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Empresses, Queens, and Letters: Finding a 'Female Voice' in Late Antiquity?

Julia Hillner

Few texts assigned to the authorship of women survive from antiquity. By and large, this also holds true for the fifth and sixth centuries CE, which, as a historical period, saw the consolidation of Christianity as the dominant religion in the Mediterranean, the disintegration of the Roman Empire and the emergence of non-Roman successor kingdoms in its Western territories. Still, these two centuries present a unique moment in the history of female writing. Twenty-six letters composed under the name of female members of imperial or royal dynasties remain from that time. Nineteen of these were written in Latin, while seven are preserved in Greek, of which at least three may be translations from an original Latin composition. The letters originate from both the East and the West of the late Roman Empire, as well as from Ostrogothic Italy and from Merovingian Gaul. They can be divided exactly into one half written under the name of late Roman imperial women and one half attributed to royal women of the mentioned kingdoms. All these letters are 'political' in the sense that they either deal with diplomatic negotiations between different political entities or are part of communications between rulers and subjects (for a full list see the Appendix).

Very little attention has been paid to the majority of these letters so far.[1] Where they have been studied, the approach has usually been individualising and biographical, with the intention of analysing a single letter's content for evidence of a specific woman's personal opinions, relationship to the recipient, feelings, writing style or political power.[2] Building on a notable exception to this approach – Andrew Gillett's studies of the letters of Brunhild, mother of the Merovingian king Childebert, and of diplomatic embassies in the post-Roman West more generally[3] – this article argues that these twenty-six letters are more productively studied as a corpus. This is despite the difference in language or political contexts from which they originated. What these letters – with one exception – have in common is that they were sent with other letters as part of 'batches', following literary and ceremonial conventions of letter-writing that late Roman and the post-Roman ruling elites shared.[4] This common format suggests that the late Roman and post-Roman letters considered here can be studied together, but also that they formed part of larger political strategies that went beyond the relationship between a single letter's sender and recipient. Focusing on such relationships only is therefore deeply problematic.

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The first objective of this article is to identify these larger political strategies. The method adopted in order to do so is, first, to study the letters against their diplomatic and political context by comparing male and female letters within a particular batch of letters and, second, to study the letters against their epistolographic context, comparing the different batches of letters with each other. As soon as we do this, it becomes clear that across the fifth and sixth centuries imperial and royal female letters were composed in dialogue with the male letters they travelled with. The formats in which this dialogue happened differed according to political agendas. As I will show, petitions were usually expressed by matching correspondents by gender or (sometimes fictive) kinship relations, the broadcasting of court unity mixed the voices of male and female members of a court, while government announcement often saw letters from each part of a ruling couple. Despite this variety of purpose and format, however, the overriding aim throughout the period was to gender diplomatic and political processes in order to, conventionally, underscore the masculinity of a ruler, to safeguard him from direct critique and to humanise his rule, but also, more innovatively, to express an emerging idea of male and female co-regency in late antique government.

These conclusions from the first part of the article throw doubt on the female authorship of most of these letters, at least if defined in the modern sense of the actual writer as an individual and original source of expression. In the latter part of the article I confirm this impression by analysing the content of the letters in the light of recent research on gender-specific language in ancient and medieval texts. The letters studied here provide a precious opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the gendering of letter-writing in the ancient and medieval world; something that has so far been difficult to achieve because female and male letters arising from the same epistolary occasion so rarely survive together from this period.[5] Adopting a linguistic perspective, I show that gender-specific language, rather than giving us insight into a woman's voice, can, at times, be used to unmask men trained in techniques of ventriloquising for women. This is an insight of importance for all scholars of female writing and of female biography of the period. Yet, for historians of late antique and early medieval government, these observations have further consequences. In the cases studied here, the ventriloquising men were those employed to draft letters and speeches at and for the late antique courts. Exploring their identity, education and job descriptions further, I show that their work, including the drafting of female letters, responded and contributed to a specific late antique understanding of male and female companionship within ruling families that can also be observed in ceremony and art. Given that we find such widespread expressions of companionship at both the late Roman and the post-Roman courts, the origins of medieval representations of the queen as 'consors regni' ('partner in reign') may well lie in this very period.[6]

Female letters and epistolography

The high number of surviving female political letters from this period provides a wealth of data at the disposal of historians trying to assess the role of women at the late antique courts.[7] It is hence surprising how little has been made of this material so far as a corpus of evidence. Studies of female writing in antiquity and the Middle Ages sometimes mention some of the letters in passing, although without submitting them to more detailed analysis.[8] Scholarship on the transformation of the power and

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representation of late Roman empresses equally largely neglects these letters, despite being a vibrant field, to which I will return below. A recent review of, specifically, the role of women in diplomatic exchanges between East and West in the fifth and early sixth century also has nothing to say about these letters, focusing instead on the circulation of women themselves through marriage alliances in the 'pluripolar' world of late antiquity.[9]

It is usually through the investigation of individual women that historians have arrived at these texts, and, in consequence, at only some of them, although even this is neither a universal nor sustained approach.[10] Three women stand out in the historiography in this regard: Galla Placidia, sister of Western emperor Honorius (d. 450), the Merovingian queen-turned-nun Radegund (d. 587), and the Ostrogothic queen Amalasuentha (d. 534/5). In the first two cases, their letters have been presented as an expression of the respective woman's feelings and ambitions. Placidia's, written soon after she had returned from an unusual marriage with a Visigothic king, are seen as part of her strategies to make a place for herself at the Western imperial court by demonstrably defending Christian orthodoxy.[11] Radegund's letters were written to her cousin Amalfrid and his son Artachius who were living in Constantinople, after she had left her husband, King Clothar, and founded a monastery at Poitiers. They were all members of the Thuringian royal family whose territory had been conquered by Clothar in 531, but, while Radegund had been taken captive, Amalfrid had gone into exile in Constantinople. Radegund's letters, which adopted the format of epistolary poems, hence are seen as expressing deep mourning over the loss of her family and homeland and her wish to strengthen ties with her remaining relatives to protect her monastic foundation from outside interference.[12]

Yet, doubts have also been raised over Radegund's authorship of these letters. In the Middle Ages they were transmitted under the name of the poet, panegyrist and courtier Venantius Fortunatus, a friend of Radegund, and can be seen as very much following the style of this author's other works.[13] In that sense, these letters are similar to those of Ostrogothic queen Amalasuentha, which are included in the letter collection of Cassiodorus, a Roman who worked for the Ostrogothic kings in various offices. These letters have attracted attention due to Amalasuentha's unusual form of rule. In October 534, Amalasuentha invited Theodahad, her married cousin, to be proclaimed king alongside her upon the death of her minor son, Ostrogothic king Athalaric.[14] Yet, except in very rare cases, Amalasuentha's letters, while studied, are attributed to Cassiodorus in modern scholarship, without problematising or even just acknowledging the alternative that they may have been written by Amalasuentha herself.[15]

The described different traditions of authorship attribution raise larger questions that transcend these individual women. Should we believe attributions made by late antique or medieval compilers of letter collections even though they may have had particular reasons to transmit a letter under a certain name, either male or female? If not, how can we show that letters were written by men or by women? Perhaps most importantly, if some of the 'female' letters can be shown to have been written by men – as particularly the context of Cassiodorus suggests – how far can we then assume that other 'female' letters, like those of Galla Placidia or Radegund, were in fact written by the women themselves? And, if they were not written by the women, what was the

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purpose of ‘gendering’ them in this way? What do they tell us about these women’s position at the courts?

These questions call for a more holistic and comparative approach than has hitherto been attempted, one that compares male and female letters written on the same occasion on the one hand, and similar occasions of letter writing from across the late antique period on the other. With our evidence, we are in the unique position to do so. Among our twenty-six letters only five have been transmitted without other letters directly associated with them (see Appendix). As we shall see, however, two of these (Galla Placidia to Paulinus of Nola, Pulcheria to the abbess Bassa) may have nonetheless been composed with other letters. Two further letters, those by Radegund, may also have travelled with male letters originally.[16] Both letters may have been part of Radegund’s mission in 568 to acquire relics from Emperor Justin II (d. 578) and carried by an embassy sent by Sigibert, the Merovingian king of Metz and Radegund’s stepson, in whose territory her monastery was situated. Having reached Constantinople, the embassy may have found Amalfrid deceased, which could have prompted substitution of the poem addressed to him with the second of Radegund’s letters, to his son Artachius (this letter refers to Amalfrid’s death).[17] It is fair to say, therefore, that almost all of the letters under study here were originally part of batches of letters.

Andrew Gillett has already argued for the importance of considering late Roman imperial and royal letters in context, echoing calls by other scholars of late antique epistolography who see letter-writing as part of a large ‘nexus of communication’ that also included scribes, the public reading of letters, accompanying verbal messages, letters’ further circulation and their collection.[18] From this perspective, political letters need to be analysed in the context of the physical reality of the embassies or messengers that carried letters, as this determined the way they were composed and delivered. The evidence suggests that usually late antique embassies or messengers carried several letters, of which only a fraction survive in later collections. According to Gillett, these batches of letters could fulfil a variety of epistolographic or even performative strategies.

First, letters could be sent to an addressee considered central to the issue (for example, the emperor) as well as ‘lateral’ individuals considered close to central decision maker(s) (such as members of the imperial household). This ‘lateral’ strategy was to create a network of influence and to project information beyond the central addressee. Second, numerous letters written by different individuals could be addressed to one single, significant addressee to press the same point in a variety of ways, in order to create an effective rhetoric of persuasion through this barrage. Finally, several individuals could write to several other individuals in a form of ‘multiple communication’ that matched correspondents according to common attributes. All these were rhetorical strategies, but they were also meant to have a dramatic effect when messengers read letters aloud to different members of the audience, in this way embodying a variety of viewpoints and emotions. Diplomatic letter batches in particular, Gillett argues, were public affairs, very possibly performed publicly on a ceremonial occasion where all letter addressees came together and often accompanied by further, more substantial verbal messages. All of this suggests that all letters contained in the same batch were also composed on the same occasion.

When we now look at batches of letters that contain female imperial or royal letters, we can see that some of these letters fit into these strategies described by

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Gillett, but that with regard to female communication Gillett's conclusions can also be refined further. There is no example of female letters adopting a 'lateral' strategy, that is, where one imperial or royal woman wrote to a range of addressees. This may show that such women rarely sent letters on their own. In turn, we can identify three contexts in which female imperial or royal letters appear alongside those written by men: multiple communication, barrage of letters and, not considered by Gillett, twin communication. A closer analysis of these three epistolographic formats shows that each involved female letters for a different purpose.

