The many faces of Duchess Matilda: matronage, motherhood and mediation in the twelfth century

Jasperse, T.G.

Citation for published version (APA):
The many faces of Duchess Matilda: matronage, motherhood and mediation in the twelfth century

Jitske Jasperse
The many faces of Duchess Matilda: matronage, motherhood and mediation in the twelfth century

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties ingestelde commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen
in de Aula der Universiteit
op vrijdag 6 december 2013, te 11.00 uur

door

Tjisje Geertje Jasperse

geboren te Kloosterburen
Promotiecommissie

Promotor
Prof. dr. C.A. Chavannes-Mazel

Co-promotor
Dr. W.A.W. van Welie-Vink

Overige leden
Prof. dr. J.A.A.M. Biemans
Prof. dr. G. Geltner
Prof. em. dr. J.C. Klamt
Dr. J. Koopmans
Prof. dr. J. Luckhardt
Dr. T. Martin

Faculteit der
Geesteswetenschappen
I

The Rolandslied: Matilda’s literary matronage and other responsibilities of noble women

1.1 The noble duchess, child of a mighty king: Matilda as instigator

1.1.1 Matilda as a matron of literature

1.1.2 The writer revealing his name and working method

1.1.3 The intended courtly audience of the Rolandslied

1.1.4 The influence of the matron? An emphasis on female characters

1.2 Women in the Rolandslied

1.2.1 Literary texts as sources: a social-historical approach

1.2.2 Limitations of the Rolandslied as historical source

1.3 More than a woman: consorts, widows and regents in the Rolandslied

1.3.1 Roland’s fiancée Aude as loyal and devout

1.3.2 Ganelon’s wife, more than Charlemagne’s sister: mother and regent

1.3.3 Ganelon’s wife: taking care of the hereafter

1.3.4 Queen Bramimonde: women as mediators and advisors

1.4 Conclusion: almost all the world is playing a part
Preface
Writing my PhD-thesis would have been extremely difficult without the grant of the Stichting Art, Books and Collections and the Institute of Culture and History of the University of Amsterdam. During the whole process I have considered the Art Historical Institute my home. Therefore I would like to thank my colleagues Miranda Bloem, Lex Bosman, Klara Broekhuijsen, Sanne Frequin, Marije Osnabrugge and Wouter Wagemakers, and especially my supervisor Claudine Chavannes-Mazel. All of them contributed to my research in their own way. My dear co-supervisor Wendelien van Welie deserves special mention. She has supported and stimulated me throughout the process. Both her comments and home-baked bread provided essential food for thought. The same care was given to me by Annika Rulkens who listened to all my stories, proofread my papers and kept me going. Although our research is separated by three centuries, we have stumbled upon many similar authors and accompanied each other on research trips. I would also like to thank my fellow art historian Marrigje Rikken who was always willing to give advice. I am immensely grateful that Gerd Althoff, Maaike van Berkel, Truus van Bueren, Mario Damen, Joachim Ehlers, Piet Gerbrandy, Knut Görich, Christian Klamt, Jelle Koopmans, Jochen Luckhardt and Therese Martin made useful bibliographical suggestions and were willing to discuss my thoughts and questions. Jos Biemans, Guy Geltner, Karl Heidecker, Jef Jacobs, Martine Meuwese, Anneke Mulder-Bakker, and Lucia Travaini were willing to read my texts. I want to express my sincere gratitude to them, though whatever shortcomings remain are fully my own doing. I also want to thank all of those who commented on the papers I have given in Leeds, Kalamazoo and Winchester as well as during the meetings organised by the Onderzoekschool Mediëvistiek.

On a more practical level I have benefitted from the assistance of the Münzkabinett of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig, the Städtisches Museum Braunschweig, the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel and the British Library in London. I also want to render my thanks to Ilse Slot and Maarten Prot for helping me out with the Latin, and to Yvonne Vermijn who assisted me with the Old French. Andy Duncan was so kind as to correct a chapter in the early stage of my research. Rosi Wiegmann translated the summary into German. And Thomas Belyea meticulously read and corrected the whole text and therefore improved it enormously. I highly appreciate their help. Lastly, I am thankful for the support my family and husband have given me.
Introduction
These words by Georges Duby reveal that medieval noblewomen were expected to provide heirs, motherhood being one of women's most important duties. This demand was no different for Matilda of England (*1156–†1189), the eldest daughter of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. In 1165 negotiations for her marriage to Henry the Lion (*1131/1135–†1195), duke of Saxony and Bavaria, were initiated. A charter issued 1 February 1168 mentions that Henry and Matilda were united through the exchange of rings, which has been interpreted to mean that they were then married. Fortunately, Matilda lived up to the expectation that heirs should be brought into the world and provided Henry with a daughter and four sons. Besides recording her progeny, medieval chroniclers writing around 1200 also took the opportunity to commemorate Matilda's royal descent. She is almost always referred to as *filia regis Anglorum* (daughter of the king of the English). Considering Matilda's royal status, it seems strange that no thorough study of her life has yet been published, though modern historians have by no means ignored her existence. Understandably, this is partly due to the fact that her husband, Henry the Lion, is considered more appealing. Historians, art historians, literary historians and numismatists all had an interest in how this duke consolidated and later lost his dominant position in Saxony. The other reason why Matilda has received less attention is probably the result of the scarcity of the written source material, though it does exist.

With regard to the sources, special attention must be given to the pictorial ones. The first reason is that there are few twelfth-century noblewomen who have been depicted as frequently as Matilda. Her image can be found twice in the famous Gospel Book of Henry the Lion. This label is
misleading, since it suggests that Henry was the sole patron. In Chapter 3, I will explain why this assumption is not so straightforward. The duchess was also portrayed in a psalter, of which nowadays only several folia are extant. In addition, her image appears on bracteates: thin silver coins struck on one side. Sixty-three specimens depicting Henry and Matilda were found in Brunswick. In all of these instances, Matilda appears at the side of her husband. Not only was Henry’s status enhanced by including Matilda, but her own position as wife was also defined. This brings me to the second reason for studying visual arts. Through these were are able to understand how Henry and Matilda perceived themselves.

As mentioned, Matilda also left traces in written sources. Her name comes up in three charters issued by Henry, and a record in the Hildesheim Cathedral inventory of donations and revenues mentions her as the donor of several liturgical vestments and two shrines (scrinae). Although Henry the Lion is also mentioned in this record, Matilda’s name precedes it, indicating her importance to Hildesheim. The fact that she is the donor of several liturgical vestments and two shrines (scrinae) suggests an appropriation of an imperial theme that emphasised the importance of co-rulership. This also affected noblewomen, though here the process was gradual. Such a conclusion might possibly be made from the famous coronation miniature in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, which was donated to the Church of St Blaise at Brunswick. As this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, it suffices to say here that the use of imperial iconography in a liturgical manuscript was ‘outdated’ in the sense that – judging from the material that has survived – the last imperial couple’s corollary (consortium) to be depicted in a liturgical manuscript (ca. 1051) was Henry III and Agnes. That this iconography (re-)appears in Henry and Matilda’s Gospel Book suggests an appropriation of an imperial theme that emphasised the importance of co-rulership.

The remainder of this introduction discusses how historians have constructed Matilda’s image by discussing her marriage. By way of commenting on their approaches, four themes related to the study of medieval empresses. It is my contention that by making Matilda the primary subject of investigation, both her own actions and those of the people with whom she interacted can be examined.

It will become evident that in several crucial ways Matilda’s duties cannot be separated from those of her husband. Not only did the events in Henry’s life affect Matilda’s movements to a large extent, but on a more fundamental level, the marriage itself had a great impact on the duchess. As a result of the marriage, Matilda, like other women, had access to her husband’s ears and was considered a perfect mediator. According to clerical writers, the marital bed was an ideal place for a woman to advise and influence her husband by way of charm. By virtue of the consortium, Matilda shared Henry’s authority and, as his consors regni, was able to exercise power, at least in theory. The origins of the consors regni idea are imperial. Analogous to the biblical Queen Esther, medieval queens and empresses were considered their husbands’ consorts, as is evident from coronation ordinines. As such, they shared his sacral rule. With the loss of sacral kingship in the eleventh century, a topic that will be touched upon in Chapter 2, the queen lost her privileged position. This also affected noblewomen, though here the process was more gradual. For Matilda’s childhood, see Bowie 2011: 30–33. While I am aware that the notion ‘Germany’ is an anachronism, I shall nevertheless use it more frequently than Holy Roman Empire, which expanded well beyond the borders of modern Germany. Emma, wife of Manasses, ‘embraced her husband, showing him and lamenting the miseries and shame of Guines.’ Erkens 1991: 258.

12 For Matilda’s childhood, see Bowie 2011: 30–33. While I am aware that the notion ‘Germany’ is an anachronism, I shall nevertheless use it more frequently than Holy Roman Empire, which expanded well beyond the borders of modern Germany. Emma, wife of Manasses, ‘embraced her husband, showing him and lamenting the miseries and shame of Guines.’ Erkens 1991: 258.
women are highlighted, since they have been relevant for my approach to Matilda’s duties and responsibilities at the court. Next, I will elaborate on the three chapters in this book. As will become evident in these chapters, my interpretations of the visual and textual material suggest that the years 1168-1173 were Matilda’s crucial years. During this period she got acquainted with a foreign court, got pregnant for the first time and was one year completely separated from her husband. Some years later, during the period 1178-1181, the opposition against Henry was most powerful and this must also have greatly affected her. She was, for example, forced to flee from Brunswick to the Artenburg in 1179. Accordingly, the introduction of this study will end with a brief overview of events from 1173 to the time of Matilda’s death in 1189.

**PAST RESEARCH: MATILDA IN HER HUSBAND’S SHADOW**

As this book is devoted to Matilda’s responsibilities as a duchess – not only as co-ruler, but also as a wife, devout woman and patron of arts and literature – Henry’s life and deeds are not my primary concern. Many books and articles have been published about the duke. Nonetheless, I will not overlook his actions, as they affected his own life as well as that of his family, friends and followers. As we will see, Henry’s deeds gave Matilda an opportunity to exercise authority and perhaps even translate this into power. Moreover, the presence or influence of Henry cannot be denied when examining the works of art commissioned by the ducal couple. Nonetheless, Matilda remains the basis of this investigation, and it is this which sets this study apart from those of art commissioned by the ducal couple. In all likelihood, the ducal wedding was less elaborately celebrated than the imperial one narrated here. Yet it gives an impression of how such festivities may have come about in light of the dearth of information regarding Henry’s and Matilda’s ceremony. Their union was cemented by Bishop Werner on 1 February 1168 in Minden Cathedral, according to a charter issued by Henry. However, no further details are given. The festivities – possibly similar to the ones mentioned above – were held at Brunswick. The chronicler Albert of Stade, writing between 1240 and 1256, mentions that the nuptial feast was magnificently celebrated there. In contrast to the anonymous chronicler quoted above, Albert says nothing more about the marriage. Entries in the Pipe Rolls, however, inform us that Duchess Matilda travelled with the marriage aid (auxilium) of 5,102 pounds silver to Germany. The same source also mentions that Matilda arrived from England in a yacht, accompanied by six other ships. Upon arrival in Saxony, Matilda’s belongings totalled a minimum of twenty bags and twenty chests, probably filled with the stated household utensils. All of it was carried by thirty-four pack mules (sumar). Matilda also departed with twelve sables, two large silk cloths, two silk tapestries, three Spanish silk cloths (pani de Musco) and a

[...]

