ostrogothic *princeps*. Cassiodorus described the ruler's attachment to any appointee almost exceptionally with nouns, thus, generalising the emotion and depersonalising the relationships.<sup>60</sup> However, he used verbs to further emphasize the *princeps'* passion as a distributor of rewards or lover of virtues, and this personalised emotion as an action generated and experienced by the subject.<sup>61</sup> For example, Theodoric writes that “we cherish” (*amamus*) “exceptional dignities” bestowed from his liberality (*benignitas*)<sup>62</sup> or duplication of “our favors” (*beneficia nostra*).<sup>63</sup> Apart from playing the role of a benefactor, Theodoric also fashions himself as a virtuous model for his subordinates, who “are able to love (*sola diligere*) only in that in which you also know us to love (*amare*).”<sup>64</sup> It is in this script that

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its admonitions regarding the civil disturbances in Rome and shows his concern by the very same cares (*ex ipsa cura*) when he appoints his confidant to the urban prefecture. *Var.* 1.44.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 74).

<sup>58</sup> *Var.* 8.3.5 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 317).

<sup>59</sup> Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 58–61.

<sup>61</sup> Ríkharrðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, p. 50.

<sup>62</sup> *Var.* 3.12.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 130).

<sup>63</sup> *Var.* 2.2.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 80).

<sup>64</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 58. *Var.* 4.37.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 190). It is important to note that addressing the letter to Theodogunda, an *illustris* woman, responsible for closing the litigation between two persons, Cassiodorus also subtly extends these principally masculine emotive codes to the noble females.

Cassiodorus most expressly glorifies the emotive behaviour of the king as it attests to the governmental virtue of both ruler, who promotes worthy members of the civil elite, and of these members, who are exhorted to support stability and the ruler's virtuous rule. Such manner of affectionate and morally superior distribution of favours reinforced the image of *imitatio imperii* and specifically uninterrupted continuity of late-Roman imperial practices of liberality.<sup>65</sup>

To summarise, all these five different scripts of the ruler's emotive world reflected a social performativity that accommodated the social and political realities of sixth-century Italy. Although the presented system of social differentiation through the scripts of love could seem static, these scripts could and did overlap explicitly or implicitly, even if we cannot access the precise dynamics of change and interaction throughout the entire period.<sup>66</sup> However, as we see, they all stressed the preserved Roman emotive comportment and the governmental virtue of the rulers, which was not a universal characteristic for all Ostrogothic kings.

### **Divergence from the Script: the case of Theodahad and Witigis**

In this last part, I will briefly describe how the generic parameters of official correspondence written in the name of the ruling king still left vacant space for representing divergence from the royal scripts of love by looking at the example of the letters issued in the name of Theodahad. As I have tried to show above, the emotive scripts introduced earlier were a part of normative nuanced system of royal behavioural codes, which were recognised by the

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<sup>65</sup> Choda – Leeuw – Schulz, *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour*, p. 84; Marco Cristini, 'Diplomacy at the End of the World: Theoderic's Letters to the Warni and Hesti', *Klio*, 103/1 (2021): 270–296; Carlos F. Noreña, *Imperial Ideals in the Roman West: Representation, Circulation, Power* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 82–92.

<sup>66</sup> Explicitly, in the case of Artemidorus, the latter enjoyed both royal intimacy and affection expected from the king by the palatine servants (*Var.* 1.42.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 72)). Implicitly, a more interesting case presents Cassiodorus, since in the letters of his appointment as praetorian prefect, the specific verbal coding and some recurring themes could have implied a special intimacy with the rulers (2). For example, the emphasis on fidelity (*Var.* 9.24.11; 9.25.12 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 387, 389)) and proximity: "You acted as a personal judge and private advisor to the master of the state. ...he would draw the opinions of the wise from your stories, so that he might compare his own deeds to those of antiquity." *Var.* 9.24.8 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 386).

Italo-Roman elite. Theodahad's letters, however, diverge from these in several minor, at first sight, but crucial aspects, considering the generic limitations.

First, Cassiodorus introduced a prescriptive element to the bestowal of royal ceremonialised affection and explicitly articulated expectations of reciprocity. While the previously mentioned royal affection explored the role of the Ostrogothic king as a benefactor and feeling subject, Theodahad reversed the actors, making officials a feeling subject, who were demanded reciprocity in an almost jussive manner.<sup>67</sup> The assassination of Amalasuntha (535 CE) puts all of his letters into a wider historical context, where his political position seemed unstable, so Theodahad attempted to secure it with installing a Gothic garrison in Rome, which prompted the Senate to request an oath of security from him, which he eventually took. Thus, in the letter to the Senate, Theodahad writes that for his display of royal affection he expects *affectus* in return: "demonstrate (*monstrate*) good faith for the assurance you have obtained, since after such a thing, affection (*affectus*) ought to be returned (*redditur*) for our clemency (*nostrae clementiae*), rather than promised (*offertur*)."<sup>68</sup>

Other three vital points are Theodahad's grammatical individualisation of ceremonialised affection, imperative constructions, and heightened emotionality, all of which could be vividly illustrated with one concrete example. In the letter to the Senate, which elevated Maximus, a member of leading senatorial families, to the rank of *primicerius*, Theodahad also attempted to represent Maximus's announced marriage to a woman of the Amal family as the one that cemented the union of the Amal dynasty with the Senate and the Roman people:

But we add to his honorable distinctions, conscript fathers, so that the shining grace of your order may be commingled in lofty kinship with us. Indeed, it is not possible for only one man to assume to claim for himself the glory that we are granting to the Roman name. Return (*reddite*) the fullest regard (*plenissimam caritatem*) for my affection (*affectui meo*). A subject who

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<sup>67</sup> According to Vidén, Cassiodorus frequently resorted to imperative as a polite, soft command with only imaginary jussive sense that functioned as a stylistic feature. Consequently, Cassiodorus's use of *praesens imperfecti* might be an attempt to articulate another type of command making it slightly stricter. Gunhild Vidén, *The Roman Chancery Tradition: Studies in the Language of Codex Theodosianus and Cassiodorus' Variae* (Göteborg: Acta universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1984), pp. 65–68.

<sup>68</sup> *Var.* 10.16.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 405).

is worthy enough that his master bestows kinship upon him must be loved more (*plus est amandus*) ... How could entreaties demand of me what my heart has granted of its own accord (*meus animus spontanea deliberatione*), so that the men of your order whom we are truly able to call fathers should be bound to us with the distinction of kinship?<sup>69</sup>

Here Cassiodorus uses for the first and for the last time a possessive first-person singular adjective "*meus*" instead of plural "*noster*," as was the norm for kings that represented governmental virtue, thus, he extraordinarily individualises the affection manifested through Theodahad's royal favour. The discursive arrangement also implies that respective *caritas* has to be returned specifically to Theodahad as a person currently possessing the power of the king rather than an institutionally and symbolically entitled ruler. It creates the effect of Theodahad's actual and symbolical dissociation from the embraced role of the *princeps*, as he essentially steps out of the royal public persona to demand public love. Then, the gerundive *amandus* in the expression *plus est amandus* is used in its imperative meaning as an attempt to prescribe and impose feelings of personal attachment towards his current protégé. Third, an emphasis on "my rational soul" (*meus animus*), which classical writers largely considered as one of the main seats of emotions,<sup>70</sup> as a vehicle for making a decision for granting a favour, as opposed to abstract imperial virtues such as generosity and love of virtues, sheds an unfavorable light on Theodahad's allegedly heightened emotionality.

Overall, though Cassiodorus never explicitly indicated the excessive expression of emotions in Theodahad's rhetoric or bodily gestures, all these literary and discursive means in the official public discourse convey the subtle breach with normative emotive conventions implied by the Roman ideal of self-command and self-restraint.<sup>71</sup> Cassiodorus's subtle criticism targeted this deviation from the traditions of antiquity, which, eventually, further exacerbated the internal conflicts between the civil elite and Theodahad, leaving the Ostrogothic *regnum* vulnerable to external attacks.

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<sup>69</sup> Var. 10.12.3-4 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 402).

<sup>70</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 52-63.

<sup>71</sup> Stavroula Constantinou – Mati Meyer, *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 4.

## Conclusion

Cassiodorus's *Variae*, as a pro-Ostrogothic textbook intended for the next generations of the bureaucratic Italo-Roman elite, documented the new perplexing reality as a combination of both governmental successes of early years and political failures of the late 530s, in which the Roman institutional and cultural continuity served as an authorial measuring instrument. In this context, the emotive behaviour of the rulers and the quality of their interactions with the administrative apparatus acquired a central role, which was indissolubly linked to imperial court culture and public performances of affection. Despite the historiographical and of the "Roman imperial restoration," promoted by Cassiodorus idea, the patterns in which the public persona of the rulers could display their love and affection to officials visibly departed from the late-Roman imperial codes. These traditional types of imperial benevolence with their strictly formulaic and limited vocabulary were no longer applicable and meaningful for the Italo-Roman elite, who, in the fifth century, witnessed how the imperial power and authority was effectively fading away in the unremitting struggles for the control of the Western Roman Empire followed by Odoacer's twenty-year dissolution of western Roman emperorship.<sup>72</sup> Cassiodorus preserved the basic semantic signifiers of the imperial codes such as love vocabulary but significantly expanded on their performativity (rhetoric) and emotive range (epistolography of friendship, paternal and familial language, metaphors). Different identifiable royal love scripts performed a social function of reproducing some of the imperial patterns of behaviour with its stratified system of favours and culture of patronage, in its wider sense. In the narrower sense, however, the Ostrogothic political structures, self-fashioning pursuits of the Roman principate and adaptation of the imperial and Italo-Roman codes engendered a more affectionate persona of the king with emotive interiority, deeply embedded in the sixth-century understanding of Romanness. These nuanced sensibilities of the Italo-Roman elite were the most apparent in the subtle narrative signs, which marked Theodahad as a king that diverged from normative emotive scripts – all those have been pointing to his deviation, in Cassiodorus's perspective, from the fundamental Roman emotional ideal of self-restraint.

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<sup>72</sup> Wijnendaele, *Late Roman Italy*.



As Ríkharðsdóttir notices, "emotion is a literary device for engendering and rectifying narrative imbalances to convey a literary message of social behavioural codes."<sup>73</sup> It is precisely through this discursive and linguistic representation of such emotion as royal love that we can locate the new conflicted emotive sensibility of the Ostrogothic reality.

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<sup>73</sup> Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, p. 177.