Multiple communication

Most of our female letters were part of multiple communications, during which women corresponded with other women or close relatives. We can assemble five letter batches under this category: in chronological order, the letters of the Western imperial family in 450 (originally written in Latin, but translated into Greek in the 450s),[19] Amalasuentha and her co-regent Theodahad's Latin correspondence with Justinian and Theodora in 534, Theodahad and his wife Gudelina's Latin correspondence with the same imperial couple in 535, possibly Radegund's letter to Amalfrid and Artachius, and the letters from the Merovingian court at Metz to the Eastern court between 585 and 593 (all Merovingian letters were also written in Latin).[20]

It is useful to begin with these last-mentioned letters, as they have been identified as a form of 'multiple communication' already by Gillett, whose analysis I largely follow here. The context of the letters was the hostage-taking of King Childebert's nephew Athanagild by emperor Maurice (*r.* 582–602), after a failed coup in 584 by his father and Childebert's brother-in-law, Visigothic prince Ermengild, to take power in Spain with the help of the Eastern empire. The Eastern court subsequently used Athanagild to exert pressure on Childebert to resume campaigning against the Lombards in Italy in support of the empire.[21]

Following these events, Childebert sent two embassies to Constantinople that carried altogether at least thirteen letters, including five from his mother Brunhild, Athanagild's grandmother. The aim was, at least partly, to ease a petition to allow for Athanagild's return to Gaul. In both cases, the letters had been written with the intention of creating a common ground between the two courts through pointing at shared family roles and corresponding emotions and duties.[22] In the first letter batch, most were 'letters of credence', simply introducing the ambassadors, drawing attention to the gifts and verbal messages that they carried and asking the recipient to petition the emperor. This is also true for Brunhild's letters in this batch, to Constantina, the emperor's wife, and Anastasia, her mother. It is notable, however, that Brunhild was chosen as correspondent with these imperial women, as if emphasising her equal status at Childebert's court to the *Augustae* in Constantinople. In this batch, Brunhild's letter to her grandson Athanagild stands out as different, also from Childebert's own brief letter to Athanagild which only intimates that he would raise the issue of his circumstances (*vestris condicionibus*; ep. 28) with the emperor verbally. Brunhild's letter to Athanagild (ep. 27) is remarkable for its personal emotional expression, also conveyed by the use of the first person singular. The letter expresses the hope to establish a physical bond with Athanagild through his gaze onto the letter, and thereby also to resurrect Brunhild's lost child, Ingund, Athanagild's mother who had died on

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the way to Constantinople. Since Athanagild cannot have been more than two years of age at the time, the letter was clearly meant to be read and possibly heard not by him, but by a wider audience, invited to partake in Brunhild's grandmotherly and maternal feelings. Two letters in the second four-letter batch, which more directly addresses the issue of Athanagild's hostage in Constantinople, represent an intricate idea of parallel family relationships, where Brunhild wrote to Constantina as mother to mother, and Childebert wrote to Theodosius (the emperor's son) as an heir to an heir, with Athanagild also built into the concept of inheritance. Both letters invite the addressee to imagine the respective maternal and filial emotions of the writer as well as the feelings of the orphaned Athanagild, although Brunhild's letter again is more passionate than her son's, dwelling on the experience of losing a child. Since Theodosius was also an infant, Gillett cautions us that, once again, we must assume this, and possibly all the letters, were meant to be read by a wider circle at court or even declaimed.

In both batches of letters, then, Brunhild's were clearly gendered with respect to addressees and content, but, given the likely rituals of their delivery, we can be sure that this was part of a communicative strategy intent on exploiting the dramatic effect of these varied, but ultimately artificial viewpoints. It is not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that, even though we do not have his or her name, all the letters were drafted for signature by the same person whose very job it was to create variety in a single batch of letters. I will return to this point below.

The other extant female letters perhaps carried by a royal embassy from Metz to Constantinople, Radegund's epistolary poems to Amalfrid and Artachius, are not easily comparable to Brunhild's due to their format. They are much longer and written in elegiac couplet, switching between the tone of classical epic passionately expressing grief over the destruction of a homeland and the voice of female love elegy bewailing the absence of this lost realm's hero, Amalfrid. Nonetheless, some emotions expressed in the letter to Amalfrid are not dissimilar to those articulated by Brunhild. For example, Radegund, again in the first person singular, evokes the same mental image of a letter – the letter from Amalfrid she longs for but that does not arrive – transmitting the sender's physical presence ('the letter may have painted (your) face and the image carries the man who his location holds back') and through this a connection to her dead family, immediate and distant (Amalfrid's father, relatives, ancestors).[23] Furthermore, if Radegund's letters, as suggested above, travelled with a larger, not surviving royal letter batch, it is not impossible to imagine that this batch, like the one carrying Brunhild's letters, carefully reconstructed pre-existing multiple relationships between the two courts to support the embassy's business. At that moment in time, the family relationship between Radegund and Amalfrid was probably the strongest and most precious connection the court at Metz had to Constantinople, as later that between Brunhild and Athanagild would be, and both were bound to be exploited to give the respective embassy access to a larger imperial audience. This would also explain why the letter to Amalfrid was quickly substituted with that to Artachius (an individual who, while related to her, Radegund cannot have known personally and who, again, may have been a child) when his death became known in Gaul. It should also not surprise us that Radegund's letters did not make mention of the embassy's business, be this the relic petition or any other diplomatic issue. As we have just seen, neither did the first letter batch sent by Childebert regarding Athanagild's hostage address his situation or any

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other purpose of writing beyond making contact with a lost family member. Rather, the letters were used to set the scene for the development of understanding, while diplomatic details – which could also be multi-purpose – were exchanged verbally or in subsequent correspondence. Whatever other diplomatic purpose Radegund's letters had, their explicit drawing on celebrated models of classical literature such as, most obviously, Virgil's *Aeneid* (Rome's epic foundation myth) and Ovid's *Letters of the Heroides* (epistolary poems written in the voice of mythical women) was certainly meant to convey an image of immense learning and tradition prevailing in post-Roman Gaul that the imperial court was expected to relate to.[24]

There is no need to assume that the court at Metz invented such diplomatic strategies; rather, as Gillett reminds us, they drew on models this court expected its Byzantine counterpart to be familiar with and hence on models the Merovingians had inherited or copied from the late Roman world. In fact, at least the letters regarding the Athanagild issue can be compared with the letters the Western imperial family sent to the Eastern imperial family in February 450. The occasion for this correspondence was the deposition of Bishop Flavian of Constantinople at the second council of Ephesus in 449 over a contested definition of the nature of Christ, on instigation of Bishop Dioscorus of Alexandria and against the doctrinal position of Leo, bishop of Rome.[25] Leo sought help from Western emperor Valentinian III, his wife Licinia Eudoxia and his mother Galla Placidia when they visited St Peter in the Vatican the day after they had entered Rome in early 450. They were to lobby Eastern emperor Theodosius II, Valentinian's cousin and Eudoxia's father, to overturn the decisions of the council, to reinstate Flavian and to hold a new council to settle the doctrinal questions in Italy (Flavian in the meantime had died, but this seems not to have been known in Rome yet). Accordingly, Valentinian, Eudoxia and Placidia each wrote a letter to Theodosius on 22 February 450. Placidia also wrote to Theodosius's sister, Pulcheria. This letter is usually dated to 22 February too and thought to have arisen from the same occasion, because Placidia refers to the scene at St Peter, although, in fact, it is not dated.

According to Hagith Sivan, the female letters within this correspondence, by Eudoxia and Placidia, show 'the vigor of imperial women', who saw an 'opportunity . . . to demonstrate their own commitment to orthodoxy' in a way that was 'novel' and 'likely inspired by the (authoritative) Galla Placidia'.[26] Reading the letters together with the male letters and with the comparative epistolographical context in mind, Placidia's leading input is, however, debatable, at least for the batch of letters addressed to emperor Theodosius.

Similar to the Merovingian batches, senders and recipients in this imperial batch of letters were matched according to, in some cases artificial, household positions. Emperor Valentinian and empress Eudoxia write to their 'father', emperor Theodosius (ep. 2), while Placidia writes as 'mother' to her 'son' Theodosius (ep. 3), and to her 'daughter' Pulcheria (ep. 14), even though the latter were really her nephew and niece. While this invoking of family relationships was meant to create commonality between the two courts, the male and female letters again express different aspects of this unity. The female letters differ from Valentinian's (and Leo's) letter in that they add more detail to the emperor's request and, particularly in Placidia's letter, more drama and emotion. Valentinian's letter is a brief and sober request for a council in Italy to resolve the 'rivalry' (φιλονεικία) within the Church over which the Roman bishop, whom he does not name, should preside due to his ancient primacy. While

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Valentinian mentions the visit to St Peter, it is from Galla that we learn the specifics. In her letter to Theodosius (ep. 3), she describes how Leo, whom she names, after the service pleaded with the imperial family in tears, surrounded by a ‘multitude’ of bishops who had come from ‘innumerable’ Italian cities. She also uses much stronger words to refer to the ecclesiastical dispute: ἀψιμαχία, which implies violent scuffles, and the ‘hate’ (μῖσος) of ‘one man’, whom she does not name, but who intimidated Flavian, who she names, with a military presence at Ephesus. Her plea to the emperor is for the reinstatement of Flavian, who should be judged by the Roman bishop. Leo’s authority and primacy she links to the ‘keys of heaven’ and to Rome’s dominance of the earth, as well as, more precisely, the council of Nicaea’s decision on Rome as the see of appeal for ecclesiastical disputes (a confusion with the council of Serdica, where this decision had actually been taken, which we also find in one of Leo’s previous letters).[27] Eudoxia’s letter (ep. 4), in turn, is a little more subdued, although she, like Placidia, but unlike Valentinian, finds very deferential adjectives to describe both St Peter (ἁγιωτάτου) and Leo (μακαριώτατος), whom she also names. From her letter we learn of a new feature of the council of Ephesus: that Flavian had been expelled due to the hostility of ‘the bishop of Alexandria’ (Dioscorus, probably the ‘one man’ Placidia mentions).

None of the letters makes reference to each other or that of Leo (ep. 1) which will have headed the batch. This confirms the impression that they were meant to be delivered and read together, each contributing an aspect of the same story and new information. From this we should not conclude, however, that Valentinian was less interested in the matter than his womenfolk. His moderate letter would have been read first (after Leo’s), to set the scene, while the women’s letters filled in the gory details, the names (one by one), and the outrage. In view of these three letters dramatically ‘unfolding’ the imperial request, but also due to some detail (in particular the error over the council of Nicaea), it is again likely that the letters were written by the same individual who drew on information received from Leo.

Placidia’s letter to Pulcheria (ep. 14), usually believed to have been sent on the same occasion, somewhat differs from the letters just discussed. While it also describes the scene at St Peter and Leo’s tearful appeal, Placidia seems to sharply rebuke her Eastern relatives.[28] She begins the letter emphasising ‘our’ (the Western imperial family’s?) cause to protect religion and ‘order’ (τάξις), only to lament the fact that at Ephesus, where by the will of ‘someone’ ‘something nasty’ was done to the Bishop of Constantinople, ‘no one’ had guarded order (τάξις), which can only be taken as a veiled attack at Theodosius. This comparison between the moral stature of the Western and the Eastern imperial family continued throughout the letter: Galla expressed the hope that Pulcheria (‘your philanthropy’) should now achieve unity (συμπνεῦσαι) with the catholic faith, ‘as we (the Western imperial family) have always done’ (ὅπερ ἀεί μεθ’ἡμῶν πεποίηκε), so that the ‘case of the bishop (Flavian)’ be referred to the apostolic see, with further references to the ‘keys of heaven’ and Rome’s global dominance. The difference in tone of this letter from the others discussed above is remarkable. Neither Leo nor the Western imperial family probably knew that Pulcheria was actually not living at the main palace at the time.[29] If this letter was really part of the same batch as the others, they would have expected that it was read or performed together with them. It therefore may have been meant to press the other letters’ points even further, to underscore the unity within the Western imperial family and publicise

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the (assumed) disunity over Flavian's treatment at the Eastern court, in order to shame their relatives into action. The letter's tone may also have been motivated by the wish to divert open criticism of the emperor via his sister, in a communication from the older *augusta* of the West to the younger *augusta* of the East, who it was safer to rebuke. Still, the real addressee of Placidia's letter may have been Theodosius, who was expected to listen to or at least see this letter too. It should be noted that there are some very distinctive stylistic features in this letter, for example the flowery and somewhat cumbersome beginning, and the labelling of Leo as 'papas', which was not the title customarily used for the Bishop of Rome in Rome at the time.[30] Perhaps this implies a different composer from that of the other letters by the Western imperial family discussed above (we should remember that this letter was transmitted without a date, so perhaps the occasion was different too). More likely, however, this letter had the same composer, but an alternative translator into Greek, particularly since it first circulated in a different collection from the others.[31]