Matilda, the daughter of Henry, king of the English, a girl of noble character, distinguished and beautiful, who was held to bring glory and honour to both the Roman empire and the English realm. She was born of ancient lineage, most noble and royal on both sides, and gave promise of abundant future virtue in everything she said and did, so that all hoped she might be the mother of an heir to the Roman Empire. The nuptials were attended by such a great concourse of archbishops and bishops, dukes and counts, abbots and provosts and learned clergy [...] As for the counts and abbots and provosts, no one present could tell their numbers, though many observant men were there. So numerous were the wedding gifts [...] that not one of his chamberlains who received or distributed them could count them. 16

The event described here does not concern the wedding of Matilda and Henry the Lion, but instead recounts that of Matilda’s grandmother, known as Empress Matilda († 1167), who in January 1114 married Emperor Henry V (r. 1106-1125) at Mainz. 17

Although the sum Matilda took with her was significantly smaller than that at Empress Matilda (10,000 pounds silver), it was still large when considering the fact that Matilda’s sister, Joanna, brought 4,540 pounds into the marriage with King William II of Sicily, Ethel 1898: 190.

---


17 Matilda (* 1102) was the daughter of Henry I and Edith-Matilda. She went to Germany in 1110 to meet her future husband, Emperor Henry V. On 10 April of that year the formal betrothal took place and on 25 July (Feast of Saint James) she was crowned. Because she was still a child, there was enough time for her upbringing and education in Germany. See Chibnall 1991: 24-25.


19 Although the sum Matilda took with her was significantly smaller than that at Empress Matilda (10,000 pounds silver), it was still large when considering the fact that Matilda’s sister, Joanna, brought 4,540 pounds into the marriage with King William II of Sicily, Ethel 1898: 190.
charters, seals, coinage and chronicles – that the older Matilda was actively engaged in the politics of her day. For the younger Matilda, such activities are less evident. This is partly the result of Henry the Lion’s age and experience, which did not immediately present the very young Matilda with the possibility to act. Since he also outlived her, her chances to actually rule were substantially diminished. At the same time, Matilda’s royal descent set her apart from other women of the German high nobility. Her royal status, considered along with the fact that she had entered her husband’s rule through marriage, suggests that Matilda is very likely to have had opportunities to exercise authority and perhaps even to wield power.

This is not the way historians have dealt with Matilda when considering her marriage, however. Karl Jordan, in his biography of Henry the Lion, discussed the marriage in a chapter concerning Henry the Lion at the pinnacle of his power. Clearly, Jordan considers their union against a political background, with Matilda as the young woman who sealed the alliance between the Angevin and German courts. While he admits that Henry the Lion had much to gain from the marriage, he does not elaborate on the quantity and variety of precious goods, nor does he mention the names of the courtiers to exercise authority and perhaps even to wield power.


21 I thank Colette Bowie for providing this information from the Pipe Rolls. See also Ehlers 2008: 191.
23 There are some other queens as well who outlived their husbands. See Martin 2005: 1154-1171; Leschhorn 2008: 1-11.
24 For the younger Matilda, such activities are less evident. This is partly the result of Henry the Lion’s age and experience, which did not immediately present the very young Matilda with the possibility to act. Since he also outlived her, her chances to actually rule were substantially diminished. At the same time, Matilda’s royal descent set her apart from other women of the German high nobility. Her royal status, considered along with the fact that she had entered her husband’s rule through marriage, suggests that Matilda is very likely to have had opportunities to exercise authority and perhaps even to wield power.

27 Ehlers 1998: 211.
28 This was also emphasised in Jens Ahlers’ study on the connections between the Welfs and the English kings, Matilda is again considered a mediator. She brought wealth, and above all, prestige, or as Ahlers puts it: ‘money played a major role in Henry the Lion’s politics’. This was also emphasised by Wolfgang Leschhorn in his 2008 lecture on the wedding of Henry and Matilda at Minden. Once again, the Anglo-Norman influence on the cultural climate at the Brunswick court is mentioned. Yet no real insight is given into what the court culture at Brunswick would have been like both prior to and after Henry’s marriage to Matilda. This does not come as a surprise, as the lack of sources makes it extremely difficult to gain an accurate perspective of court life. The article’s focus is indeed on the wedding, but it does not address the question of what consequences the marriage may have had for Matilda. This theme, however, is discussed by Laura Brandr. She examines how the narrations of princely weddings found in textual sources are linked to the later influence of noblewomen at their husbands’ courts. These sources also provide insight into women’s contributions to the construction of the family consciousness. While most aristocratic weddings were not even recorded, the ones that were all share a common denominator: the
splendour that was displayed. This is also evident from the sources that mention the marriage of Henry and Matilda. Although it is nowhere stated explicitly, Brander’s discussion of women indicates that Matilda’s pedigree had increased Henry’s status.

The five historians discussed here essentially regard the marriage as a political move that was beneficial to both the Anglo-Norman realm as well as Henry the Lion and his cousin, Frederick Barbarossa. There is indeed no denying that medieval marriages were linked to political, economic or social strategies. However, focusing solely on what Henry had to gain and emphasising his role as the mediator between the Anglo-Norman and Saxon courts is only one part of the story. This obscures Matilda’s role, when in fact, an analysis of the written and visual sources most certainly offers information about her. These can be useful when thinking of Matilda as an active participant at her husband’s court; be it as a patron of literature, as the donor of reliquaries, as a co-ruler, or as a devout woman involved in liturgical memoria and works of mercy. In order to investigate these aspects of Matilda’s life, I have greatly benefitted from several studies on medieval women. They have created an awareness that visual and textual sources can be studied in a different manner when alternative questions are asked. Several important themes that have moulded my thinking are discussed next.

**Women in the Middle: Some Important Themes**

Based on my research question, this study falls under the field of gender studies, which in its most basic form can be understood as the study of the divergence between the roles allotted to men and women in relation to the wider cultural meaning concerning masculinity and femininity. The titles of many studies addressing the subject of medieval noblewomen in Western Europe suggest that the emphasis of their content is placed on women only. Frequently, however, these studies have included their male counterparts, if only because medieval society was largely dominated by men. The study of medieval women has drawn the attention of a variety of disciplines (e.g. history, archaeology, literature and art history). Feminist and gender approaches have fostered interdisciplinary research, which, for example, has led to the study of visual culture. My intention is to focus on the art historical objects in relation to the life and duties of Matilda – not to theorise about the ways in which medieval women have been studied in the past. I do think it is necessary, however, to acknowledge four themes within the study of medieval women: 1. women in textual and visual sources; 2. authority and power; 3. women as makers of art; and 4. performativity. Gender is the basis that links these themes. Without these topics, the term ‘gender’ – in short, being masculine or feminine – would bear little meaning. The roles attributed to men and women determined, for the greater part, the extent to which they were able and were expected to hold authority, power, and patronage. Admittedly, the portrayal of powerful women is complex. Examining existing sources from the perspective of gender, for instance, reveals that clerics acknowledged that women were able to become ‘masculine’ if the situation demanded, usually because their husbands were away. Power thus had the capacity to re- or degender, as chroniclers testify.

The first theme can be labelled as ‘women in textual and visual sources’. In her article, *Taking a Second Look. Observations on the Iconography of a French Queen*, Claire Richter Sherman admits that, after first having overlooked the miniatures depicting Jeanne of Bourbon (1338-1378) in the coronation book of her husband, King Charles V, she realized these images tell us much about the queen’s position. The mere fact that Jeanne was included in this book affirms that her presence was considered important. She was the king’s consort, and because of this, she enjoyed a certain status. Due to her character and political circumstances, she was able to participate actively in public life. The same has been argued by the historian Anneke Mulder-Bakker, who is critical of historians’ emphasis on sources such as coronation *ordinas* and their overvaluation of councils and institutions at the expense of information transmitted orally, which, according to the chronicles, was highly important. The stories about women found in narrative sources, such as chronicles and letters, demonstrate that a woman’s consort function entitled her to act. While the extent of their responsibilities could vary (e.g.


36 The importance of studying women in relation to men has been pointed out by Georges Duby in his book on twelfth-century nobleswomen. See Duby 2000: 205. Although Duby is interested in women, the focus is often on men.


39 Johns 2003: 15. Contrasting with what Georges Duby concluded from the chronicles written in Flanders, Bettina Elpers contended that the writers of chronicles concerned with Saxon territories did not consider powerful women – regent mothers – anomalies. See Duby 1993: 75; Elpers 2003: 200. I do not share Elpers’s notion that the descriptions of women in chronicles are not as much gender-based because of the absence of the words mulieres (women, wives, mistresses) and feminae (women, female) in German chronicles. See Elpers 2003: 27. The fact that women were described as daughters, wives, mothers, and dowries also refers to gender.

taking care of the court, receiving guests, offering access to their husbands), it is evident that women, as consorts, were expected to assist their husbands. This has been convincingly demonstrated in Bettina Elpers’s discussion of German noblewomen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a study that is important for my research, not just because chronicles and charters are considered from a female perspective, but more importantly, because Elpers makes an effort to establish—by way of summarising her findings—a ‘collective biography’ of territorial princesses. This offers an opportunity to reflect on Matilda’s responsibilities and to compare them with women’s behaviour in the Rolandlied. Chronicles and charters are valuable sources that offer insight into the duties and responsibilities of aristocratic women. I would suggest, however, that coins and manuscript miniatures tell a different story than those sources that may be considered more traditionally ‘masculine’, such as charters who were often issued by men and concern issues associated with men (property, feudal relations). For this reason, they must be examined as well.

The second topic, ‘authority and power’, is related to the problems that sources can bring with regards to women. These two words are often used interchangeably, though they do not mean the same for both men and women. This has painstakingly been pointed out by Erin Jordan in her analysis of the action radius of the thirteenth-century countesses, Jeanne and Marguerite of Flanders. Admittedly, these women differ from Matilda in that they inherited their father’s patrimony. Jordan’s manner of dealing with the difference between authority and power, however, is relevant in order to obtain a more nuanced view of Matilda’s position as a duchess. To have held authority—either through inheritance or through marriage—did not mean that women were also necessarily able to wield power, defined by Jordan as well as Pauline Stafford, as the ability to act, e.g. allocating fiefs, influencing the appointment of abbots or mediating in and settling disputes. Their definition of power differs from that of Georges Duby, who views power (potestas) in relation to the power to command and to punish, thereby connecting it to a male world linked to the public sphere. Associating power with the public sphere excluded women from power since their domain was the domestic sphere. This view has been criticised over the years, for example, by Richter Sherman and Mulder-Bakker. This criticism has been taken to heart and has subsequently broadened the scope of research. Women’s religious patronage has, for example, neither been understood as a personal nor private undertaking, but rather as something that was purposefully and consciously employed by women in order to extend their power, both secular and spiritual. Religious patronage consisted of public actions with political implications. In order to assess to what extent Matilda was able to exercise authority and power, I will investigate what mechanisms influenced this.

My third theme is ‘women as makers of art’. The art historical interest in medieval women perhaps started with a small exhibition catalogue, published in 1983. The authors pointed out that medieval women participated in medieval culture as audience, patrons and artists. Women’s patronage, whether of the literary or cultural sort, has held a great attraction ever since. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the male terminology is still employed, rather than the female equivalent matronage. In order to underscore that patronage was not limited to men, I will also use the words matronage and matron in this book. In her book, Queens in Stone and Silver, Kathleen Nolan has demonstrated the importance of women’s cultural patronage in crafting the visual imagery for queenship. Although it is difficult to assess what Matilda’s share was in the cultural patronage at the Brunswick court, Nolan’s insights can be helpful in thinking about the construction of Matilda’s ducal identity by means of coinage and the Gospel Book. Her findings demonstrate that women’s donations, the objects they commissioned and their relations to religious institutes offer insights into women’s authority and power. More recently, Therese Martin reconsidered this approach when she suggested that the concept of matronage be broadened by studying women as makers in various ways. A woman does not necessarily have to be directly involved in commissioning or donating an object: her name in an inscription also testifies to her ‘participation’ as a maker.