Multiple forms of communication with parallel correspondence according to common court positions and gender attributes also appear in the Ostrogothic correspondence. Amalasuentha and her co-regent Theodohad each wrote to Justinian between late 534 and April 535 to ask the emperor to dispatch building materials that one of their courtiers, Calogenitus, had bought in the East before he died during that trip. On the same occasion, Amalasuentha also sent a letter to empress Theodora, enquiring about her health (*sospitas*, ep. 10.10) and expressing the hope that through the union of the charity of their souls they would be able to see each other better, another variety on the commonplace that letter-writing established a physical bond that recalls Brunhild's letter to Athanagild and Radegund's letter to Amalfrid.[32] Again, then, a female letter expressed affection, albeit in a fairly conventional way. Amalasuentha's letter to Justinian also differs from Theodahad's through her dwelling on the emperor's 'piety' (*pietas*; ep. 10.8) and divine favour, while Theodahad praises his 'clemency' (*clementia*) and refers to the *res publica* (state; ep. 10.9). King and queen hence neatly, but rather artificially, divided divine and worldly matters between themselves in their letters. This harmonious arrangement was not to last, for in late April 535 Amalasuentha was murdered, possibly on order of Theodahad, leading to a diplomatic crisis with the Eastern court. During these feverish months Theodahad twice dispatched a batch of letters pleading for peace, each containing letters written by himself to Justinian and Theodora and by his wife Gudelina to Theodora, apparently within a short time and using the same embassy of Justinian's envoy Peter the Patrician. In his letters to Theodora, Theodahad asked the empress to mitigate the emperor's decision (*sapientiae vestrae moderatione mitigetur*, ep. 10.23), she, who 'merits to be heard' (*quae meretur audiri*, ep. 10.21), and to intercede for his requests, which, he alleges, she had asked him to bring first to her (*hortamini ut . . . vestris ante sensibus ingeramus*, ep. 10.21). While Theodahad's words have sometimes been seen to imply a secret understanding between himself and the empress, the fact it accompanied a letter to Justinian (ep. 10.20) shows that this was just a rhetorical manoeuvre. Addressing both the emperor and the empress at times, Theodahad's letters to the imperial couple and, accompanying them, Gudelina's to Theodora were meant to be read by both, even if not publicly. Gudelina's letters are almost meaningless in their content, other than wishing for Theodora's 'love' (*amor*; not a term used by Theodahad, but twice by Gudelina in ep. 10.22 and 10.24) and extolling the empress with fertility metaphors.[33] This choice

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of language was surely meant to emphasise and strengthen the affectionate bond the two ruler consorts were expected to share due to their gender. We usually assume that Gudelina's letters were composed by Cassiodorus, so again it is doubtful how much they presented Gudelina's 'real' sentiments.[34]

Barrage of letters

Female imperial (although not royal) letters also appear among batches containing letters of several individuals sent to one single, significant addressee. For the letters under study here, however, this strategy was exclusively adopted in reply to that addressee's previous use of what Gillett has called the 'lateral' correspondence strategy. We only have one piece of evidence for this scenario, from the end of the so-called Acacian schism, still over the definition of the nature of Christ, which divided the churches of Rome and Constantinople between 482 and 520.[35] To end this schism, the Bishop of Rome, Hormisdas, sent an embassy to Constantinople in February or March 519 to deliver a batch of letters to the court of new emperor Justin who was more amenable to Rome's position than his predecessors had been (all letters from this context are in Latin).[36] This batch fully employed the 'lateral' epistolary habit, containing letters to Justin and a long list of individuals Hormisdas considered close to the emperor, including the empress Euphemia (CA, ep. 156). He may also have written more frequently to the empress and to others, as Euphemia in July 520 acknowledges letters which, significantly, she says she had listened to, rather than read.[37] This was either because it was usual to include the empress in correspondence with the emperor, or because Hormisdas thought Euphemia had a particular influence.[38]

Yet, while the emperor and other individuals had replied to Hormisdas more swiftly, Euphemia herself only replied to Hormisdas upon the completion of the embassy's mission in July 520, in a batch of letters that also contained one from her husband, one from the bishop of Constantinople and two from court grandees, a general called Celer and a woman called Anicia Iuliana, a granddaughter of Valentinian III and Licinia Eudoxia. The main aim of this 'barrage' of letters was to demonstrate unity at the imperial court and harmony between the emperor and individuals of influence in Constantinople, but also to emphasise that the emperor was in control of this unity. There is no doubt, then, that this batch of reply letters, and also those Hormisdas received on earlier occasions from Constantinople, were assembled and orchestrated by the emperor or his chancellery.[39] This wish to demonstrate unity of the imperial court may also be the reason why Anicia Iuliana – a descendant of the Theodosian dynasty, and hence of a rivalling family – appears not only in the batch of letters from July 520, but also in one mailed to Hormisdas earlier, on 22 April 519. At first, Hormisdas had not written to her at all, but she seems to have been mobilised by the emperor for the construction of his narrative of unanimity and her letters make specific references to her Catholic commitment (e.g. in ep. 164: 'we have come together ... in the unity of the catholic faith'; in ep. 198: 'we hold on even more firmly to the immoveable steadfastness of the right faith'). By contrast, Euphemia's letter is non-descript, just asking Hormisdas for his prayers. She, unlike Anicia Iuliana, also only appears as a letter writer to officially announce, with her husband, the success of Hormisdas's mission upon departure of the Roman embassy from Constantinople.[40] The batch of letters that went to Hormisdas on 9 July 520 was hence headed by an announcement of both

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emperor and empress, in which Euphemia's person is carefully controlled according to court requirements. This is to some extent similar to a third epistolographic scenario in which female letters appear: what I would describe as 'twin' communication of an imperial couple.

Twin communication

The strategic pairing of a male and a female letter has recently received some attention in one particular instance, the correspondence of Amalasuentha and Theodahad with the imperial court and the Roman senate, the ancient assembly of the Roman aristocracy, at the beginning of their reign in late 534. These letters were to announce their unusual partnership and, in the case of the emperor, request his approval for the sake of safeguarding the treaty Ostrogothic Italy had with the empire. As Cristina La Rocca has shown, in both cases the letters are clearly gendered, but, astonishingly, they subvert traditional gender roles.[41] The letters to emperor Justinian dwell on Amalasuentha and Theodohad's artificial brother-sister relationship (they were really cousins) and their partnership (*socius*), but present Theodahad in an inferior position. For example, Theodahad describes Amalasuentha as his 'most preeminent mistress', *praecellentissima domina*, while his role is presented by Amalasuentha as one of prudent 'counsel' (*consilium*), an established way to refer to the role of a ruler's wife (10.2).[42] Of all those surveyed in this article, Amalasuentha's and Theodahad's letters to the senate perhaps fit the label 'twin letters' best, drawing, as they do, on the metaphor of the body being composed of binary functions (eyes, ears, hands) to reflect on the nature of the pair's partnership. Yet, they were even more pronounced in their distortion of customary gendered norms than the letters to the emperor: while Amalasuentha's letter (10.3) does reference her maternal grief over her son's death and her burden of carrying the 'weight of the state' alone (*molem rei publicae solitaria cogitatione pertulimus*), it quickly brushes aside this female weakness of a 'pious mother's heart' (*animus piae matris*) for the 'love of all' (*generalitatis affectio*). It is Theodahad's letter (10.4), however, that is most remarkable in its representation of their respective roles, for Amalasuentha is here described as the active and wise ruler, the one taking decisions and making pronouncements, while Theodahad is said to contribute rather domestic skills, such as hospitality and generosity. In both instances, Theodohad's letters are also much longer than Amalasuentha's (to the Roman senate, his letter is about a third longer), making his more comparable to some of the female letters and hers to some of the male letters discussed above.

As Massimiliano Vitiello excellently explains, the reasons for this curious way of portraying Amalasuentha and Theodahad's relationship are historically contingent.[43] The Ostrogothic treaty with the Eastern empire had been renewed with Athalaric, under guardianship of Amalasuentha. After Athalaric's death, it was therefore Amalasuentha who was the guarantor of this treaty, but as a woman she could not reign alone. To receive imperial endorsement of how the succession to Athalaric had been solved and to make the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy safe, it was important that Theodahad, even though he was not Amalasuentha's husband, was presented as providing continuity. This included following Amalasuentha's lead in dealing with the empire. Yet, in Italy, with the Roman senate, the situation was different, for Theodahad was despised by Roman aristocrats on account of his greed. Here, it was important to emphasise the

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king's skills in household management as well as to show that Theodahad would be under Amalasuentha's watchful eye who in fact as regent had already submitted Theodahad to an investigation of his aggressive tactics of bringing landed property into his possession.

Nonetheless, even though this gender subversion was extraordinary – and as La Rocca has shown ultimately counterproductive, for it contributed to damaging Theodahad's position – the format in which it was announced was not.[44] In fact, it can be argued that the gender subversion could only be expected to work if it was presented in a format familiar to the audiences of the letters; in short, if it subverted an already existing idea of a ruling couple as a 'team' with clearly gendered roles. Here it should be noted, as will be further explored below, that since at least the early fifth century it was customary to present the imperial couple as a 'partnership' or *koinōnia* (in Latin *consortium*), a custom that was firmly established by the mid-sixth century.[45]

The various elements of this representation seem to have included the composition of 'twin' letters, of which a few also survive from the fifth-century empire. We find them, in particular, among the correspondence involving the already mentioned Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II (these letters are preserved in Greek but may originally have been in Latin or bilingual).[46] After Theodosius had died childless in July 450, Pulcheria married General Marcian, who became Theodosius' successor. Their marriage was unusual as Pulcheria had previously taken a vow of chastity, which Marcian was asked to honour.[47] On 22 November 450, Pulcheria and Marcian wrote to Leo of Rome, explaining that they would finally convene a Church council to settle the contentious decisions taken at Ephesus in 449, but not in Italy, and invited him to preside over it. After the council, which was held in Chalcedon in the summer of 451, Pulcheria and Marcian wrote a letter each to the archimandrites (leaders of the monks) of Palestine, who had riotously refused to accept the conciliar decisions, rejected Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem upon his return from the council and proclaimed one of their own, Theodosius, as bishop. Fearful of sanctions, the monks had approached Pulcheria with a petition, blaming Samaritans (an ethnic group in Palestine) and the imperial military for the troubles, to which Pulcheria and Marcian's letters, written in autumn or winter 452–3, are the reply.

In both their correspondence with Leo and with the archimandrites in Palestine, Marcian's and Pulcheria's letters make parallel points, but in slightly different ways. The letters to Leo are somewhat similar to those of the Western imperial family to Theodosius II discussed above, in the sense that Marcian's letter (ep. 8) offers a brief and sober invitation to the council he was planning to hold 'where it pleases us'. Pulcheria's (ep. 9) repeats this invitation (although is much more diplomatic: the council should be held 'in one city' (εἰς μίαν πόλιν), but then also adds the information that bishop Anatolius of Constantinople has accepted Leo's doctrinal position, that, by order of Marcian, Flavian's body has been returned to and buried in Constantinople's Church of the Apostles, and that the bishops exiled after Ephesus had been recalled and were now awaiting their reinstatement into office. Again, then, like Galla Placidia's and Licinia Eudoxia's, the empress's letter puts the emperor's decision into the context of personal and dramatic circumstances (death and exile), highlighting imperial mercy.

The letters to the archimandrites of Palestine, however, show that 'twin letters' could also give more voice to the emperor, with the empress's letter simply repeating the major points he made. Of the two imperial letters to the monks, Marcian's letter (ep. 26)

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is longer and more colourful, listing in detail the monks' evil deeds.[48] It then launches into a lengthy exposition of their doctrinal errors and the teachings of Chalcedon and then finishes, somewhat surprisingly, by announcing a pardon on condition of penance, an enquiry into 'thieving' by the Samaritans and a relief from the distress that the presence of his soldiers had imposed upon the monasteries. Pulcheria's letter (which makes reference to her husband's; ep. 27), by contrast, is shorter and focuses mainly on the doctrinal aspects, repeating in slightly different words Marcian's explanation of the nature of Christ, and mentions only briefly the emperor's decision on pardon, penance, enquiry and removal of military presence. In this instance it was perhaps not seen as opportune for the empress to comment in detail on what was essentially male government business, the policing of law and order. At the same time, Pulcheria may have written a letter to Bassa, the abbess of a female monastery in Jerusalem, explaining Chalcedon's decisions (ep. 31). It briefly summarises the monks' bad deeds and the emperor's decision for pardon (with reference to the other imperial letters), but then expresses concern that female ascetics may also have been corrupted by the leader of the monks, Theodosius. Pulcheria asks Bassa to make clear 'to all women devoted to God' the imperial couple's doctrinal position (she uses 'we'; since she refers to the emperor before, she must mean both of them).

All three letters make the doctrinal point that the Council of Chalcedon had not introduced a novel statement of faith but was in line with the Council of Nicaea held in 325 and even earlier authorities (with reference to the same texts, such as Paul Gal. 4.8). They are also similar in their avoidance of the key Chalcedonian formula of Christ's nature as 'one hypostasis in two natures'. According to Alois Grillmeyer, there can therefore be no doubt that at least Marcian and Pulcheria's letters to the monks, and perhaps also that to Bassa, were written by the same person, who may also have been familiar with Juvenal of Jerusalem's synodical letter of the same period (notably, Juvenal, despite having been deposed by them, had also interceded for the Palestinian monks).[49] Kenneth Holum argues that Pulcheria wrote to Bassa because she was 'worried that she might lose the admiration of these virgins, especially since her recent entrance into nominal marriage would have made her appear to have left their ranks'.[50] Looking at the epistolographical context, one wonders, however, whether it was not the imperial chancery that deliberately segregated the male and female addressees and followed what was, as we have seen, a not unfamiliar strategy of matching correspondents of the same attributes (here: female gender and perhaps also ascetic status).

There was, hence, already a precedent for Amalasuentha and Theodahad's unison pronouncement of the values of a new government in the format of twin letters in the mid-fifth century, even though the Ostrogothic letters clearly bent the format to fit their situation. Yet, I would suggest that another epistolographic context could also be analysed in this way. This is the correspondence of Western emperor Honorius's imperial court to settle a disputed episcopal election in Rome in 418 by calling a synod at Spoleto in spring 419.[51] Among the invitations to bishops to attend this synod, three were written by Honorius's sister, the already-mentioned, but at this time still much younger, Galla Placidia. One of these was addressed to Aurelius of Carthage and dated 20 March 419, and another, in identical copies, to seven further African bishops, including Augustine of Hippo and Alypius of Thagaste, of the same date.[52] A further

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invitation went to Bishop Paulinus of Nola on the same day. This last letter has also, although less securely, been attributed to Placidia, partly on stylistic grounds, due to 'strong similarity in wording' to the other two, but partly also on the speculation that Placidia could have met Paulinus of Nola when she had come to his city as a captive of the Visigoths back in 410.[53]

Placidia's letters to Aurelius of Carthage and the seven further African bishops accompanied Honorius's invitation 'to the Africans' (ep. 26). Honorius' letter is, like some of Valentinian's and Marcian's letters, and to some extent Amalasuentha's, brief and sober, starting with the duty of the emperor to protect the 'just causes' (*causae*) that pertain to religion, explaining the legal problem that the schism in Rome could not be decided by a few, but needed many, and finishing with the invitation. Placidia's letters are far more personal, flattering the named addressees (Aurelius is 'very learned', *doctissimus*, ep. 27; each of the seven other bishops is 'leading due to the worthiness of his life' *merito vitae praecedens*, ep. 28), using reverent titles ('holy father', 'father venerable by merit' *domine sancte, pater merito venerabilis*, ep. 27), demanding their blessing, and describing in more dramatic detail the events in Rome, which she calls 'struggle' (*certamen*; ep. 27) and 'conflict' (*conflictum*; ep. 28), rather than Honorius's 'tension' (*contentio*).

Some of Placidia's biographers, again, have used this correspondence to point at her independence, political shrewdness and 'the manner in which she made a place for herself at the court she had just joined'.[54] Yet, her letters do not substantially differ from the other female letters analysed in this section, so may equally have been part of the common rhetorical strategy to 'twin' masculine efficiency with feminine piety. As Honorius was a widower at the time, Placidia was the senior and only adult imperial woman in the West, so it may not be surprising if she was 'used' for this purpose. To be sure, Placidia explains that Honorius's invitation should have been sufficient for the African bishops to come, but she decided to 'associate letters' to them (*socianda scripta iudicamus*), which some have interpreted as a public put-down.[55] This overlooks, however, that it was by no means uncommon to send male and female imperial letters together in late antiquity, even if Placidia's are the earliest examples we have. Furthermore, there is stylistic evidence that Placidia's and Honorius's letters to the African bishops, and perhaps also that to Paulinus of Nola, were composed together. Each of the letters, for example, includes the request to lay aside any excuse and 'deign' (*dignetur*) to come.[56] The question whether the letter to Paulinus of Nola was also composed in the name of Placidia may therefore be irrelevant. Stylistically, it certainly resembles more the letters to the individual African bishops than Honorius' general invitation, but can this really mean it expressed Placidia's personal 'fondness' for the old man?[57] Each of Placidia's letters, in fact each of the letters analysed so far, may have been a product of an imperial or royal chancery intent on leaving nothing to chance.

Pulcheria and Marcian, Amalasuentha and Theodahad as well as Galla Placidia and Honorius were all highly unusual couples. Pulcheria and Amalasuentha both seem to have been involved in choosing or at least providing legitimacy to the previous ruler's successor, and all three were not the ruler's 'wife', at least not in the conventional sense (Pulcheria continued to be a consecrated virgin, Amalasuentha was the married Theodahad's cousin, Placidia was sister to the unmarried Honorius). For them, the epistolographic strategy of 'twin' letters may have been chosen in order to bolster their

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position at court. But we should also remember that what survives from late antiquity may only be a fraction of the letters that imperial and royal women wrote. It may be a coincidence that we only have 'twin' letters for these three 'atypical' women. Having surveyed all the letters, it is clear that the choice of strategy depended not only on the identity of the women involved, but also on the political or diplomatic context. 'Twin' letters were mainly used to make government pronouncements or orders, 'multiple communication' was a strategy used to ease a petition, while 'barrages' of letters were sent when court harmony needed to be demonstrated. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that in late antiquity all three strategies – which, alongside 'lateral' communication, must have structured epistolographic habits in earlier antiquity too – encompassed women. Again, a lack of evidence for the involvement of women in earlier imperial correspondence may be due to a lack of transmission. The late antique evidence, however, fits well with the increased visibility of women and a heightened emphasis on 'partnership' of emperor and empress in late antique court ceremonial, as we shall see further below.

Female voices, male writers and the late antique courts

Before we turn to how our letters fit into larger trends of late antique court ceremonial, we need to discuss who at court may have actually written them. The evidence above on the various formats of letter 'batches' in which female letters appear strongly suggests that it was not the female senders themselves. This conclusion is further supported by what we know about the timing of female letter writing. In fact, at what point in a diplomatic exchange female letters were written and sent was equally heavily regulated. We have already seen the empress Euphemia not appearing as a letter writer until the end of negotiations between Rome and Constantinople over the Acacian schism. This female imperial correspondence pattern is comparable to that leading up to the Council of Chalcedon. As the letters of Bishop Leo of Rome show, he had written to Pulcheria, the sister of the emperor, to solicit support for Flavian of Constantinople several times since June 449, but had never received a reply.[58] Perhaps because of Pulcheria's silence Leo mobilised the Western imperial family to write to Theodosius and Pulcheria in February 450. Pulcheria may not have replied to Leo because, living away from court at the time, she had not received Leo's letters. It is notable, however, that the first time we hear about a letter from Pulcheria to Rome it dates from the time that Theodosius replied to his Western relatives in Rome even though she was still living in her own palace. Judging from Leo's words in his reply letter (Pulcheria's letter is not extant), it had been a fairly non-committal message.[59] Theodosius himself rejected the idea of a new council to review Flavian's case and it does not seem that Pulcheria tried to cross his purpose. The first surviving letter we have from Pulcheria is her 'twin' letter with Marcian and it addresses Leo as if she was writing to him for the first time (she acknowledges a letter from Leo, through which 'we have come to know that your faith is pure').[60] If Pulcheria's views dissented from those of Theodosius or indeed Marcian her letters do not show this, which further suggests their letters were composed together.

Alongside formats and timings, many of the letters' style should also caution us against a hasty attribution of the writing process to the women who appear as their senders. Recent research into the characteristics of ancient female language has shown

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that it is difficult to identify ‘real’ features of ancient female speech since sources predominantly consist of written texts and, in addition, were usually written by men. Yet, we can gain a very clear understanding of ancient male beliefs about how women expressed or ought to express themselves. Both Greek and Roman authors reflected on gender-specific language to a high degree. These reflections were surprisingly stable throughout the ancient period and lasted into the medieval period.[61] They encompassed ideas that women were loquacious, that they were prone to phrases of affection, compassion and emotion, including expressions of grief, self-pity and lament, that their language tended to be deferential, flattering or coaxing, that they used titles and kinship terms more often than men, as well as certain grammatical features such as personal pronouns and possessive pronouns (*meus*, *tuus*).[62] Of course, these ancient observations may well reflect real gender-specific traits of speech. However, scholars have warned that where such features appear in an accumulative fashion in ancient texts, and particularly in texts that were also meant to be publicly performed, it is more likely that they are indicators of an artificial construction of a female voice.[63]

When we think back in particular to the female letters written in the context of ‘multiple communication’, letters also probably destined for public performance, we can see that they certainly accumulate the described linguistic features. Most of these letters were longer than their male counterparts’, as well as more dramatic, more polite or deferential and more emotional, written in the first person singular, making reference to specific female identities, in particular motherhood, to the affections underlying real or invented family relationships, and to female grief. While it is these gendered features that have induced some scholars to attribute the letters to female authorship, in light of the insights from linguistic scholarship just described I would argue that they may actually be counted as additional evidence against such a conclusion. This is also supported by contemporary papyri documents from Egypt, the place from which most of our examples of female writing in the late Roman Empire derive. This evidence shows that where women wrote letters themselves or dictated them to a scribe these were rarely gendered, that is, rarely differed from those written by men. Such unmediated letters were usually brief and sober, or, depending on the context, even curt. It is only in contexts in Roman Egypt where the process of letter-writing had been entrusted to a professional scribe that literary conventions appear, including gendered tropes such as the famous allusion to ‘female weakness’ that we frequently find in female legal petitions. What may sound like a ‘female voice’ in these letters was hence a rhetorical strategy of persuasion.[64] Of course, these letters, with their usually rather domestic or mundane concerns of a middling landowning class, are not directly comparable to imperial and royal letters. It is however remarkable that female letters from Roman Egypt which deal with official business, and address more vertical relationships with government representatives, incorporate female modes of expression not dissimilar to the letters surveyed in this article. This suggests that in both incidents the letter writers drew on a common understanding of gendered behaviour, and gendered discourse.

It is therefore reasonable to think that much effort had gone into making the content of royal and imperial female letters conform to what was thought to be a particular female style of expression. The fact that some of the letters – Galla Placidia’s letter to Pulcheria, Pulcheria’s twin letters to the ascetics in Palestine, Amalasuentha’s letters to emperor and senate – do not fit this model does not contradict this conclusion.