42 Elpers 2003.
43 Jordan 2006: 39-49. The emphasis on women’s character means that they are detached from the people they are connected with. This is odd, because women were part of families and their actions were legitimised against this background, Elpers 2003: 4.
45 Duby1995: 69 and 73.
46 Jordan 2006: 5.
47 This theme has been extensively discussed by Martin 2012, vol. 1: 1-36.
48 Sivertsd and Opitz 1983: 4. While this last activity was emphasised, little attention was given to the ways women were depicted. See Havice 1999: 345-373. Although this article presents a good overview of the various media in which historical women appear, it is foremost a description of what can be seen, without relating it to the historical context.
49 Just to mention a number of books: McCash (ed.) 1996; Smith and Taylor (eds.) 1997; Lewes 2002; Stanbury and Ragon (eds.) 2005.
51 Nolan 2003.
That women can indeed be considered makers – both of art and identity – is brought to light in Gudrun Pamme-Vogelsang’s book, which focuses on the depiction of married royal couples from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. She argues that depictions of husbands and wives in the period concerned commonly result from a religious or secular political situation in which the persons who commissioned the artwork found themselves.\(^{53}\)

We need to bear this in mind when thinking about the meaning of the donation and coronation miniatures from the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, as discussed in Chapter 3. Pamme-Vogelsang not only demonstrates that changes in society influenced iconographical themes, but also reminds us that women remained an integral part of society, and as such, were included in the visual arts. I have applied the notion of ‘women as makers’ in studying the Rolandslied and the Gospel Book, discussed in Chapters 1 and 3 respectively.

This being said, the fourth subject crucial to my research is the structure of the book. As June McCash has already stated in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, medieval chronicles and charters often credit men as the patrons of art and architecture, when in fact, women were the driving force.\(^{58}\) The Rolandslied not only testifies to patronage, but will also prove useful in exploring medieval noblewomen’s responsibilities. Of course, this epic story about Charlemagne and his fighting heroes is a story written for and about men defending the emperor and Christianity. Yet if we set aside the brutal fights and the way in which the Christians and Saracens try to mislead each other, it becomes evident that women play a role in the story as well. So far, literary historians have failed to acknowledge this. In this chapter, the Heidelberg manuscript containing the Rolandslied is handled both as a source featuring women and suitable for examining Matilda’s patronage.

In Chapter 2, I argue that the bracteates depicting Henry and Matilda are not merely a confirmation of Henry the Lion’s authority, but marginalised, but – together with men – stood at the very heart of society. Yet I will not argue that Matilda developed a well-defined strategy to establish or consolidate her position, as Martin has argued for Queen Urraca of León-Castile.\(^{56}\) The fact that Matilda never truly ruled alone and that her power was largely based on her marriage with Henry the Lion makes it quite difficult to view her as ruler in her own right. Nevertheless, the art works and the textual sources tell us something about the way she functioned at court and the manner in which her duties can be looked upon. This has resulted in three chapters, which will be considered next.

**The structure of the book**

In order to evaluate Matilda’s responsibilities and duties at the court and to obtain insight into these aspects for noblewomen in general, the first chapter concerns the version of the Rolandslied, which is dated to the end of the twelfth-century and is housed in the University Library of Heidelberg. This text, yet not necessarily this manuscript, was commissioned by Matilda and Henry around 1173. While it is not the only text associated with Matilda, it is the only one that can be linked to her convincingly.\(^{57}\) A close reading of its epilogue suggests that the text has been too easily attributed to Henry’s patronage. As June McCash has already stated in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, the Heidelberg manuscript containing the Rolandslied is handled both as a source featuring women and suitable for examining Matilda’s patronage.

In Chapter 2, I argue that the bracteates depicting Henry and Matilda are not merely a confirmation of Henry the Lion’s authority, but


\(^{54}\) Butler 2003: 193. Butler’s views are seriously imbued politically. She thinks that because gender is constructed through actions (and has nothing to with biological factors) you can also undo or change gender. Her ‘model’ aims for change. Butler’s ideas about gender and performance have not gone unchallenged by medieval art historians: Caviness 2001, Stanbury and Raguin (eds.) 2005.

\(^{55}\) Women can be considered a ‘fourth estate’, as women were categorised separately. See Shulman 1984: 2.

\(^{56}\) Martin 2005: 1134-1171.

\(^{57}\) There are two poems written by Betran de Born, who in accordance with convention did not mention Matilda’s name. See Kellermann 1974: 447-460. The other fact that is related to the Wolf court is Tristan by Elhart of Oberge. See Martens 1995, vol. C: 207-208. The poems and the Tristan will be discussed in Chapter 1. McCash 1996: 1-49.
that they communicated the notion of Matilda as a consort as well. This idea is not only supported by the coins’ iconography, but also by the circumstances that gave rise to this coin type being issued. Henry’s long-term absence in the years 1172-1173, which time he spent in the Holy Land, gave Matilda the opportunity to wield authority as his consort. Based on a rereading of a passage from Arnold of Lübeck’s Chronicle (ca. 1210), I suggest that the idea of consors regni, or co-ruler, was put into practice. Both Arnold’s text and the bracteate are sources studied from a gender perspective that facilitates the study of questions regarding Matilda’s authority and power.

As its point of departure, the final chapter takes the idea that the miniatures and dedicatory text in the Gospel Book inform us about the construction of Matilda’s identity. Moreover, this construction can be seen as a performative accomplishment. I have chosen the word ‘performative’ for several reasons. For one, it indicates that it is an act constructing something (gender, class, age etc.). Second, performativity suggests communication, or to be more precise, the words and images in the Gospel Book through which Matilda’s identity is ‘performed’ receive meaning through the audience’s presence. And lastly, the performed identity and the audience’s (possible) reception of it occurred in a specific time and place. The Gospel Book was donated to the Church of St Blaise in Brunswick in order to be used during mass, providing both place and time. Another issue that will be addressed when discussing the Gospel Book is that of Matilda as a maker, since she was intentionally added to the book in text and image. Of course, without her presence, it would still be a gospel book, but I will argue that her being featured in the book gives it a specific meaning. The Gospel Book is an instructive document, because it underscores the notion that Matilda – like the women in the Rolandslied – was expected to perform several roles.

In all of the chapters, the intended audience of the objects under discussion is a matter that will also be taken into account. Up to now, this issue has received little attention. Another common denominator in all three chapters is that ‘the womb’ – to use Georges Duby’s words once again – was considered a matter of great importance. This may suggest that the visual and written sources can be interpreted univocally and that they do not pose their own specific problems. Of course, this is an illusion. Accordingly, each chapter will address the difficulties in studying the specific works of art. We must remain aware of the fact that there is no full picture of Matilda, nor are we able to create this by combining the existing sources. My interpretations of the visual and textual material support the argument that the years 1168 to 1173 were critical for Matilda. During this period, she became acquainted with court life in Saxony, was prepared for motherhood, became pregnant and remained at Brunswick while Henry set off for the Holy Land. This by no means implies that Matilda’s role was solely limited to these years. Yet this study focuses on the early and formative years of Matilda’s stay in Saxony. Matilda’s life was to change drastically from 1180 onwards.

On 13 April of that year, the Charter of Gelnhausen was issued. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa had it recorded that his cousin Henry had offended the ecclesiastic and secular princes and that he had treated the emperor with contempt. As a result, Henry the Lion was dispossessed of his fiefs Bavaria and Saxony. Ultimately, this meant that Henry was allowed to keep his patrimonial properties in Saxony but no more. Moreover, the sentence of outlawry was revoked on the condition that Henry promised to leave the country for a period of three years. It seemed logical that he and his family would retreat to the Anglo-Norman realm, and on 25 July 1182, the family travelled to Normandy. Although we hear about Matilda’s whereabouts through the Pipe Rolls and several Anglo-Norman chroniclers, her situation and that of her husband’s had changed dramatically. They were guests whose political leverage had been cut back drastically. The ducal family remained in the Anglo-Norman realm until 1185. Shortly after Michaelmas (29 September), Henry returned to Brunswick, accompanied by Matilda and their eldest son, Henry. After Matilda had returned to Germany, her patronage did not stop and she probably still also influenced and supported her husband’s actions. Nevertheless, the period from 1182 up until the year of her death in 1189, do not form the core of my research. It is not my intention to provide a biographical and chronological overview of Matilda’s life. Instead, I have singled out what I believe to be three key artworks that can be convincingly linked to Matilda and that are instructive to ascertaining her duties and responsibilities.

60 Stafford 1994: 159.
The Rolandslied: Matilda’s literary matronage and other responsibilities of noblewomen
The University Library of Heidelberg owns ‘manuscript P’, which contains the famous medieval Middle High German Rolandslied dated to the last quarter of the twelfth century. The text is also known in two other twelfth-century manuscripts, which though fragmentary, originally contained the same text, suggesting that the three twelfth-century manuscripts were based on a (lost) common model. Manuscript P, consisting of 9,038 lines concerned with Roland, Charlemagne and Ganelon, does however stand out when compared to the two other known manuscripts. It is the only one containing an epilogue (lines 9,039-9,094) identifying the scribe as Pfaffe Konrad, who also might be labelled as an author because he seems to have altered the French text he used as a model. Moreover, in this epilogue the identity of his patrons, Duke Henry and his wife, are revealed. This is, however, not to say that manuscript P was the ‘original’ manuscript, once possessed by the ducal couple. Lastly, the Heidelberg manuscript is the only one with an extensive cycle of thirty-nine pen and ink drawings, which has long attracted the attention of art historians. These illustrate the epic of Charlemagne, Roland and the other heroes engaged in their battles against pagans and traitors. The end of the battle against the Saracens in Spain is announced in the second-to-last drawing, where Charlemagne and his army arrive on horseback at Saragossa and Queen Bramimonde has opened the city gate as an act of surrender [ill. 1.1].

Charlemagne is recognisable by his long beard and his crown-shaped helmet; the queen can be identified by the decorated crown placed over her long hair. She kneels before the emperor with her arms stretched as a demonstration of her acknowledgment of his superiority and, at the same time, as an act of surrendering the city. Her maid servant stands in the doorway of the gate, while three men witness the scene from the city wall.

Battle scenes were among the most popular depictions of the Song
of Roland in twelfth-century art. According to Rita Lejeune and Jacques Stiennon’s monumental survey of the Song of Roland in art, still the most comprehensive work available, the episode where Queen Bramimonde surrenders the city and Christianity triumphs is depicted only in the Heidelberg manuscript of the Rolandslied discussed in this chapter. The only other twelfth-century example that perhaps features Bramimonde is found in the lintel of the west facade of the Cathedral of St Peter in Angoulême (ca. 1120). Lejeune and Stiennon suggest that Bramimonde is depicted behind the open door, wearing a small crown on her head, and holding Marsile’s bow [ill. 1.2].

However, this identification is disputable, as the crown is difficult to recognize and the facial expression is no different than that of the remaining figures. The few depictions of women appearing in the Song of Roland confirm the general notion that women play a marginal role in this text.

While this marginality may lead us to broaden our conclusions about both the depiction of women in chansons de geste and the importance attributed to women’s presence in these stories, this chapter focuses not so much on images of Bramimonde, but instead primarily concerns itself with Duchess Matilda, who figures in the epilogue of the Rolandslied. Once I have discussed her appearance, I will then consider Aude (fiancée or wife of Duchess Matilda, who figures in the epilogue of the Rolandslied) and the facial expression is no different than that of the remaining figures. The few depictions of women appearing in the Song of Roland confirm the general notion that women play a marginal role in this text.