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Ancient authors were acutely aware of the inequalities of power that structured social contexts of communication and that these could be unrelated to gender. Women were not expected to address social inferiors or equals, whether male or female, submissively or with flattery, so it is no surprise that the letters of a senior *augusta* to her niece, or the letters of an empress to troublesome monks and nuns within their realm, did not contain such gendered features.[65] As for Amalasuentha, it has already been shown that her and Theodahad's letters deliberately inverted gender stereotypes. It is Theodahad's letters, longer than Amalasuentha's, more loquacious and more submissive, that fit the 'female' register described above. None of this, then, is evidence against the assumption that all these letters were still written at a central location at the imperial or royal courts, by writers who had a unified vision of the message the letters were supposed to convey together with their male counterparts at point of usually public delivery. These writers hence 'masqueraded' as women, drawing, where they explicitly gendered the content, on mutually agreed and conventional cultural norms on how women felt, behaved and spoke.

In some cases, of course, we think we know who these men were, because, as we have seen, female letters have been transmitted under male authors' names (Cassiodorus, Venantius Fortunatus). Where this has not been the case – which is generally true for the late Roman imperial context, where control over court propaganda was perhaps tighter than in the post-Roman world – it is far more difficult to reconstruct the writing process. According to the *Notitia Dignitatum,* a fifth-century list of imperial offices, the imperial bureaucracy had an 'office for letter-writing' (*scrinium epistolarum*), including correspondence with foreign powers, subordinated to the 'Master of Offices' (*magister officiorum*).[66] Yet, diplomatic letters and government announcements are also sometimes understood to have been written by the *quaestor sacri palatii*, for example Honorius's letters pertaining to the schism in Rome in 418–420.[67] In this case, the man in question remains anonymous, but, if we believe that political letters were written by the *quaestor*, prosopographical data may help us to identify another of the authors of our 'female' letters. The letters of the Western imperial family in February 450 regarding the case of Flavian of Constantinople may in fact have been written by Valentinian III's *quaestor*, possibly a Roman senator called Boethius, who also drafted at least ten of this emperor's laws between June 449 and April 452 and who was, as Tony Honoré puts it, 'from a literary point of view the most accomplished draftsman of (Valentinian's) reign'.[68] Honoré further comments on this man's Christian faith and his predilection for 'literary ornament' and 'highly-coloured rhetoric', which would go well with the elaborate and dramatic unfolding of the imperial request to Theodosius II through a series of male and female letters. Yet, Boethius's examples of writing, the imperial laws, are of a very different genre, which makes direct stylistic comparison difficult.

Trying to establish our anonymous letter-writers' identity based on an understanding of formal court procedure may, however, be futile for there was probably little formality at the late antique courts when it came to the drafting of letters. For example, Theodosius's replies rejecting his Western relatives' request of a new council in the spring of 450 seem to have been written, or rather dictated, by his chamberlain Chrysaphius, Bishop Flavian's enemy.[69] Given that the Western relatives' letters themselves were sent together with a letter of Bishop Leo of Rome, they may also well have been drafted by members of the ecclesiastical bureaucracy, rather than the

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imperial. In Ostrogothic Italy, Cassiodorus wrote letters for the kings as *quaestor,* but, as he himself tells us in the preface to the *Variae*, due to his recognised rhetorical skills being superior to that of the actual office holder, was often asked to step in for the *quaestor* while holding other posts, including, at the time of Amalasuentha, as Praetorian Prefect.[70] This sort of deputising may have been frequent. We only know about it in Cassiodorus' case because he afterwards chose to publish the letters under his own name. Venantius Fortunatus, most probably the composer of Radegund's letters, does not seem to have held any formal role within the Merovingian kingdom of Metz other than being occasionally invited to perform his poetry at ceremonial court events.[71]

Emperors and kings may hence have shown quite a flexible attitude regarding who they would draw upon to draft their and their women's letters. Yet, what most of these drafters must have had in common, and what must have been seen as a prerequisite for the job, also or perhaps particularly in the post-Roman world, was a classical literary education. Rather than undermining this notion, the ability to adopt a 'female voice' is a case in point: in the grammar schools of late antiquity the impersonation of women was a key part of an aspiring boy's literary training. Augustine, later Bishop of Hippo but initially set up by his parents for a career in the imperial bureaucracy, describes such exercises in his *Confessions* (written *c.* 400 CE). He recalls a contest in his school class to make up a speech of the Goddess Juno, pained at the thought of the Trojan hero Aeneas sailing to Italy, which was to be won by the boy 'who best expressed feelings of grief and anger'. Other such exercises, called 'pathetical *ethopoeia'*, included appropriating the voice of human heroines, such as Dido, Medea or Hecuba, as we know from Augustine's contemporary, the rhetorician Aphthonius.[72] From late antiquity also derive some of the most outspoken reflections on gender-specific language, those of the Grammarian Donatus, whose writings remained fundamental well into the Middle Ages. Donatus may have been the tutor of the influential Christian writer Jerome, who, in turn, also may have written letters under the name of women.[73]

Female *ethopoeiae* had always been part of a literary education in antiquity. They were at the foundation of acclaimed forms of poetry, such as Ovid's *Heroides* which profoundly influenced, for example, Venantius Fortunatus's writing of Radegund's letters and beyond.[74] Due to the underlying conventional ideas about gendered behaviour, such arguing of 'the woman's side' also helped to cement traditional beliefs about the natural order of society in the young men of the elite.[75] Yet, in the Roman school class, the impersonation of a female voice also served a very practical purpose. As Manfred Kraus has argued, it provided a safe space, beyond accusations of 'femininity', for adolescent boys to practise how to invoke emotions and empathy in a listener, an invaluable skill in legal and political oratory, which for centuries were prominent fields of action of the Roman elite's offspring.[76] In late antiquity, the school of the Grammarian and then the Rhetoric teacher also provided training for entry into the much enlarged imperial service, that is, for flawless execution of the various forms of imperial representation, such as panegyrics (praise speeches), the drafting of laws and of letters.[77] To be able to voice the 'empress's side' may have become increasingly important in this context, since, as has been shown recently, over the course of the fifth and early sixth century, the position of imperial women within this representation drastically changed.

This change in the representation of imperial women has so far been most systematically discussed with reference to imperial iconography.[78] The official image of the

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late antique empress (usually the emperor's wife, but occasionally an imperial mother, as in Placidia's case, or sister, as in Pulcheria's) notably transformed from explicit expression of her feminity or even divinity to one of more formal, earthly authority shared with the emperor. While this transformation had already begun in the fourth century, its acceleration can be linked in particular to the Theodosian dynasty (379–457). This was due to a combination of dynastic and structural factors at this time: a series of child emperors (Honorius, Arcadius, Theodosius II, Valentinian III) and hence female imperial figureheads, the previously itinerant imperial courts becoming stationary at Ravenna/Rome and Constantinople, which promoted the significance of the imperial household, and an increasing link between imperial authority and divine ordination by the Christian God. In addition to military victory, this Christian Empire was built around 'spectacular piety' and orthodoxy, as expressed through Christian lifestyles (asceticism, religious charity) accessible to and expected of both leading men and women.[79] On official imperial artwork, coinage, mosaic decorations or ivory diptychs (coverings of wax notebooks, used as expensive imperial gifts), the empress now came to be visualised with imperial attributes of power, the imperial purple (*paludamentum*), the crowning hand of God, a sceptre, a globe, a throne.[80] Increasingly, the partnership of emperor and empress was also expressed by showing them side by side. In the fifth century, this was still confined to coins commemorating imperial weddings (of Valentinian III and Licinia Eudoxia, of Pulcheria and Marcian). In the sixth century, however, with the trend firmly established, we see emperor and empress represented together in a more timeless and hence constitutive fashion: on the famous mosaic panels of Theodora and Justinian in St Vitale in Ravenna, their representation on the (now lost) Chalke gate in Constantinople and other city gates, or on coins minted by Justinian's successor Justin II, which showed himself and his wife Sophia carrying a globe or each holding an insignium of power. Significantly, this iconographic development was copied in the post-Roman kingdoms. Amalasuentha and her son Athalaric appear as a ruling couple on a consular diptych from Ostrogothic Italy, as already emperor Anastasius and his wife Ariadne had done on Eastern Roman consular diptychs earlier in the sixth century.[81]

It is not too far-fetched to see our letters, and in particular the 'twin' letters, as directly linked to this artistic development. The close dialogue of written word and visual arts in late antiquity is well known. Even in non-imperial contexts, the latters' distinctive decorative and manneristic qualities had a strong influence on stylistic composition of writing, endlessly taught in the late antique schools, which shows a predilection for parallelism, contrasts and enumeration, emphasising slight variation within a uniform whole.[82] Our letters, almost certainly to be performed publicly in sequence, each being a distinct compositional unit and indeed physical object, providing a variation of the same theme, often typical of the gender of the writer, fit this model perfectly. They are strongly reminiscent of the two mosaic panels of Justinian and Theodora in the apse of St Vitale, which oppose each other but through this contrast emphasise the different attributes emperor and empress (and their respective male and female entourages) bring to the same imperial, divinely ordained project.[83] Yet, imperial texts and visual arts also shared a common aesthetic with a third dimension, court ceremonial, which, in late antiquity, also became increasingly formalised and schematic. As has been much discussed, this is reflected in the nature of late antique panegyrics (formal praise speeches), whose compositional style drew on physical art forms but also the material

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surroundings of the occasion, alluding to what the audience, at that moment in time, saw and experienced.[84] Increasingly, late antique panegyrists also invoked the partnership of emperor and empress. In his *epithalamium* (wedding speech) on the emperor Honorius and his wife Maria in 398, Claudian called the young bride *consors imperii* ('sharing the empire').[85] Claudian and others were echoed by panegyrists at the post-Roman courts. In 580, Venantius Fortunatus delivered a panegyric on Sigibert's brother Chilperic, where he described Chilperic's wife Fredegund as 'participant' (*participata*) of the king's reign and 'ruling together with (him)' (*pariter tecum moderante*).[86] These panegyrists were undoubtedly in dialogue with the visual parity of emperor and empress, or king and queen, presented by iconography, but also expressed in court ritual and acclamations, popular expressions uttered at ceremonial events.[87] Those directing letters to courts were equally catching up on the ceremonial requirement for twin addresses. For example, Gregory the Great (d. 604), bishop of Rome and another man well versed in classical literacy and late Roman diplomatic etiquette, wrote 'twin' letters to royal couples in Lombard Italy and in Anglo-Saxon Britain, which were almost certainly also declaimed to them upon arrival of the messenger.[88] Our letters, written by men of a similar educational background, hence emerged from and were part of a strong triangular discursive context of art, speech and ceremony.

What this means is that the female letters studied in this article may have been a historically specific and distinctively late antique art form and that the absence of similar letters from the earlier empire is not a coincidence. Gendering imperial and royal letters certainly fulfilled traditional rhetorical aims of such endeavours. Contrasting it with female language served to emphasise the masculinity expected of the emperor's or king's (or Amalasuentha's) language, which was supposed to be brief, sober, moderate and vigorous.[89] It was also a conventional ancient literary technique to use women, and female emotion, to humanise and personalise male rule, or to voice uneasiness about the abuse of power safely (or, to ridicule men by assigning female traits to their speech, as in Theodahad's case).[90] This may explain why we often only find actual names of individuals and places involved in the events addressed – specifics that bore the dangers of raising offence of those named and placed – in some of our female letters. It is no surprise that such letters usually derive from contexts that are trying to ease a petition. Yet, in light of the discussed visibility of imperial and also some royal women, the heightened formality of their position and their association with particular areas of self-representation, above all Christian piety, perhaps simply commanded their inclusion in correspondence, particularly that which sought to transmit an impression of court harmony. This is not to say that women were always incorporated in such business, but particularly so where such impression was at stake, which was perhaps especially the case where women had been written to and petitioned previously.