While this marginality may lead us to broaden our conclusions about both the depiction of women in chansons de geste and the importance attributed to women’s presence in these stories, this chapter focuses not so much on images of Bramimonde, but instead primarily concerns itself with Duchess Matilda, who figures in the epilogue of the Rolandslied. Once I have discussed her appearance, I will then consider Aude (fiancée or wife of Roland and sister of his friend, Oliver), Bramimonde, and a fourth woman (sister of Charlemagne, mother of Roland and wife of Ganelon), whose name is unknown. Compared to its French model (known as Ms O with 4,002 lines), the German text is significantly longer (9,038 lines) and features its ideologies.

I wish to compare the passages from the Rolandslied (Heidelberg, ms P) with those of the French text (Oxford, ms O) in order to establish the degree to which women function differently in the two sources. In all likelihood, a French text, similar to ms O, was used as the German text’s model. When possible, I will investigate to what extent Matilda’s duties coincide or differ from that of the three women in the Rolandslied. This can broaden our understanding of Matilda’s duties at her husband’s court. Although the Rolandslied is a literary (fictive) text, the fact that I consider it to be related to medieval ideas about rulership, knighthood and female conduct may suggest that the text can be read as a mirror (speculum) for princes – or in this case princesses. These texts can be described as political writings that provided explicit instructions for the ruler concerning government and behaviour. Examples of such books are John of Salisbury’s Policraticus (Statesman’s Book, ca. 1156-1159), Godfrey of Viterbo’s Speculum regum (1180-1183), written for Frederick Barbarossa’s son, Henry VI, and De instructione principis (On the Education of a Monarch, ca. 1218) by Gerald of Wales.

Examples are taken from ‘Fürstenspiegel, 2. Wandlungen des 12. Jh.’ in LexMA, vol. 4: col. 1045. ‘Ein Fürsten- spiegel ist eine in paränetischer Absicht verfasste Ausar-

I I

The noble duchess, child of a mighty king: Matilda as instigator

We all wish for Duke Henry to be rewarded by God. The material is beautiful, the pious meaning is delivered by him. He had the book made known, which was written in France. This was wished for by the noble duchess, daughter of a mighty king. Radiant heavenly legions will escort them, after earthly burden, together with all the chosen children of God to a place where they will find eternal bliss. That they even considered having the story translated into German has heightened the honour of the empire. His exemplary conduct urged him to do so. Where lives a ruler today on whom ever was bestowed the same prosperity? The Lord is faithful and fair.

The debates concerning the exact identity of the duke who ordered the translation of the French text, as mentioned in this epilogue, have resulted in a general agreement with regard to his probable identity: Henry the Lion.
According to most scholars, he commissioned the text around 1172. This identification is based primarily on events within the *Rolandslied* that would most certainly have appealed to a duke who had raised his sword to fight heathens living north of the Elbe – although his motive is more likely to have been territorial expansion rather than Christianity. Moreover, the story may have been even more appealing as Henry and Roland were both cousins of emperors, respectively Frederick Barbarossa and Charlemagne. When considering topics such as heroism and Christianity in the *Rolandslied* sponsored by them.

14 In the RL, the word ‘hierin’ or ‘heiden’ (heathen) is used, while in the Driich they are addressed as ‘paigens’ (pagans).
15 Both terms refer to Saracens.
16 More often, however, the emphasis has been on the fact that Konrad established a relation between Duke Henry to Charlemagne referred to with ‘richen’ through King David (change Davite). See Wisniewski 1964: 108-102, esp. 115; Bertau 1982: 331-370 esp. 334.
17 Lajoue 1966, vol. 1: 36; ‘le manuscrit de la legende de Roland que Matildine de prouder...’; Geer 1976: 112; book written for Matilda around 1172; Geith 1989: 168; book written on request both Henry and Matilda; Geitl 1990: 338 (translation with Matilda acting as mediator); Sjowin 1996: 21 (Matilda took initiative, but one cannot deny Henry’s involvement because of the references to the political and ideological goals of the Guelph in the RL).
18 Bertau 1991 [1961]: 3-45; Bumke 1993: 57 (Henry commissoned on Matilda’s request); Bumke 1982: 9; Bumke 1993: 34. Green does not agree with their narrow expanse of 1173-1177, but from July 1182-September 1185.
19 The Greek poet, Prodromos, referred to Theodora as daughter of a powerful king in her wedding poem. In the *Rolandslied* was commissioned by Henry the Lion around 1170 in Regensburg; Guttfeisch-Ziche 1998: 180-186 (it might have commissioned the text in Brunswick); De Vries 2010, 2 (Henry ordered the text to be translated into German).

Literary patronage, by both men and women, has received much attention. In his book on women readers D.H. Green summarised the debate on the definition on literary patronage when he observed that a distinction should be made between works written for women versus literature sponsored by them.19 In the first category, women can play a passive role: a work dedicated to a woman was not necessarily produced at her own request. In the second category, women who act as sponsors of literature – a term preferred by Green – play a more active role and are often referred to as being involved in the process (they request, reward, encourage and command). In reality, the distinction between active and passive female participation may not be so clear-cut. Whatever active or passive, it becomes clear that women as matrons played an ‘important role in the production and reception of books in the Middle Ages’.20 According to June Hall McCash, the role of women is undeniable in the rise of vernacular texts. Moreover, she considers the addition of female figures in vernacular texts as an indication that this audience included females.21 The translation of the *Rolandslied* from French into German might be a reflection of courtly taste. Whatever the case may be, the writer Konrad does suggest that the duchess had an interest in the text. From this, we can conclude that Matilda functioned not merely as a matron, but at the same time, was part of the broader audience for whom Konrad was writing. I will therefore discuss Matilda as matron, Konrad as the author (not just as the copyist he claims himself to be: *ich neban dir nicht an gemëret, / ich neban dir nicht überhaben*, RL 9084-9085) and the intended audience to whom his message was addressed.

### Matilda as matron of literature

**I.I.I.**

With the exception of Karl Bertau and Christian Gellinek, scholars have devoted few words to Paffe (cleric) Konrad’s statement: *Des gerte du edele herzoginne, aines rîchen küniges barn*. Bertau accepted Dieter Kartschóke’s contention that the *Rolandslied* was to be linked to Henry the Lion. He also observed that the genealogical reference to Matilda, the daughter of a powerful king, was repeatedly used in texts and inscriptions that mention Henry the Lion as a patron.22 Gellinek, on the other hand, was not convinced that the ‘Duke Henry’ mentioned in the epilogue was Henry the Lion. He suggested that ‘the daughter of a mighty king’ referred to the Byzantine Theodora Comnenus († 1184), who married Henry Babenberg, also known as Henry Jasomirgott († 1177).23 The Greek poet, Prodromos, referred to Theodora as daughter of a powerful king in her wedding poem. In the

21 The contention that women are the protagonists of books has been discussed many times. See Chawarowsky 2007 (with references to older literature); Bumke 1982: 9; Bumke 1993: 34.
Privilegium minus, she is also described as noble duchess.²⁴ This led Gellinek to regard the line in the Rolandslied as a double allusion to Theodora’s unique position in the newly created Duchy of Austria.²⁵ For Gellinek, the fact that he could find no references to ‘daughter of a powerful king’ in any of the Old French sources was sufficient reason to dismiss Matilda as candidate. While it is true that no such line is to be found in fictional narrative sources, Matilda is often referred to as ‘daughter of the king of the English’ and ‘daughter of the glorious king of England’.²⁶ In fact, Karl Bertau has argued that Matilda’s family descent, be it her father the king or her grandmother the empress, is highlighted both in word and image again and again. That Matilda is described by Konrad as daughter of a powerful king therefore suits her perfectly. Consequently, I see no reason to dismiss the consensus that ‘Duke Henry’ and the ‘noble duchess’ are Henry the Lion and his wife, Matilda.

The epilogue of the Rolandslied states that Paffe Konrad was actually assigned the task of translating the chanson de geste from French into German. In all likelihood we are not reading a fictional dedication in the hope of being rewarded with real sponsorship. Henry the Lion is the one who, according to Paffe Konrad, commissioned the book (daz buoch hiez er vor tragen), yet it is Matilda who is said to have been the one behind it (des gerte diu edele herzoginne).²⁷ Contrary to what has often been suggested, the book was not commissioned or sponsored by Henry alone. Matilda was also somehow involved as a matron or sponsor — without her request, it seems, there would have been no translation at all. D.H. Green regards this as joint patronage, but he also suggests that Matilda’s contribution could simply have been added to emphasise that Henry had married a royal woman.²⁸ While there is no denying this possibility, the manner in which she provided Henry

with the French text leads one to believe that Matilda acted as the mediator. Matilda’s involvement is mentioned once again when Konrad writes: ‘That they even considered having the story translated into German has increased the honour of the empire.’²⁹ Konrad’s statement that Matilda wished the French text to be translated may be interpreted as a sign that one of Matilda’s responsibilities was literary patronage. The omission of her name from the epilogue does not contradict this, as there are numerous examples where the names of female (and male) patrons and dedicatees are not mentioned explicitly. Benoît de Saint-Maure omitted what was probably Queen Eleanor’s name from his Roman de Troie, referring to his (intended) matron as rich dame de rich rei (a powerful lady of a powerful king).³⁰ Matilda’s famous half-sister, Marie of Champagne, is nowhere explicitly mentioned by the authors who credit her for commissioning a work, nor by those who dedicated their work to her name. She is commonly referred to as ‘la contesse of Champagne’ or ‘ma dame de Champaigne’.³¹ One explanation for an omission of explicit references to patrons or dedicatees in literary works is that their involvement was already evident to the audience. They knew who these unnamed people were, when referred to as ‘powerful lady’, ‘countess of Champagne’ and ‘daughter of the king of the English’.

Konrad is not the only writer in Matilda’s surroundings to have referred to the duchess without explicitly mentioning her name. The poet and nobleman, Betran de Born, wrote two poems in which he describes Matilda without revealing her name. In his Casutz sui de mal en pena (I Have Fallen from Evil into Pain), written at the court at Argentan in Normandy, Bertran describes his tedious stay at the court, where Matilda, ‘la Saisa’ (the Saxony lady), was a welcome distraction.³² In Ges de disnar non for oïmais maitis (You Shouldn’t Spend a Whole Morning just Eating), Matilda is described as ‘Na Lana’, and Bertran expresses his wish that she would love him.³³ Bertran writes that he has left the Limousin to visit Anjou to see her. In his view, it is her high status that raised her above other women. He believes the imperial crown would suit her.³⁴
The poet joined up with Matilda at Argentan in 1182, where she spent some time during her exile (1182-1185) and gave birth to her son, William. Bertran was probably in Argentan due to a dispute with his brother, Constantine, concerning the castle of Autafort in the Dordogne. Bertran needed his overlord, Henry II, to settle the dispute. Our interpretation of Bertran’s love for the lady (a troubadour technique, an expression of Frauendienst, a desire to engage with other members of nobility) sheds little light on the relationship between the two. Similarly, his allusions to the duchess do not reveal whether Matilda was involved as a dedicatee, matron or audience. Accordingly, I am reluctant to attribute Casutz sui de mal en pena and Ges de disenar non fór’oinai maitis to Matilda’s matronage.

The other text that has been related to the Welf court is the Tristrant by Eilhart von Oberg, which is probably the oldest extant version of the tragic love story of Tristan and Isolde. Eilhart’s version is usually dated around 1170. Some identify him as Eilhardus de Oberg, a vassal of Henry the Lion whose name appears in charters from 1189-1207; others have suggested the poem was written by one ‘Eilhart’ from an earlier generation.

The fact that Eilhart appears in the charters of the Welf court has led scholars to believe the Tristrant was commissioned by Henry and Matilda, with the latter providing an Old-French Estoire to Eilhart. According to Volker Mertens, it is not clear who commissioned the Tristrant; it could just as well have been one of Henry and Matilda’s sons, as contacts with the Anglo-Norman court would also have given them access to a French text as well.

Georg Steer also expresses his doubts regarding whether the Tristrant was commissioned by the ducal couple. First, there is neither an epilogue nor prologue known in which Henry and/or Matilda are mentioned. Secondly, Eilhart’s name is featured only in texts passed down from the fifteenth century. Even though the Tristrant is often connected to Henry the Lion and Matilda, there are just as many uncertainties. For this reason, this romance story is not considered as a source with which to further examine Matilda’s matronage.

The Rolandslied thus appears to be the only literary work that can be convincingly connected to Henry and Matilda. It is my contention that Konrad’s allusion to Matilda in the epilogue indicates that she is one of the patrons. It was she who talked her husband into translating the text from French into German. It is safe to assume that everyone at the Saxon court – and possibly outside it – knew very well who the duchess and daughter of this powerful king was. While Konrad may have felt no urge to specify the duchess’ identity, he was most certainly explicit in revealing his own name and function. Who he was and how he proceeded will be discussed in the next paragraph in an attempt to gain further insight into his relation with Matilda.

I.I.2

The writer revealing his name and working method

The writer of the Rolandslied begins his tripartite prologue by referring to and praising those who commissioned it. He ends it by revealing something about himself but also tells his reader about his working method:

If you like this poem, all of you remember me as well. I am the cleric Konrad. Just as it was written in the book in French I cast it into Latin and then translated it into German. I have not added to it, nor have I omitted anything.

In the end, the audience learns that the text they had read or listened to was written by a cleric, i.e. not a layman, known as Konrad. Jeffrey Ashcroft argues that he might have been the ‘magister’ and ‘presbyter’ Conrads who appears in Henry the Lion’s charters from at least 1174. He belonged to the staff of clerics who served at Henry’s Brunswick chancery, his chapel and several administrative functions. It seems this Konrad included his name so as
not to be forgotten by the audience. The most certain way to be remembered is by revealing your name.

Konrad then tells his audience that he worked from a French model. However, he does not explicitly state that Matilda provided him with the French model. Nor are there written sources informing us that Matilda owned many book or was an ardent reader. Yet it seems conceivable that Matilda may have been the person who provided the French model when considering her upbringing at the Anglo-Norman court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Both have been considered as patrons of literature. While Karen Broadhurst has argued that fewer works can be attributed to Henry II and Eleanor’s patronage than had once been assumed, the fact remains that at the court where Matilda was raised, literature was an important part of cultural life. The heroic Roland was a famous figure in Henry and Eleanor’s domains, Normandy, Anjou, and from Aquitaine to Gascony. It is therefore likely that Henry II and Eleanor were at least familiar with the story.

In the history of the Normans (Roman de Rou), written around 1160 by the poet Wace at the request of Henry II, the vassals of William the Conqueror sing a song about Charlemagne and Roland before engaging in battle at Hastings in 1066. The story of Roland was also known through the Anglo-Norman Chanson de Roland, contained in what is now known as the Oxford manuscript. This manuscript holds the oldest extant Old French version, probably written in the second quarter of the twelfth century. The story of the treason by Ganelon and the Battle of Roncevaux, including its aftermath, were also part of the Historia Karoli (or History of the Norman People: 181). Everyone said (about William): ‘no man was ever so brave when spurring his horse or striking blows in such a way or supported such a weight of arms. Since Roland and Oliver there was never such a knight on earth.’ From Wace, The History of the Norman People: 181. Every- one said (about William): ‘no man was ever so brave when spurring his horse or striking blows in such a way or supported such a weight of arms.’ From Wace, The History of the Norman People: 181. Every- one said (about William): ‘no man was ever so brave when spurring his horse or striking blows in such a way or supported such a weight of arms. Since Roland and Oliver there was never such a knight on earth.’ From Wace, The History of the Norman People: 181.

Whatever the working process might have been, it seems obvious that a French story, be it a written text or orally transmitted, would have been translated to be read and heard at a German court. Matilda may have desired a translation based on a true interest in the story, which offers purported similarities between her husband and Roland and glorifies Charlemagne as Henry’s ancestor. It was not uncommon for women to acquire books for their court or offer them to their (future) husbands, with themes addressing their interest and position. After their betrothal in 1326 and before his coronation in January 1327 Philippa of Hainault gave her husband, Edward III, the Livre d’Étours by Brunetto Latini. Philippa is even depicted with the book in her hands, while her husband in the opposite margin stands empty-handed. While we can regard the individual who commissioned or received the book an important constituent of the audience of a literary work, there were probably others to whom the story would have been translated to be read and heard at a German court. Matilda may have desired a translation based on a true interest in the story, which offers purported similarities between her husband and Roland and glorifies Charlemagne as Henry’s ancestor.

According to Kartschoko, the French model used by Pfaffe Konrad could have been a written text. But he also suggests that an orally transmitted French story was (roughly) written down in Latin before being copied into German. This method seems unusual, even laborious, and may perhaps have been mentioned solely to emphasise Konrad’s status as a man who could read and write Latin. Whether he really considered it easier to use Latin as an intermediate stage in the writing process is a matter of debate. It is also possible that Konrad wrote two texts – in Latin and in German – for two separate audiences. One audience would have comprised his fellow clerics who, though able to read German, would preferred to have read or listened to the story in Latin. The other audience was the courtly audience, represented among others by Henry and Matilda, who were interested in the German text.
appealed. Until now the intended audience of the *Rolandslied* has failed to attract any significant scholarly attention.

## 1.1.3

The intended courtly audience of the *Rolandslied*

When looking at the *Rolandslied* as a text reflecting the society in which its patrons lived, its reception or appreciation by the intended twelfth-century audience has to be taken into account. This is by no means an easy task, as the actual audience, i.e. the historical audience, no longer exists. Moreover, it was not just one audience, but rather several. The issue of medieval audience(s) has been addressed by several scholars. In the case of the *Rolandslied* and its patrons, Henry and Matilda, I use the term intended audience, because it suggests that the author intended (or expected) his text to be read or heard by a certain audience.

The audience is easier to identify when a book’s content reveals it was presented or dedicated to a certain individual. This implies that there must have been a primary audience. In the case of the *Rolandslied*, this consisted of Henry and Matilda. However, the intended audience was not necessarily limited to the text’s patrons, but may also have included other members of the ducal circle, perhaps even the clerics reading the Latin text that Konrad wrote. An attempt will be made to reconstruct Konrad’s twelfth-century intended audience – the people he believed would be his listeners. According to Krueger this audience shared a sophisticated knowledge of courtly literary conventions.

The court, to be understood as a group of people that was not stable but fluctuating, was itinerant most of the time. Henry and Matilda indeed visited several residences, including Regensburg in Bavaria among others. Nonetheless, there was a *Kernhof* consisting of the court (personal surroundings of the ruler) and its household (the material infrastructure of the court). For Henry and Matilda – and their entourage (or at least part of it) – the most important residence seems to have been Brunswick, visited a minimum of twenty-one times by Henry in the period 1148-1180. Henry and Matilda’s building and patronage activities in Brunswick indicate that this city indeed was favoured over other places. Joachim Ehlers provides some insight into the people attending the court, though at the same time, he admits the statistics are obscured by the fact that there is insufficient evidence in the charters. Limiting ourselves to the years 1172-1184, the period in which the *Rolandslied* was written, we find four court chaplains as notaries in Henry’s entourage along with five other men known as *capellani ducis*. In the same period, seven counts also attended the Brunswick court. And of the thirteen leading ministerials (with several of these holding important offices such as seneschal and chamberlain), seven were at Henry’s court between 1172-1184. These men came from well-known families and formed the elite of the approximately 400 ministerial families that supported Henry. The fact that Ehlers does not include women may reflect the available documentation, as his results are based on charters in which they are absent. Nevertheless, since marriage was an important strategy in securing both political bonds and offspring, many of the ministerials and counts were likely married. For that reason their wives probably also appeared at Brunswick. They would have been present at special events, such as the presentation of the relics brought by Henry from the Byzantine court, the birth and baptism of his children as well as tournaments. To this we must also add that Matilda likely had her own entourage, even though there are no sources confirming this. In my opinion, the audience listening to the *Rolandslied* consisted thus not only of Henry, Matilda and their children, but also of clerics, counts, ministerials and noblewomen in various stages of their lives.

By thinking about Konrad’s intended audience, I have tried to catch a glimpse of the historical readers (or listeners) who encouraged the writer to write and/or translate. This audience consisted of both men and women. In all likelihood the latter were not only wives, but daughters, mothers and widows as well. While there is no denying that the *Rolandslied* was appealing to most men, it is my contention that the (mixed) audience

---

56 Strohm 1983: 141-142.
59 Ehlers 2008: 235 (Lübeck 4x, Artlenburg 6x, Verden 3x, Lüneburg 6x).
60 For patronage of Henry and Matilda see the Introduction and Chapters 2 and 3.
61 Ehlers 2008: 244.
63 Ehlers 2008: 241 (counts), 247 (ministerials).
64 Rösener 1990: 150 where Rösener suggests the same when it concerns the court of Frederick Barbarossa and Beatrice.
also appreciated the part played by women in the story. This presumed appreciation stems from the fact that the male and female audiences were, as we will see, familiar with the women's actions.

1.1.4
The influence of the matron? An emphasis on female characters
To summarise, the epilogue of the Rolandslied offers some clues concerning its patrons. Pfaffe Konrad describes Henry as the person who presented him with a model text (daz buoch biez er vor tragen, gescrizen ze den Karlingen, RL 9022-9023). If we take the epilogue literally, Henry was the one who maintained relations with Konrad and seems therefore to have been the one who paid for the enterprise. Henry’s contact with Konrad and the idea that the Rolandslied fits in with Henry the Lion’s ‘cultural representation of his aggressively expansionist territorial lordship’ seem to have been the main reasons for considering Henry the Lion as its patron.66

According to Konrad, however, it was not Henry, but rather Matilda, who wished the translation to be made (Des gerte diu edele herzoginne, aines rîchen küniges barn, RL 9024-9025). Therefore I would indeed consider Matilda at least a co-patron – and perhaps even the chief patron – of the Rolandslied, because it was her wish to have the French material translated. There was probably more to the translation than the sheer appreciation of the text by the duchess, because the French version would have suited her just fine since she was able to understand French. Her interest is more likely to be viewed in relation to that of her husband, who would have enjoyed a story with which he could identify, but also in light of her own responsibility to entertain the court by providing them with a text to which many could relate. The Rolandslied was appropriate for reading at Henry and Matilda’s court because it offered flattering parallels between Roland and Henry and because it was in tune with the crusading movements in the twelfth century. The text may also have been considered suitable in that it could provide Matilda with exemplary women with whom she herself could identify.

50

Whatever the exact reasons for ordering this text might have been, Henry and Matilda are likely to have had a say in any changes introduced by Konrad because they were paying for the book. In fact, it is possible that he made adjustments because he suspected his patrons would value them.67 This could explain the fact that, as we shall see, women in the Rolandslied figure more prominently than in the French text. The notion that this occurred at Matilda’s request remains hypothetical, but when considering that she might have been the driving force behind the project, it is possible that she made such suggestions. Matilda, Henry and Konrad were probably aware that the Rolandslied would become more appealing when every member of the audience was able to identify him- or herself with one or more characters and events in the story. Before addressing the ways women are depicted in the Rolandslied and to what extent their actions can be related to the responsibilities of a twelfth-century female audience, I will elaborate on the use of the Rolandslied as a historical source.