Conclusions

In his magisterial *A Greek Roman Empire*, Fergus Millar writes that Galla Placidia's letter to Pulcheria from February 450 is 'the only example from Classical antiquity of a letter from a woman to a woman on a major matter of policy.'[91] While it is of course debatable what can be dated to 'Classical antiquity' or what we can call a 'major matter of policy', the present study shows that, at least in late antiquity, women writing to other women, or indeed to men, on matters of political business were not as unusual

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as they may first appear. While this is remarkable in itself, the evidence investigated here holds further, significant methodological insights for ancient and early medieval historians of gender generally, and insights into the workings of imperial and royal courts for historians of late antiquity specifically.

In terms of method, we cannot reduce the writing of any of these letters to a situation of just two individuals conversing privately in written form. All letters investigated here served a court agenda from which the entire imperial or royal household was meant to benefit: to promote and perform the unity, stability, education and piety of a realm's centre. Male and female letters supported this unified aim, albeit in different ways. As such, we have to question the level of control women had over the content and style of a letter as much as we question the control they had over their image.[92] Furthermore, in a world where letter-writing involved a range of communicative situations, from the drafting in court chanceries, with their scribes and copyists, to oral public delivery by ambassadors, it is methodologically very difficult to identify an authentic 'female voice' in these letters. Features that have been seen as a 'give-away', such as the gendering of language and style, can in fact mean the exact opposite when we consider how well-educated men of the time understood the poetic, theatrical and rhetorical value of adopting a 'female' register. This is not to say that the women who appear as letter writers in this article had nothing to do with their letters at all. It is hard to believe that those in whose names they were written did not approve particularly the letters that publicly expressed deep emotions, such as grief.[93] What the letters then invite us to do is to rethink our understanding of the female 'author' in this period. Women were certainly involved in letter-writing processes, although to what degree may have varied considerably, as the papyri evidence from Roman Egypt also shows. Yet, most letter-writing processes, and certainly at this highest government level, were collective events. Authorship in this period was a multi-layered concept, of which women could only claim a part, even though we should not forget that it was ultimately the lending of an imperial or royal woman's name to a letter that provided it with authority.[94] Incidentally, this is also true for the men who appear as letter writers. As Linda Olson has so elegantly argued with regard to medieval female writing, 'we constantly make the women we study bear an extra burden of proof, but we should bring the same questions to [men]'.[95]

In terms of the nature of the imperial and royal courts of the fifth and sixth centuries more specifically, these letters, and the 'twin' letters in particular, mirror the changes in late-antique iconography and ceremony, with the imperial or royal couple appearing as co-rulers but covering different fields of competence. As a result, by comparison with classical antiquity and still in the fourth century, women of some fifth- and sixth-century ruling dynasties were immensely visible. Perhaps not coincidentally, that earlier period has not left us any letters by Roman empresses either. In the case of imperial women, this visibility was a consequence of the combined rise of Christianity and of the stationary court since the late fourth century, which meant that the conduct of the imperial household, in particular with regard to Christian orthodoxy and piety (and increasingly less so with regard to reproduction), became as much a legitimising force as military success. Imperial women, even if they did not reproduce, were hence strongly integrated into the imperial project and the projection of its public image. Yet, most recent research has shown that this increase in visibility, particularly in the fifth century, developed largely within male and court defined norms that sought to exploit the stabilising and

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consensus building qualities of female piety in the public sphere, especially in relation to newly emerging groups of legitimising force: urban crowds, bishops and ascetics (the latter, perhaps not coincidentally, often among the correspondents of their letters). For example, as Anja Busch has shown, Theodosian imperial women appear as frequent addressees of petitions, but in each case the emperor's approval was needed to give in to such demands.[96] Even with regard to church building, an activity that has often been interpreted as a fairly unmediated expression of power, recent scholars have shown that it quickly became an expected duty of imperial women.[97] The amount of freedom church building bestowed is at least questionable.[98] This study has shown that we need to interpret imperial women's letters in the same light: just like patronage and church building, letter writing was a female activity that was promoted, but determined by court rules and worked for the collective good of the dynasty. It would hence be naïve to think that, even if an imperial woman in question had to give her final approval to a letter, it expressed her 'real' sentiments, or that a letter gave her the sole power to innovate on court politics.

Nonetheless, as Jill Harries has noted, imperial women may have found this working for the collective good of the dynasty empowering rather than inhibiting.[99] It certainly opened up new fields of activity for imperial women, such as asceticism, Christian church foundation, but also putting their names to imperial letters. Neither was a consequence of totally independent decisions but allowed for the establishment of new patronage networks and the increase of prestige. It hence aided the institutionalisation of imperial women's position, as is so well reflected in fifth- and sixth-century iconography. When times were propitious, this may have also opened more concrete windows of opportunity for the exercising of real political power. Perhaps this was particularly so in the less-well-established post-Roman courts of the sixth century, as in the case of the Ostrogothic Amalasuentha, where there was 'scope for women to take full political advantage of an openly negotiable political system'.[100] Yet, Amalasuentha, as we have seen, already mirrored the Roman Pulcheria from eighty years earlier in both actions and self-representation.

In this regard, it is perhaps not surprising that the only surviving letter from a late antique imperial or royal woman that seems to have been sent independently from that of a man is a letter of Pulcheria to Strategios, the governor of Bithynia. The letter ordered the governor to expel turbulent clerics, monks and laymen from the city of Nicaea, where Marcian had first called the council to review the deposition of Flavian of Constantinople (it was later transferred to Chalcedon). This letter is undated, but probably was sent in early September 451. As the rest of Pulcheria's letters it is preserved in Greek. It may have been written while Marcian was on campaign in Illyria. Apart from the sender, it is almost indistinguishable in style from other imperial 'administrative letters' contained in late antique legal collections. The order of expulsion draws on the imperial power of *coercitio* (establishment of law and order without a formal judicial process) and the letter crucially threatens the governor (in the Greek version; any expelled individual in the Latin version) with punishment upon non-compliance. This is hence an extraordinary letter, showing Pulcheria as a legal authority, which so far has not received the attention it deserves.[101] Of all the letters discussed here, this is the only one to give us a glimpse of a late antique woman exercising political power directly. Like all imperial laws, Pulcheria's directive must have been the outcome of yet another collective court-based process of drafting and

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imperial approval.[102] But it should not go unnoticed that when, but only when, it was in the empire's interest that it be so, the sole voice of an empress could be framed as the voice of authority.

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Notes

1. Anthologies of female writing covering the ancient period (e.g. I. M. Plant (ed.) *Women Writers of Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: Equinox, 2004)) do not take these texts into consideration. Those focusing on the medieval period consider some of the letters written by 'Barbarian' queens: e.g. M. Thiebaux, *The Writings of Medieval Women* (New York: Garland, 1987) includes letters from Radegund and Amalasuentha; L. J. Churchill et al. (eds), *Women Writing Latin*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2002) includes Radegund's letters, as does J. McNamara et al. (eds), *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992). The website *Medieval Women's Latin Letters* (https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/) has Radegund's and Brunhild's letters.
2. For references see notes 11, 12, 15 below.
3. A. Gillett, 'Love and Grief in Post-Imperial Diplomacy: The Letters of Brunhild', in B. Sidwell and D. Dzino (eds), *Power and Emotions in the Roman World and Late Antiquity* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2010), pp. 127–65; A. Gillett, '"Advise the Emperor Beneficially": Lateral Communication in Diplomatic Embassies Between the Post-Imperial West and Byzantium', in A. Becker, and N. Dorcourt (eds), *Ambassadeurs et ambassades au cœur de relations diplomatiques. Rome, Occident Médiéval, Byzance (VIIIe s. avant J.-C. – XIIe s. après J.-C.)* (Metz: Centre Régional Universitaire Lorraine d'Histoire site de Metz, 2012), pp. 257–85.
4. On these conventions see A. Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411–533* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 26–7 and further below.
5. R. Cribiore, 'Windows on a Woman's World: Some Letters from Roman Egypt', in A. Lardinois and L. McClure (eds), *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 223–39.
6. On the medieval concept of 'consors regni' see P. Delogu, 'Consors Regni. Un problema carolingio', *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 76 (1964), pp. 47–98; P. Stafford, 'Powerful Women in the Early Middle Ages: Queens and Abbesses', in J. Nelson and P. Linehan (eds), *The Medieval World* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 398–415. See also M. C. La Rocca, '*Consors regni*: A Problem of Gender? The Consortium Between Amalasuntha and Theodahad in 534', in J. Nelson et al. (eds), *Gender and Historiography. Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), pp. 127–43, which will be discussed further below.
7. For a discussion of the reasons why these and other female letters were preserved by compilers of late antique letter collections see J. Hillner, 'Preserving Female Voices: Female Letters in Late Antique Letter Collections', in R. Lizzi and G. Marconi (eds), *A Late Antique Experiment in Roman-Canon Law. The Collectio Avellana and its Revivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019, pp. 210–244).
8. J. Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets. Language, Gender and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 87–8 discusses Radegund and on pp. 62–3 briefly mentions imperial female letter writing, but, perhaps symptomatically, gets some of the writers' names wrong (e.g. Euphemia is called Anastasia).
9. A. Becker-Piriou, 'De Galla Placidia à Amalasonthe, des femmes dans la diplomatie romano-barbare en Occident?', *Revue Historique* 310 (2008), pp. 507–43.

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10. The life of Anicia Iuliana, for example, has been extensively researched in recent years, but these endeavours have virtually ignored her letters; for an overview of the scholarship see J. Hillner, 'Anicia Iuliana and the Collectio Avellana: What Difference Do Her Letters Make?', in A. Evers (ed.), *Emperors, Bishops, Senators: The Evidence of the Collectio Avellana* (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming).
11. H. Sivan, *Galla Placidia. The Last Roman Empress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 18 (on the letters dated to 419) and pp.138–41 (on the letters dated 450); J. E. Salisbury, *Rome's Christian Empress. Galla Placidia Rules at the Twilight of the Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), p. 127 (on the letters dated 419).
12. See, for example, K. Cherewatuk, 'Radegund and the Epistolary Tradition', in K. Cherewatuk and U. Wiethaus (eds), *Dear Sister. Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 20–45.
13. See M. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow. The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), p. 284, with a summary of the debate and references at n. 93.
14. On the historical background see K. Cooper, 'The Heroine and the Historian: Procopius of Caesarea on the Troubled Reign of Queen Amalasuentha', in J. Arnold et al. (eds), *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 296–315.
15. A rare exception is Thiebaux, *Writing*, pp. 71–84, although she, in turn, does not problematise what ascribing the letter to Amalasuentha means with respect to its transmission under Cassiodorus' name. For firm attribution of the letters to Cassiodorus see e.g. La Rocca, '*Consors regni*', pp.127–43.
16. Note that Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum*, 9.42, ed. B. Krusch, W. Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* 1.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1937) includes yet another of Radegund's letters. This letter was, however, written in Radegund's capacity as monastic founder, rather than as a member of one or more royal families. It is therefore excluded from this study.
17. On the poems being part of Radegund's relic petition see L. Jones, 'Perceptions of Byzantium: Radegund of Poitiers and Relics of the True Cross', in L. Jones (ed.), *Byzantine Images and Their Afterlives. Essays in Honour of Annemarie Weyl Carr* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 105–24, here p. 117. For Radegund's letters forming part of Sigibert's embassy see M. Widdowson, 'Merovingian Partitions: A "Genealogical Charter"?', *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), pp. 1–22, here pp. 13–14. On the substitution of letters: J. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 111 n. 1 and p. 116 n. 21. J. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), Amalafridas, pp. 50–1 argues that Amalfrid visited Radegund in Poitiers after receipt of the letter. This would mean that the letter to Artachius was written on a different occasion, but the evidence is inconclusive.
18. Gillett, '"Advise the Emperor"', pp. 257–85. See C. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster. Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 19 for the phrase.
19. See *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum,* ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1933–5), ACO 2.1.1, xiii-xiv. The letters were then retranslated back into Latin in the sixth century, so both Latin and Greek versions survive.
20. I refer readers to the Appendix for references to the specific letters and letter batches analysed in the remainder of the article.
21. For background see S. Loseby, 'Gregory of Tours, Italy and the Eastern Empire', in A. C. Murray (ed.), *A Companion to Gregory of Tours* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 462–97.
22. Gillett, 'Love and Grief', pp. 127–65.
23. Ven. Fort. App. Carm. 1, line 75–8: *quem volo nec video, pinxisset epistula vultum / aut loca quem retrahunt ferret imago virum: / qua virtute atavos repares, qua laude propinquos, / ceu patre de pulchro ludit in ore rubor.* See also Gillett, 'Love and Grief', pp. 156–7.
24. See also George, *Venantius Fortunatus*, p. 116 n. 21: 'Amalfrid was probably the least of the audience this poem was intended for'.
25. For background see S. Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 261–3.
26. Sivan, *Galla Placidia*, pp. 138–41, although see also Salisbury, *Rome's Christian Empress*, p. 192 who finds Galla not as committed and M. Dirschlmayer, *Kirchenstiftungen römischer Kaiserinnen vom 4. bis zum 6. Jahrhundert. Die Erschließung neuer Handlungsspielräume* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2015), p. 89, who notes Galla's more emotional tone, but does not find her more prominent than the other letter writers.
27. Leo, ep. 44 (ACO 2.4).
28. See also A. Busch, *Die Frauen der Theodosianischen Dynastie. Macht und Repräsentation kaiserlicher Frauen im 5. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2013), p. 124.