1.2
Women in the Rolandslied
While the ‘small, but vital role’ women played in the Chanson de Roland was reason enough for French and American scholars to study them in the Old French text, their counterparts in the German Rolandslied have received little attention.68 That the role of women in manuscript P has never been at the heart of research into the Rolandslied is partly due to the fact that it has been looked upon as a text dealing primarily with men and ‘the heroic culture that valued war, loyalty to one’s lord, prowess and courage in battle – all masculine virtues.’69 It is therefore not surprising that this chanson de geste has mainly been studied from a male perspective.70 The lack of interest in the female characters probably reflects the scholarly interest in the interpretation of the epilogue, which hails Henry the Lion. In this section, I will

68 Ibid. 1994: xxi. This is not to say that German scholars have less interest in medieval women than their French colleagues. Perhaps it is the more limited dispersion of the chanson de geste in Germany, as opposed to France, that explains the lack of interest in women in this genre. McCash 2008: 48.
argue that a social-historical approach to literary texts can provide information about medieval women. Such a study of the *Rolandslied* is useful because it provides new insights into the way this text might have functioned and how it was perceived.

Petra Kellermann-Haaf discussed the text briefly as one of the forty-five courtly romances she studied in order to establish what political activities were undertaken by the women found in these literary texts. She starts by stating that Bramimonde is the only woman involved in politics, but she hardly retains any influence.\(^{71}\) Dieter Kartschoke argues that women only play a small role in the *Rolandslied*; the few words spent on women should not be taken as an excuse to overrate their significance.\(^{72}\) This warning against overvaluing the presence of women in the *Rolandslied* is unjustified for several reasons. First, studies on women in the *Chanson de Roland* and *chansons de geste* have revealed that while women appear less frequently than men, this does not mean they were insignificant. Ann Tukey Harrison concludes her analysis of Aude and Bramimonde by stating that both are 'depicted as women in actions appropriate to women'.\(^{73}\) Second, the German text devotes greater attention to the three women than the French text – a reason, in itself, to reflect further on their role. Moreover, the women are not merely talked about ('von Frauen gesprochen'), but rather have a voice of their own and actually speak to men.\(^{74}\) What we see is that women appearing in the *Rolandslied* reflect virtually every phase of the female life cycle: daughter, wife, mother and widow.\(^{75}\) Therefore, one cannot justifiably ignore these women if studying the *Rolandslied* in relation to its patrons and its audience.

According to Ursula Peters, writing in 1985, the use of literary texts in combination with other sources concerned with legal matters and social hierarchy is useful when studying issues such as rulership and the relations between lords and their vassals.\(^{76}\) While rulership and vassalage have long been associated with men only, the many studies on medieval women have confirmed that women were engaged in these affairs as well. In her study on German noblewomen acting as regents for husbands and sons, Bettina Elpers has demonstrated that chronicles and charters offer insights into the responsibilities of these women.\(^{77}\) She did not, however, include fictional literary texts as source material. That these texts can be instructive is demonstrated by Petra Kellermann-Haaf. She focused on fictional women who functioned as rulers, regents, mediators and advisors and their actions in relation to actual historical female figures. She based her information concerning these historical women on research done by others who had in the past used charters, chronicles and annals. As Elpers’s study of maternal regents clearly indicates, these sources have proven their value. Kellermann-Haaf points out that the relation between fictional and historical women is not always straightforward. Courtly narratives frequently feature women who are given the opportunity to rule independently, while in reality, women were not so readily assigned these tasks and were often controlled by men.\(^{78}\) Because Kellerman-Haaf signals discrepancies between fiction and reality, she concludes that poets ignored some aspects of reality while including others. While the relation between fiction and reality is perhaps not always straightforward, it can be supplemental when seeking insight into women’s lives. Administrative sources and chronicles tell us about the content, type and duration of these activities, whereas fictional romance stories are instructive with regards to the means employed by women, their arguments and the reactions of the rulers.\(^{79}\)

---

\(^{71}\) Kellermann-Haaf 1986: 108.  
\(^{72}\) ‘So bemerkenswert im deutschen Rolandslied jeder der worten Verse ist, in denen von Frauen gesprochen wird, so nahe liegt die Überbewertung’, Kartschoke 2007: 703.  
\(^{73}\) Harrius 1981: 674.  
\(^{74}\) In his article on women in the *Chanson de Roland*, Serrano does not look upon them as female characters with an own voice, but regards them as pawns in Charlemagne’s attempt to order his guilt (sleeping with his sister who gave birth to Roland). See Serrano 1992: 110-116.  
\(^{75}\) Although is it not explicitly stated the three women also seem to hold different ages: Aude having an age ready to be married (or perhaps was just married) in the youngplot, Ganelon’s wife – who is the mother of the adult Roland and the immature Baldwin – could be in her late forties and Bramimonde might be slightly older, perhaps in her late forties if we take her wisdom as a key to determine her age.  
\(^{76}\) Peters 1985, vol. 2: 184-195. She gives a critical analysis of fictive literary texts as sources for the study of the ‘histoire de mentalités’.  
\(^{77}\) Elpers 2003.  
\(^{78}\) Kellermann-Haaf 1986: 246. See also Liebertz-Grön 1981: 165-187. The article is not entirely satisfying for two reasons: (1) the question posed on the function of romances as educational instruments is not answered, (2) the problems of this approach are not given although the paragraph ‘Grenzen der Untersuchung’ suggests so. Kellermann-Haaf 1986: 272.
The studies by Peters and Kellermann-Haaf point out that a social-historical approach to fiction, i.e. considering these texts as reflections of ideas within a society, is nothing new. Indeed, this is the way the Rolandslied has been studied. It was Dieter Kartschöke who argued that the poem is representative of its time, because it contains the idea of honor imperii, implicitly referring to the canonisation of Charlemagne and the promotion of crusading ideals. Moreover, the ideas put forth in the story and the content of the epilogue can be related to events in the life of Henry the Lion. The ‘Duke Henry’ mentioned in the epilogue must therefore be Henry the Lion. Karl Bertau considered the Rolandslied, with its references to David (in the epilogue) and the feudal system (as emphasised in the prologue), as part of Henry the Lion’s representation strategy designed to emphasise his royal descent and claim to power. It is perhaps the interpretation of the Rolandslied in relation to medieval lordship that has prevented scholars from studying the text from a female perspective as a source that informs us about the expected responsibilities and behaviour of noblewomen. On a basic level, it cannot be denied that women feature in the text and that Matilda is mentioned in the epilogue. This in itself provides sufficient grounds for shifting our focus to women, rather than solely studying the male protagonists as has been so frequently done in the past. More importantly, the foremost interest of any audience, such as the one at Brunswick discussed above (1.1.3), lie in stories that concern matters related to its own world. In the line of Hans Robert Jauss, we might say that the Rolandslied agreed with its audience’s ‘horizon of expectation’. In other words, a given audience’s ‘literary baggage’ is necessary for it to receive and judge new literary works. In Jauss’s view, this means that literature should be more than just the representation of a given reality: it should also shape a society. When literature merely mirrors daily life, this is something that is impossible. Interpreting the Rolandslied in this manner means that the more prominent role played by women indicates the changes to come with regards to women’s responsibilities at court. Yet I do not think this was the case. I believe that the writer and his patrons devoted more space to women precisely because these women were in a position to actually fulfil these roles. They were part of the audience and the world, be it as wives, daughters, mothers, widows, regents or rulers. While women may also have enjoyed reading about the heroic actions of men, we may presume that they likewise appreciated the occasional appearance of a lady in these books. This was their horizon of expectations.

This idea is supported by the fact that a comparison between the episodes featuring women in the German epic (Heidelberg, ms P) with its Old French model, the Chanson de Roland (Oxford, ms O), reveals that the women in the German text play a more prominent role. This indicates either that the person who commissioned the German text had other wishes or that its writer adapted the text with his own intended audience in mind. When the actions of the three fictive women are combined with historical sources related to Matilda – the latter being considered ‘official’ and therefore regarded as more trustworthy or objective – insight can be gained into the duties of noblewomen and the twelfth-century audience’s perception of the fictive women. Whenever the situations figuring in the Rolandslied cannot be directly related to Matilda (on the simple basis that Matilda was never in such a position), I have taken examples related to other family members, on both Matilda’s and Henry’s side, or their contemporaries, in order to demonstrate that the actions of the fictional women were familiar to the (female) audience.

Although fictional sources can help in fill in the gaps ‘official sources’ leave behind, this source type is not without its limitations. There is the issue of a potential conflict between the actual situation and idealised norms as pro-

80 Kartschöke 1965: 155-156. The honor imperii idea is the notion that territories, rights and the honour of the emperor and the Holy German Empire, for example with regards to Italy, should be defended like was done in the times of Charlemagne.
84 Earlier comparisons of the French and German texts have brought to light that main parts of both texts are similar. See Meyer 2003: 33 n. 20.
85 See for a short comment on the medieval German author, Spiewok 1996: 28.
moted in texts. The fair Aude, wife of Roland, is a case in point. Her denial to marry Charlemagne’s son Louis after Roland has died might seem a noble or even pious act that the religious men may have been promoting. In reality, however, a woman of her young age and noble descent was likely to remarry, certainly when a king or emperor presented his son as candidate. This is evident from Clementia of Zähringen, Henry the Lion’s first wife. When her family fell out of grace with Frederick Barbarossa, the emperor summoned Henry the Lion to annul his first marriage in 1162. This is just one example of a woman who was expected (or forced) to resign herself to a man’s wishes. This demonstrates how difficult it is to view this idealised normative image of women in fictional narrative sources. Does it reflect an independence gained by women, or is it an image created by male writers to criticise women or label them as ‘inferior’? But we can also read women’s actions as a comment on male behaviour. Kimberlee A. Campbell contends that chansons de geste not only reflect dominant behaviour patterns (men fighting), but also marginal ones (verbally and physically aggressive women). This is not to say that a woman’s aggressive behaviour had the same political and social consequences as that of a man, but it does show that the concept of male force so strongly emphasised in the chansons is at the same time ‘reinforced and subverted by the epic discourse’.

Queen Bramimonde, the wife of the pagan King Marsile who engaged in battle with Roland, presents another problem. If one assumes that the Christian audience identifies itself with the Christian heroes of the Rolandslied, and correspondingly, dislikes the pagans, how can Bramimonde then be considered an exemplary woman of power and a competent co-ruler? Or is she only capable of doing so because she is a pagan? This does not seem to be the case. Liebertz-Grün gathered many examples of fictional Christian women being credited with the same capacities as Bramimonde. It cannot be denied that Bramimonde can easily be seen as the embodiment of evil, a characteristic so eagerly attributed to women, and in this case, enhanced by the fact that she is pagan and seals the bond with the traitor, Ganelon. Both her relation to Marsile and her active involvement in the plot – reinforced and subverted by the epic discourse’.

The text’s general preoccupation with heroic men and the triumph of Christianity also obscures its use as a source for the study of women, because the women in the story do not hold the same prominent position as men. Even when women in chansons de geste figure prominently, men have the final say in these texts and women’s power is illusory. The actions of women or the manner in which men talk about them confirm this: Aude is expected to re-marry; Bramimonde should not talk so much, because female advice is not always useful; and Ganelon’s nameless wife is incapable of managing her affairs completely on her own. Matthias Meyer – to my knowledge the only scholar who discusses the women in the Rolandslied – also comes to the conclusion that women are ultimately marginalised. He studies them in relation to the males appearing in the same scenes and considers the manner in which the writer has constructed masculinity. One way the writer of the Rolandslied enhances masculinity is by marginalising the position of women by ‘fading them out’. This happens either by ignoring her (Aude), by submitting herself to an attractive male (Bramimonde), or by letting her die (again Aude).