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29. K. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 196.
30. J. Moorhead, '"Papa" as Bishop of Rome', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), pp. 337–50. Note, however, that another letter attributed to Placidia (CA ep. 27), to Aurelian, speaks about the bishop of Rome as 'papa'. According to Sivan, *Galla Placidia*, p. 100, this shows the letter to Pulcheria was written by Placidia herself, but it may equally be that the phrasing was concurrent in the imperial chancellery, especially since an imperial law (CTh 16.5.62) issued from Thessalonika just after Valentinian III's coronation in 425 also uses it.
31. See Hillner, 'Preserving Female Voices'.
32. Cass. Var. 10.10: 'unity is not only for those present: those see each other better who join each other through the charity of their heart' (*Concordia non est sola praesentium: illi se melius respiciunt, qui animi caritate se coniungunt*).
33. Cass. Var. 10.22: 'the faith that your heart gives us will be copiously multiplied' (*fiducia, quae nobis de animo vestro data est, uberius augeatur*).
34. For this reason and the described public nature of diplomatic letter writing, it is also doubtful whether Theodahad's and Gudelina's letters to Theodora made allusions to the murder of Amalasuentha, as sometimes thought (for the debate see M. Vitiello, *Theodahad: A Platonic King at the Collapse of Ostrogothic Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 108–09). See also Gillett, *Envoys*, pp. 182–4.
35. On the background of the Acacian schism see W. H. C. Frend, 'Eastern Attitudes to Rome during the Acacian Schism', *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976), pp. 69–81.
36. On the aims and activities of the embassy see C. Sotinel, 'Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: the Western View', in M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 267–290, here pp. 270–2.
37. CA, ep. 194: *quem etenim non solum apostolicae sedis auctoritas celebrat sed vitae quoque commendat integritas et studiosa rectae fidei sollertia, huius verba quis non libentissimis suscipiet auribus?* 'How can we not with most grateful ears accept the words of who not only the authority of the apostolic see celebrates but whose integrity of life commends him and the studious expertness of the right faith?'
38. On Euphemia see H. Leppin, *Justinian. Das christliche Experiment* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011), pp. 54–8.
39. As also suspected by E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), p. 175.
40. T. Honoré, *Tribonian* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 231 suggests that her letter, like that of Justin and Justinian, was written by the *quaestor* Proculus; on the *quaestor* as letter writer see also further below.
41. La Rocca, '*Consors regni*', pp. 135–41.
42. See e.g. Julian's panegyric on the empress Eusebia: Julian, *Or*. 3.114C, ed. W. Wright (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913).
43. Vitiello, *Theodahad*, pp. 63–79.
44. La Rocca, '*Consors regni*', p. 143.
45. The imperial model has been noted by Vitiello, *Theodahad*, p. 63, although he thinks that it was established by Justinian and Theodora, but see H. Leppin, 'Kaiserliche Kohabitation: Von der Normalität Theodoras', in C. Kunst and U. Riemer (eds), *Grenzen der Macht: zur Rolle der römischen Kaiserfrauen* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), pp. 75–85 on why here as elsewhere Theodora's representation may have been more conventional than sometimes thought.
46. M. Gaddis and R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 87.
47. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, p. 209.
48. Seizing Jerusalem, killing a deacon and dragging his body around, burning houses, shutting the city gates, manning the city walls, releasing dangerous prisoners, planning to kill bishop Juvenal and clerics, but instead killing Severan of Scythopolis, torturing noble women.
49. A. Grillmayer, *Christ in Christian Tradition,* vol. 2.1 tr. P. Allen (London: Mowbray, 1987), pp. 98–105. Juvenal's letter is ACO 2.5 n. 4.
50. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, p. 225.
51. For background see P. Norton, *Episcopal Elections 250–600. Hierarchy and Popular Will in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 65.
52. Even though the sixth-century collection containing these letters, the *Collectio Avellana*, labels them as *epistolae principis* ('letters of the emperor'), the letter writer identifies the emperor as 'my lord and

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brother, the august emperor' (*dominus germanus meus augustus princeps*) in both (epp. 27, 28), suggesting that the author was Placidia.

53. The quote is from D. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola. Life, Letters and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 255. For Placidia in Nola see S. I. Oost, *Galla Placidia Augusta. A Biographical Essay* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 158–9, 167–8. Salisbury, *Rome's Christian Empress*, p. 127 repeats this speculation.
54. Sivan, *Galla Placidia*, p. 73. See also Oost, *Galla Placidia*, pp. 159–60; Busch, *Die Frauen,* pp. 93–4.
55. Salisbury, *Rome's Christian Empress*, p. 126.
56. CA ep. 25: *postpositis omnibus* ; ep. 26: *amputatis excusationibus*; ep. 27: *intermissis omnibus*; ep. 28: *sine excusatione*.
57. Salisbury, *Rome's Christian Empress*, p. 127. It should also be noted that the letter clearly states that Paulinus had been invited before to a synod at Ravenna and declined due to illness, so it would not be fair to say that Placidia only now had the 'ingenious' idea to invite him to avoid 'the admission of failure' (Sivan, *Galla Placidia*, p. 78).
58. Leo first wrote to Pulcheria on 13 June 449 (twice on the same day), Leo ep. 30/ep. 31 (ACO 2.4). After the council of Ephesus Leo wrote to Pulcheria again, on 13 Oct 449, also sending a copy of one of the previous letters: Leo ep. 45.
59. Leo ep. 60 (ACO 2.4). Leo explains that Pulcheria's letters show how much she values the Catholic faith and detests heresy, but makes no mention of her opinion on a council or Flavian's deposition.
60. ACO 2.1.1, ep. 9. pp. 9–10: δι ὧν τὴν πίστιν καθαρῶς, καὶ τοιαυτήν ἐπέγνωμεν.
61. On the early Middle Ages see J. Nelson, 'Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages', in J. Nelson, *The Frankish World, 750–900* (London: Hambledon, 1996), pp. 199–221.
62. M. E. Gilleland, 'Female Speech in Greek and Latin', *American Journal of Philology* 101 (1980), pp. 180–3; J. Adams, 'Female Speech in Latin Comedy', *Antichthon* 18 (1984), pp. 43–77; L. McClure, 'Introduction', in Lardinois and McClure (eds), *Making Silence Speak*, pp. 3–7; M. Griffiths, 'Antigone and her Sister(s): Embodying Women in Greek Tragedy', in Lardinois and McClure (eds), *Making Silence Speak*, pp. 117–36; J. Adams, 'Neglected Evidence for Female Speech in Latin', *Classical Quarterly* 55 (2005), pp. 582–96, here p. 582; D. Dutsch, *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy. On Echoes and Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 187–226; T. Fögen, 'Female Speech', in E. Bakker (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 318–24; P. Kruschwitz, 'Language, Sex and (Lack of) Power: Reassessing the Linguistic Discourse About Female Speech in Latin Sources', *Athenaeum* 100 (2012), pp. 197–229; J. Clackson, 'The Social Dialects of Latin', in J. Clackson (ed), *A Companion to the Latin Language* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 505–10; J. Clackson, *Language and Society in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 124–6.
63. Adams, 'Female Speech', p. 76; Clackson, 'Social Dialects', p. 509.
64. R. Bagnall and R. Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300BC–800AD* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 6–8, 56–7. On the trope of 'female weakness' see J. Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 51–5.
65. Adams, 'Female Speech', p. 44; Kruschwitz, 'Language', pp. 204–05; Fögen, 'Female Speech, p. 315.
66. *Notitia Dignitatum*, Pars Occ. 9, Pars Orient. 11, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin: Weidmann, 1876). For an overview of the imperial bureaucracy see J. Martin, *Spätantike und Völkerwanderung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), pp. 85–93.
67. T. Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire, 379–455AD. The Theodosian Dynasty and its Quaestors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 245. Honoré only includes CA epp. 25 (to Paulinus of Nola) and 26 (to the African bishops) in his discussion. Following the argument laid out above, we must assume that the same person also wrote epp. 27 and 28. See also n. 40.
68. Honoré, *Law*, p. 272.
69. On Chrysaphius dictating see Theodorus Anagnostes, *Epit*. 350, ed. G. C. Hansen (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971), p. 99. On the 'fluidity, or flexibility, of function' of different officials at the Theodosian court see also F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II, 408–450* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 197.
70. Cass. Var. praef. 7. For Cassiodorus' career see J. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Fl. Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator 4, pp. 265–9. The ability to assume someone else's personality is mentioned as the *quaestor's* most important quality in Cassiodorus' formula for the appointment to the post (Cass. Var. 6.5).
71. George, *Venantius Fortunatus*, xix–xxi.