While I agree that gender in the Rolandslied is a construction heavily influenced by its own time and society, whether the position of women in the Rolandslied is indeed marginal and whether the audience perceived it that way remains questionable. Can we really be sure that the nameless wife of Ganelon and the pagan Queen Bramimonde were looked upon negatively against Roland and Charlemagne make it easy to dislike this woman and regard her as evil. On the other hand, Bramimonde can also be viewed as a responsible queen taking care of the affairs of her sick husband. Moreover, to the audience it was probably evident that she embodies the topos of the converted heathen who, already during her reign, begins to doubt the pagan gods. Of course, this conversion represents the triumph of Christianity, but it as well signifies that a bad person can become a good person. All in all, Bramimonde’s actions make her a lifelike figure that must have been recognisable as such by both a male and female audience.

93 Meyer 2003: 37 and 38. The other method is to exclude Aude (see above) or the converted Olga (see above).
94 Roland does not react to Oliver’s reference to his sister Aude (see text). He refers instead to the countess Odo, wife of Charlemagne, as well as to “Aude” who is mentioned in a number of Carolingian texts.
95 To my knowledge the only scholar to discuss the women in the Rolandslied is Matthias Meyer. See Meyer 2003: 38-39.
became their husbands were villains? As I will discuss below, one can just as well view the nameless wife as the person looking after her husband’s spiritual well-being. This was a task more often performed by women and deemed important. Care for those in the hereafter was meant to ensure eternal life. At the same time, it could demonstrate and enhance one’s fame. And if these women were looked upon negatively, why did the writer then comment on their duties at the court of their husbands? That their husbands try to influence their spouses’ actions strengthens the notion that the text reflects the medieval reality that women were not passive.

Furthermore, the extent to which the patron influenced the content of the written (or copied) text and the extent to which the cleric who wrote or copied the text decided to adjust it according to his beliefs or rhetorical conventions cannot be assessed. The influence of clerical scribes is one reason to assume that the portrayal of women in medieval romance is never univocal: they frequently regarded women as inferior persons. Ironically, in chronicles and religious works written for women, these very same clerics praised them. This ambivalence is explained by Roberta Krueger in her discussion of the passage featuring a ‘rich dame de riche rei’ in Le Roman de Troie (ca. 1160) by Benoît de Sainte-Maure. This sentence has been regarded as a reference to Eleanor of Aquitaine, who is likewise considered the text’s patron. Krueger, however, points out that the passage concerning the ‘noble lady of a powerful king’ appears in Benoît’s description of female fickleness in reference to Briseïda and other women. According to Krueger, the passage is both a testament to Benoît’s misogynistic attitude and a demonstration of the problem of gender and its interpretation by the audience.

This brings me to one final limitation regarding the interpretation of fictional texts. It is difficult to assess the audience’s appreciation for the story in general and the female characters in particular. While we may assume that the response of (women) readers was anything but uniform and static, the precise nature of their responses remains difficult to grasp.

Nevertheless, when a literary work was commissioned, an author tried to please his patron by narrating stories that appealed to potential readers or listeners. Such stories revolved around courts, knights, heroes, ladies, enemies, love, emotion – but also divisions in gender and class. This idea has been put forth by scholars who address the relation between literary production and women – either as patrons, audience or fictional characters. Imagery presented in literary texts is as complicated as the society in which it is produced. In this manner, it stands as a reflection of that society. This is one reason why one cannot claim a direct correlation between the narration and the events in the lives of noblemen and -women.

As already observed, literary texts as historical sources have their limitations. There can, for example, be a tension between literary female figures and historical women. Nonetheless, it is well worth considering what Aude, the nameless wife of Ganelon and Queen Bramimonde in the Rolandslied might tell us about the responsibilities of noblewomen – the women who were also present in the audience. That women in the Rolandslied, play a different role when compared to that in the Chanson de Roland supports this idea.

In both the Chanson de Roland and the Rolandslied, Bramimonde (Brechmunda in German), the wife of the Saracen King Marsile, is the woman who appears most frequently. Then there is also Roland’s fiancée, Aude (Ailda). She is mentioned by her brother Oliver (Olivier) twice and appears in person to claim her husband after Charlemagne has returned to Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen). The third female character is the intriguing ‘nameless woman’. She is the sister of Charlemagne, the mother of Roland, the wife of Ganelon and his son’s mother, Baldwin. Thus we see three capacities – i.e. that of sister, wife and mother – united in one figure. Because the nameless woman

98 ‘the image of women in literature was complex and reflected the place of women in society generally’ is an important notion in Johns’s chapter on the way medieval women in relation to power are depicted in historiographical writings. See Johns 2003: 13 and Gaunt 1995: 3-16.

99 She presents a gift to Ganelon (in RL and ChdR), she weeps over her wounded husband Marsile (in RL and extended in ChdR); she receives the messengers of Baligant (in RL and shorter ChdR), she greets Baligant (in RL and shorter in ChdR), she cries over the death of Marsile (in RL and ChdR), she opens the gates of Saragossa and the pages are conserved (in RL and ChdR), Bramimonde addresses Charlemagne who laments his losses (only in RL), Bramimonde is Christianised (in RL and ChdR, albeit in different parts of the texts and in different fashions.

100 Aude is mentioned by Oliver in when Oliver asks Roland to blow his horn out of love for Aude in order to get help from Charlemagne (nu baz durc miner swoeter Alde willen, RL 3868). Oliver mentions her again when he reproaches Roland for not blowing his horn earlier. He says to Roland: mit swoeter Alde ir oul ein hir horn rinne acrasse, RL 6012-6014.
links all of the protagonists together, she plays a vital role when compared to the other women. Nevertheless, in comparison with the other two women, she has been largely ignored in scholarly literature, probably because she does not perform her part actively. She has no direct voice herself, but is only spoken about by others. She is not actually physically present in any of the scenes: when her husband talks about her, he is either engaged in a conversation with Charlemagne and the other paladins or addressing his vassals before departing to Marsile. Both occasions are dominated by men, and while women in reality may not have been excluded from events such as meetings and departures, their presence does not seem to have been necessary either.

That women play a role in the Rolandslied and Chanson is not a straightforward indication that women had an interest in the story, but is does make the story more appealing to a mixed audience consisting of women and men of various ages and professions. In this section, I will address the responsibilities of the women in the Rolandslied in order to get an insight into women’s duties at court. At the same time, I hope to convince the reader that the text, as such, was more than just an entertaining and instructive text that displayed noble conduct for the sole use of men. First, the duties of Roland’s fiancée, Aude, Ganelon’s nameless wife and the pagan queen, Bramimonde, will be examined by discussing specific passages from the texts, each time followed by a comparison with Matilda. If we accept the idea that the Rolandslied was useful to Henry the Lion, because he could identify with the hero Roland, then Roland’s fiancée, Aude, emerges as the ideal fictional character to investigate in relation to the duties and responsibilities of noblewomen such as Matilda.

1.3.1 Roland’s fiancée Aude as loyal and devout

The audience of the Rolandslied meets Aude for the first time when Oliver suggests that Roland should blow his horn as a call for help and adds that Roland should do so out of love for Oliver’s sister Aude (nu tuoz durch miner swester Alden willen, RL 3868). Aude is not mentioned in the same episode in the Chanson, but in both texts Roland is determined not to blow his Oliphant. He seems to have made the right decision, because the Christians besiege the pagans at Roncevaux. Marsile, however, does not give up and fights back. This time Oliver, Roland and the other Christians face serious opposition. Roland addresses his people by saying that he would have blown his horn had there been any hope that Charlemagne would come to their rescue. Oliver replies that he should have done so the first time because this would have saved the lives of many noblemen. As a consequence, Roland will die and Aude loses her future husband. In the Chanson, Oliver also blames Roland for being stubborn about blowing the horn. Oliver is angry and snarls at Roland that: ‘If I manage to see my fair sister Alda again, you shall never lie in her arms.’ (ChdR 1720-1721). These words do not refer to the defeat that Roland and Oliver are facing, but reflect Oliver’s anger towards Roland’s precipitate action.

Aude’s first appearance is a passive one, but she returns actively at the end of the Rolandslied, just before the trial against Ganelon, who is accused of treason. When studying the Chanson de Roland, scholars have pointed out that Aude offers an interesting opposition to Bramimonde. The same applies for the Rolandslied, as the main features of Aude and Bramimonde – respectively labelled as a ‘quiet maid and dissenting queen’ by Kinoshita – are also evident in the German text. In all likelihood, the audience of the Rolandslied recognised that Aude is a woman in love with Roland. The fair Aude appears at Charlemagne’s court and tells him she wants Roland back, for it was he whom the king promised her and the man for whom she longs. In the Chanson, Aude also asks where Roland is, but the audience is informed that it is Roland himself, rather than Charlemagne, who promised he would take her as his wife (ChdR 3710). Aude can therefore be regarded as Roland’s betrothed. In both texts, the king informs her with a heavy heart that Roland will not return because he is dead and buried. To this Charlemagne adds that he will provide her with a new husband, his son, Louis the Pious, who will rule over all of Charlemagne’s domains. Only in the Rolandslied, however, is it explicitly mentioned that Aude will thus also
rule as queen over all of France.\textsuperscript{104} The position of the future queen of France, as proposed in the \textit{Rolandslied}, might therefore be interpreted as bait for Aude to marry. Charlemagne’s offer equally demonstrates that young women possessed a genealogical value and were therefore meant to remarry. This fails to sway Aude, however, as she will have no other marriage and prays to Christ that she longs to die. After this she turns pale, falls into Charlemagne’s arms and dies.\textsuperscript{105}

In both the German and French episodes concerning Aude, it is evident that her character, as Oliver’s sister and Roland’s fiancée, is the common link between the two men. Although largely a passive figure, her role demonstrates the importance of women in establishing bonds between families. Through her relation with Roland she is also connected to Charlemagne, who indeed addresses her as family and even suggests that she could remain family by marrying his son Louis.

The difference between the two texts in terms of the drama connected to Aude’s death is that in the \textit{Chanson} it is centred around Charlemagne, while in the \textit{Rolandslied}, it focuses on Aude and her death wish. Only in the \textit{Chanson de Roland} does Charlemagne have tears in his eyes when Aude appears before him and he pulls his beard in despair. When she falls into his arms, he feels deeply sorry for her and holds her. After she dies he summons four countesses to further care for her body by taking it to a nunnery. Finally, the king makes an extensive endowment to the nunnery where Aude lies buried next to the altar ‘in noble fashion’ (ChdR 3723-3733). Charlemagne’s action can be considered as a gesture to secure the care of her soul. At the same time, it portrays him as an exemplary Christian king performing a task that befits his rank. In the \textit{Rolandslied}, neither the involvement of other aristocratic ladies nor the king’s largesse is mentioned. Aude is not buried next to the altar, but rather at the graveyard of the nuns. The emphasis is on the description of Aude’s loyalty to Roland and her piety, as expressed by her prayer to the Virgin in the hope that she would be taken to heaven.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{104} In the Chanson this passage is extended with the announcement that the king at first thinks Aude just has fainted and only notices that she has died as her head falls on his shoulder as he tries to help her get up. See Chdh 3722-3728.

\textsuperscript{105} Compare RL 8725-8726 and Chdh 3726-3727. ‘la mort de la fiancée de Roland comme une replique feminine de la mort du héros (comme celle d’Iseut dans le Roman de Tristan) et recevant dans la description de cette mort de frappantes ressemblances avec des motifs iconographiques tels que la Pietà (inversee) et la Dormition de la vierge’. Cited after Hijkaard 1987: 629-644.

\textsuperscript{106} RL 8714-8723.