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72. Augustine, *Confessiones* 1.17, ed. P. Knöll (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1896; CSEL 33): *in quo ... irae ac doloris similior affectus eminebat*; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 11: ΠΡΟΣ ΗΘΟΠΟΙΙΑΣ, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1926); see N. May, 'A Rhetorical Redemption: Dido in the Classroom from Late Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century', *Discentes* 4 (2016), pp. 16–24, here pp. 16–19; S. Ashbrook Harvey, 'Spoken Words, Voiced Silence: Biblical Women in the Syriac Tradition', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001), pp. 105–31, here pp. 108–09. See also A. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 7, who more generally discusses techniques of impersonation taught in ancient schools and stresses the close relationship between the training in speech and letter-writing in ancient education.
73. On Donatus see Dutsch, *Feminine Discourses*, pp. 5–6 and passim and e.g. Don. Hec. 585.3 on female flattery: *principium hoc aliquid precantis est feminae. A blandimento ergo incipit, ut libenter audiat* ("This is the opening of a woman asking for something. She hence starts with a flattery, so that one listens favourably"). On Jerome writing letters under the name of women, J. D. N. Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings and* Controversies (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 141. The letter in question is Jer. ep. 46.
74. Roberts, *Humblest Sparrow*, pp. 317–18. On Ovid's adopting of a female voice see also S. Lindheim, *Mail and Female. Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Clackson, 'Social Dialects', p. 509.
75. See R. A. Kaster, 'Controlling Reason: Declamation in Rhetorical Education', in Y. L. Too (ed.), *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 317–37, here pp. 319–25, and E. Gunderson, *Declamation, Paternity and Roman Identity. Authority and the Rhetorical Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 194 with reference to another form of rhetorical exercise, at a more advanced stage of the education, the *Controversiae* or *Declamationes*, which saw students take sides in fantastic imaginary court cases. At times this included impersonating women.
76. M. Kraus, 'Rehearsing the Other Sex: Impersonation of Women in Ancient Classroom Ethopoeia', in J. A. Fernández Delgado, F. Pordomingo and A. Stramaglia (eds), *Escuela y Literatura en Grecia Antigua* (Cassino: Università degli Studi di Cassino, 2007), pp. 455–68, here p. 457; May, 'Rhetorical Redemption', p. 20.
77. F. S. Pedersen, 'On Professional Qualifications for Public Posts in Late Antiquity', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 31 (1970), pp. 161–214.
78. L. James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2001); A. L. McClanan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); K. Schade, *Frauen in der Spätantike – Status und Repräsentation. Eine Untersuchung zur römischen und frühbyzantinischen Bildniskunst* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2003); K. Longo, *Donne di potere nella tarda antichità. Le augustae attraverso le immagini monetali* (Reggio Calabria: Falzea, 2009); D. Angelova, *Sacred Founders. Women, Men, and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Rome Through Early Byzantium* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), pp. 183–202.
79. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*. The phrase 'spectacular piety' is from p. 228. On the background to the increased visibility of Theodosian women also Busch, *Die Frauen*. On child emperors and stationary courts M. McEvoy, 'Rome and the Transformation of the Imperial Office in the Late Fourth-Mid Fifth Centuries AD', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 78 (2010), pp. 151–92.
80. On this and the following Angelova, *Sacred Founders*, pp. 185–94.
81. La Rocca, '*Consors regni'*, 141. On Anastasius and Ariadne on consular diptychs see McClanan, *Representations*, pp. 69–82.
82. M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style. Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 66–121; see the summary at p. 118: 'there is scarcely a stylistic technique ... that does not find an analogy in the visual arts of the period. Poets looked to the visual arts for inspiration; they understood composition in visual terms'.
83. Roberts, *Jeweled Style*, pp. 89–90.
84. S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 270–1.
85. Claudian, *Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*, line 280, ed. M. Platnauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), p. 262. For similar expressions of marriage as joint rule in Greek: Julian, *Or.* 5.16–20 (as n. 42) on Eusebia and Constantius II; Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio funebris in Flaccillam imperatricem* 478.20–479.1; 488.7–8, ed. A. Spira, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) on Flaccilla and Theodosius I; John Chrysostom, *Homily* 2.3 (PG 63: 472) on Eudoxia and Arcadius. On all of these see A. Busch, 'Representatives and Co-Regnantes: Imperial Women in Late Antiquity', in

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C. Davenport and M. McEvoy (eds), *The Roman Imperial Court: Pathways from the Principate to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

86. Ven. Fort., *Carmen* 9.1. line 118, p. 125. See J. Smith, '"Carrying the Cares of the State": Gender Perspectives on Merovingian "Staatlichkeit"', in W. Pohl (ed.), *Der Frühmittelalterliche Staat: Europäische Perspektiven* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2009), pp. 236–39, here pp. 236–8, who at n. 75 also notes the similarity of Venantius Fortunatus' panegyric with one delivered by Corippus in 566/8 on Justin II and Sophia, described as *consors*. On this panegyric also Angelova, *Sacred Founders*, p. 201 and pp. 183–4 on the development of the trope of imperial *koinonia* in late antiquity generally.
87. For example, Pulcheria and Marcian were acclaimed together at the council of Chalcedon: ACO 2.1.2, 124, 12.
88. For Gregory's letters to the Lombard royal couple Theodelind and Agilulf in 598 see Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum, 9.66–7, vol. 2, in L. Hartmann (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1899), pp. 86–8. For his letters to the Anglo-Saxon royal couple Bertha and Æthelberht in 601, and the Roman bishop Boniface's twin letters to the royal couple in Northumbria, Edwin and Ethelburg, in *c*.625 see M. MacCarron, 'Royal Marriage and Conversion in Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum', *Journal of Theological Studies* 68 (2017), pp. 650–70.
89. Fögen, 'Female Speech', p. 318 on such aims of gendering language in antiquity.
90. E. Clark, 'The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of Feminist Historians after the "Linguistic Turn"', *Church History* 67 (1998), pp. 1–31, here pp. 25–6. See also McClure, 'Introduction', p. 5; and Griffiths, 'Antigone and her Sister(s)', p. 135, in McClure, *Making Silence Speak*. On ridiculing men: Kruschwitz, 'Language', p. 205.
91. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire* 69b, p. 231.
92. See J. Langford, *Maternal Megalomania. Julia Domna and the Imperial Politics of Motherhood* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 2013) for the lack of control empresses may have had over their image.
93. See Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, p. 40.
94. J. Summit, 'Women and Authorship', in C. Dinshaw and D. Wallace (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 91–108, here p. 98.
95. L. Olsen, 'Reading, Writing, and Relationships in Dialogue', in L. Olson and K. Kerby-Fulton (eds) *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 1–30, here p. 5.
96. Busch, *Die Frauen*, p. 226.
97. For interpretation of buildings as expression of power see L. James, 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave? Will the Real Byzantine Empress Please Stand Up?', in A. J. Duggan (ed), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), pp. 123–39, here p. 135; L. Brubaker, 'Memories of Helena: Patterns in Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', in L. James (ed), *Women, Men and Eunuchs. Gender in Byzantium* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 52–75.
98. Dirschlmayer, *Kirchenstiftungen*, pp. 226–32.
99. J. Harries, 'Men without Women. Theodosius' Consistory and the Business of Government', in C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II. Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), pp. 67–89, here p. 69, although note that Harries does not consider letter writing here.
100. Smith, 'Carrying', p. 239.
101. Commentators of Pulcheria's interference with law-making usually focus on Sozomen's reports for Theodosius' early years that she took swift decisions and wrote everything down (Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 9.1.5–6, in eds, J. Bidez and G. Hansen, 2nd edn, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1995)) and Philostorgius' remark that she aided Theodosius with imperial pronouncements and edited them (Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 12.7, eds, J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981)).
102. On the drafting of imperial law as another collective process see J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 38–47.

Appendix

Abbreviations used in the Appendix: ACO = E. Schwartz (ed.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1933–5); CA = O. Guenther (ed.), *Epistulae imperatorum, pontificum, aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae Avellana quae dicitur collectio*, 2 vols. (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1895–8; CSEL 35); Cass. Var. = Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. T. Mommsen, Monumenta Historiae Germanica,

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Auctores Antiquissimi, vol. 12 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1894) (Cassiodorus' *Variae* have also been edited by Å.J. Fridh, *Corpus Christianorum Scriptorum Latinorum* vol. 96 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1973), but all quotes in this article are from Mommsen's edition); Epp. Austr. = *Epistolae Austrasicae*, ed. W. Gundlach, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae 3, Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892); Ven. Fort. App. Carm. = Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica,* ed. F. Leo, Monumenta Historiae Germanica, Auctores Antiquissimi, vol. 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881).

Date	Letter/Letter Batch (imperial/royal female letters in bold)	Addressee (addressees of female letters in bold)
20 March 419	**CA, Ep. 25 Galla Placidia?**	**Paulinus of Nola**
20 March 419	CA, Ep. 26 Honorius	African bishops
	CA, Ep. 27 Galla Placidia	**Aurelius of Carthage**
	CA, Ep. 28 Galla Placidia (perhaps originally in 7 copies)	**seven African bishops**
22 February 450	ACO 2.1.1, ep. 1, p. 4 Leo	Theodosius
	ACO 2.1.1, ep. 2, p. 5 Valentinian	Theodosius
	ACO 2.1.1, ep. 3, p. 5–6 Galla Placidia	**Theodosius**
	ACO 2.1.1, ep. 4, p. 6–7 Licinia Eudoxia	**Theodosius**
No date, but probably 22 February 450	**ACO 2.1.1, ep. 14, p. 49–50 Galla Placidia**	**Pulcheria**
22 November 450	ACO 2.1.1, ep. 8, p. 8–9 Marcian	Leo
	ACO 2.1.1, ep. 9, p. 9–10 Pulcheria	**Leo**
No date, but probably early September 451	**ACO 2.1.1, ep. 15, p. 29 Pulcheria**	**Governor (consularis) of Bithynia, Strategios**
No date, but probably late 452 or early 453	ACO 2.1.3, ep. 26, p. 124–127 Marcian	Archimandrites (in Jerusalem)
	ACO 2.1.3, ep. 27, p. 127–129 Pulcheria	**Archimandrites (in Jerusalem)**
No date, but probably 453	**ACO 2.1.3, ep. 31, p. 136-136 Pulcheria**	**Abbess Bassa**
22 April 519	CA, Ep. 160 Justin	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 161 John, Bishop of Constantinople	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 162 Justinian	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 163 Pompeius	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 164 Anicia Iuliana	**Hormisdas**
	CA, Ep. 165 Anastasia	Hormisdas

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Date	Letter/Letter Batch (imperial/royal female letters in bold)	Addressee (addressees of female letters in bold)
9 July 520	CA, Ep 192 Justin	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep 194 Euphemia	**Hormisdas**
	CA, Ep. 195 Epiphanius, bishop of Constantinople	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 196 Justinian	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 197 Celer	Hormisdas
	CA, Ep. 198 Anicia Iuliana	**Hormisdas**
No date, but probably late 534	**Cass. Var. 10.1: Amalasuentha**	**Justinian**
	Cass. Var. 10.2: Theodahad	Justinian
No date, but probably late 534	**Cass. Var. 10.3: Amalasuentha**	**Senate of Rome**
	Cass. Var. 10.4: Theodahad	Senate of Rome
No date, between late 534 and April 535	**Cass. Var. 10.8: Amalasuentha**	**Justinian**
	Cass. Var. 10.9: Theodahad	Justinian
	Cass. Var. 10.10: Amalasuentha	**Theodora**
No date, but probably mid-535	Cass. Var. 10.19: Theodahad	Justinian
	Cass. Var. 10.20: Theodahad	Theodora
	Cass. Var.10.21: Gudelina	**Theodora**
No date, but probably mid-535	Cass. Var. 10.22: Theodahad	Justinian
	Cass. Var. 10.23: Theodahad	Theodora
	Cass. Var. 10.24: Gudelina	**Theodora**
No date, between 558 and 578	**Ven. Fort. Carm. App. 1: Radegund**	**Amalfrid**
No date, between 558 and 578	**Ven. Fort. Carm. App. 3: Radegund**	**Artachius**
No date, between 585 and 593	Epp. Austr. 25 Childebert	Maurice
	Epp. Austr. 26 Brunhild	**Maurice**
	Epp. Austr. 27 Brunhild	**Athanagild**
	Epp. Austr. 28 Childebert	Athanagild
	Epp. Austr. 29 Brunhild	**Anastasia**
	Epp. Austr. 30 Brunhild	**Constantina**
	Epp. Austr. 31 Childebert	John of Constantinople
	Epp. Austr. 32 Childebert	Honoratus Apocrisiarius
	Epp. Austr. 34 Childebert	Domitian of Metilene
	Epp. Austr. 35 Childebert	John, Quaestor
	Epp. Austr. 36 Childebert	Megas, Curator
	Epp. Austr. 37 Childebert	Paul
No date, probably between 585 and 593	Epp. Austr. 43 Childebert	Theodosius
	Epp. Austr. 44 Brunhild	**Constantina**
	Epp. Austr. 45 Childebert	John of Const.
	Epp. Austr. 47 Childebert	Maurice

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