Aude and her Audience

It is possible that the twelfth-century audience, whether Anglo-Norman or Saxon, perceived Aude’s rejection of Charlemagne’s proposal with ambiguity. On the one hand, it emphasises the young woman’s love for the dead hero, which is further underscored by her death. It is possible that Aude’s behaviour was considered sympathetically as a ‘romantic’ love, or as the idealisation of marriage. On the other hand, Henry and Matilda, like the majority of the men and women in the audience, were married for political reasons. In their eyes a betrothal was a contractual agreement between two families. To reject such an offer by the emperor could very well have been viewed as passing up an opportunity to marry an influential man. This does not mean that women never refused such a marriage proposal. In fact, some may have refused to (re-)marry at all. Yet it is highly likely that the family of a young woman such as Aude preferred seeing her at the side of a man of influence.\textsuperscript{107} As Jens Ahlers argued, this was one of the reasons why Henry II married off his eldest daughter, Matilda, to Henry the Lion.\textsuperscript{108} It is thus possible that the readers or listeners of the \textit{Rolandslied} viewed Aude as a stubborn young woman, acting irrational by refusing to marry.

Another perspective from which to view Aude in the \textit{Rolandslied} – and the \textit{Chanson} – is religious in nature: precisely because of her death, she may be seen as a model of the perfect woman. By refusing a new husband, she chooses to remain a virgin (she does not seem to have shared Roland’s bed). As such, her death resembles that of the many virgin martyrs who likewise rejected the husbands chosen for them by their fathers. While in reality this ideal was virtually unobtainable for most noblewomen, by being chaste they could still aspire to achieve spiritual ‘virginity’.\textsuperscript{109} Aude thus was able to leverage ‘widowhood’ to stay chaste.

Additionally, she serves as a perfect literary device employed by Konrad to emphasise that the heroic Roland – the man she loved and had lost – was a unique figure with whom no man could compete. Matilda’s appearance in Arnold of Lübeck’s chronicle can be viewed in the same man-

\textsuperscript{107} Examples of ruling widowed women are Cunigunde († 1184) and Agnes van Loon († 1191). See Elpers 2003: 105-108 and 119-120; French examples in Evergates 2007: 146-147. As example of a cloistered woman is Sophie of Bavaria († 1147) who married twice and then entered a monastery. See Elpers 2003: 77-79. On this topic also Evergates 2007: 141-146; Muelin-Bakker 2011: 15-24.

\textsuperscript{108} Ahlers 1987: 41.

\textsuperscript{109} Bennett 2002: 20-21.
ner: her royal descent, her virtues and her offspring were praised to glorify Henry the Lion, who was the hero of Arnold’s chronicle, just as Roland was in Konrad’s *Rolandslied*. From both Konrad’s ideal portrayal of Aude and Arnold’s laudatory depiction of Matilda one can gather only limited information regarding the actual duties and responsibilities of women. Surprisingly, it is from the one person in the *Rolandslied* for whom no name is even provided – Ganelon’s wife – that the greatest insight can be obtained.

### 1.3.2

**Ganelon’s wife: mother and regent**

When Ganelon addresses Roland with the words ‘your mother is my wife’, a nameless and voiceless woman enters the stage in the *Rolandslied*. Her passive role is underscored by not giving her a voice of her own: she is only spoken about by others. She is first mentioned after her husband is chosen – or rather forced – to act as an ambassador at the court of the pagan king, Marsile. It is Ganelon’s duty to find out whether Marsile really intends to convert to Christianity and submit himself to the emperor. He must also communicate the message that Charlemagne will not retreat before Saragossa is destroyed. Ganelon expresses his distrust to Roland. He also points out that Roland’s mother is Ganelon’s wife and that they have a son together, Baldwin, who is Roland’s half-brother:

> Now it is evident that you [Roland] have always wanted me dead. Your mother is my wife. My son Baldwin should be your brother.

You have forgotten about loyalty.

The mentioned passage not only informs the audience of the hostility between Ganelon and Roland, but it is also instructive in revealing the family ties that exist among the story’s main characters: Roland, Charlemagne and Ganelon. As Charlemagne’s sister and Roland’s mother, Ganelon’s wife – a very beautiful woman of course – serves as the connection between these men. Konrad also relates that she has another son, Baldwin, who is too young to rule in his father’s absence. To see Ganelon’s wife merely as the pivot of the remaining characters, however, is an oversimplified view. If this were the case, Konrad would have no reason to return to the nameless wife some sixty lines further, when Ganelon addresses Charlemagne in the hope of gaining his support against Roland:

> Ganelon fell on his knees before the emperor. ‘Lord’, he said, ‘if only I could benefit from the fact that your sister is my wife. When I die, Roland will seize all my belongings. He will disown your nephew. What can a woman do to prevent this? Little Baldwin will grow up without property. You will never see me again."

Clearly, Ganelon fears that his wife, Baldwin’s mother, will not be able to prevent her older son, Roland, from capturing their estates, thereby leaving Baldwin disinherited. At this stage, the importance of Ganelon’s wife in her role of sister and mother is stressed. Although these roles contribute to her importance, her position is limited: as a woman unable to arm and defend herself, she requires the support of men.

It is not Charlemagne, but Roland himself, who dismisses his ‘stepfather’ Ganelon’s fear by stating that there is no reason for concern. Roland tells Ganelon that he dearly loves Baldwin, who is Ganelon’s son and Roland’s half-brother. Therefore Roland has no desire to take Baldwin’s patrimony. Furthermore, Roland loves his mother and wishes to serve or support her. Finally, he says that his good behaviour is the product of Charlemagne’s education.

The discussed passages from the *Rolandslied* present situations that are recognisable to the audience. Moving from one court to another, as Ganelon was expected to do, was indeed a hazardous enterprise. Besides
the risk of injury during the journey, there was also no certainty that the family and property left behind are truly safe. During the lord’s absence, and in the event of his death, the heirs’ succession was less secure and the struggle over his lands was a genuine threat to the family’s security. What means a woman would have in her possession to prevent such a thing is not easy to determine. Recent studies on aristocratic women, however, demonstrate that (some) women were able to maintain the household during their husbands’ absence.117 As a matter of fact, the Rolandslied itself provides a clue to how women’s positions as regents could be upheld. When Ganelon addresses his 700 richly adorned and well-equipped ‘loyal men’ (sînen mannen, RL 1670) before departing to the court of the pagan king, Marsile, he states:

Now I plea to you also, do a final thing out of your honour. When I die in the land of the pagans, tell my beloved wife to take care of my soul. Support her in upholding her position. I entrust her with all my belongings. I leave her many large farmsteads and plenty of treasures.118

Ganelon hereby asks the men in his service to help protect his wife’s position. Equally evident is that he expects his wife to rule and, likewise, expects his vassals to support his son, who is later to rule over his land.119 The text thus suggests that his wife and vassals were supposed to cooperate. Though his wife does not speak, she is given a voice through Ganelon’s references to her person and her rule. The same cannot be said for her character in the French text.

Ganelon hereby asks the men in his service to help protect his wife’s position. Equally evident is that he expects his wife to rule and, likewise, expects his vassals to support his son, who is later to rule over his land.119 The text thus suggests that his wife and vassals were supposed to cooperate. Though his wife does not speak, she is given a voice through Ganelon’s references to her person and her rule. The same cannot be said for her character in the French text.

Ganelon hereby asks the men in his service to help protect his wife’s position. Equally evident is that he expects his wife to rule and, likewise, expects his vassals to support his son, who is later to rule over his land.119 The text thus suggests that his wife and vassals were supposed to cooperate. Though his wife does not speak, she is given a voice through Ganelon’s references to her person and her rule. The same cannot be said for her character in the French text.

Ganelon hereby asks the men in his service to help protect his wife’s position. Equally evident is that he expects his wife to rule and, likewise, expects his vassals to support his son, who is later to rule over his land.119 The text thus suggests that his wife and vassals were supposed to cooperate. Though his wife does not speak, she is given a voice through Ganelon’s references to her person and her rule. The same cannot be said for her character in the French text.

Ganelon hereby asks the men in his service to help protect his wife’s position. Equally evident is that he expects his wife to rule and, likewise, expects his vassals to support his son, who is later to rule over his land.119 The text thus suggests that his wife and vassals were supposed to cooperate. Though his wife does not speak, she is given a voice through Ganelon’s references to her person and her rule. The same cannot be said for her character in the French text.

THE NAMELESS WIFE IN THE CHANSON DE ROLAND: AN INVISIBLE WOMAN

The position of the nameless wife in the Chanson de Roland is very different to that of her role as just described in the Rolandslied. This is made most clear in the episode where Ganelon first addresses Charlemagne. In the Chanson, it is Ganelon’s son, Baldwin, who is the heir to his father’s lands and fiefs rather than Ganelon’s wife. Nor is she expected to look after Baldwin, for Ganelon urges that the emperor take care of his son.

I am well aware that I must go to Saragossa. Any man who goes there cannot return. Above all, don’t forget I am married to your sister, and that she gave me a son Baldwin, the fairest that ever was,’ he said, ‘who will be a man of honour. To him I leave my lands and my fiefs. Take good care of him, I’ll not set eyes on him again.120

Ganelon’s request that Charlemagne be entrusted with Baldwin’s care is not found in the Rolandslied. Such a move can likely be interpreted not only as a reference to the education and safekeeping of Ganelon’s son, but also implied the safekeeping of his lands and fiefs. Nowhere is Baldwin’s mother mentioned as a regent who is responsible for her son’s upbringing nor eligible for territorial rule. This is also evident when looking at the episode in which Ganelon briefly instructs his knights (chevaler, ChdR 359) to return to France in order to greet his wife, his friend and peer, Pinabel, and his son Baldwin. The knights are to assist his son by being his vassals.121 In the French text, Ganelon’s wife is therefore above all the mother of his son and heir. She is not bestowed the responsibility of acting as his son’s regent. Instead, Charlemagne is presented as the pater familias and, as one of the protagonists in the Chanson, is credited with caring for all of the members of his family in a fair and equal manner. John F. Benton states that the code of honour so explicitly formulated in the Chanson also concerns loyalty to one’s kin.122 And this is exactly what is referred to when Ganelon asks his vassals and companions in arms to serve his son as well.

THE NAMELESS WIFE AND MEDIEVAL LEGISLATION

We have seen that the nameless wife in the Rolandslied holds a somewhat different position than in the Chanson the Roland. In the first text, she is assigned to be Ganelon’s regent, his deputy during his absence and the ward of Baldwin. In the French text, Ganelon’s wife is therefore above all the mother of his son and heir. She is not bestowed the responsibility of acting as his son’s regent. Instead, Charlemagne is presented as the pater familias and, as one of the protagonists in the Chanson, is credited with caring for all of the members of his family in a fair and equal manner. John F. Benton states that the code of honour so explicitly formulated in the Chanson also concerns loyalty to one’s kin.122 And this is exactly what is referred to when Ganelon asks his vassals and companions in arms to serve his son as well.

118 No bitte ich euch mit eure mir / ostzlandehl sunne dere. / zeit ich dë zu den houten lands. / mizzen rike xwele / bevetel xwele xde / slekter ei x dere. / albus guadle elx
119 ich x sêle getrûwen. / jü ëllæ ich xwele ætibæwen / marxhe dëschle houche. / mizzen rike xwele / bevetel xwele xde / slekter ei x dere. / albus guadle elx
120 En Saraaguse aai ben qu’alre m’estoet. / Hon ki li vaat neguier ne a s’êne pow. / Ensamquatst o a la ja voite souer. / Sin es ûl fi, ja pla buu mu vanel. / Ço est Baldewin.’
121 Benton 1991 [1979]: 161. While loyalty to one’s kin is important, Benton states ‘But towering far above loyalty to kin are a warrior’s loyalties to his companions in arms […].’ See Benton 1991 [1979]: 162.
122 Benton 1991 [1979]: 161. While loyalty to one’s kin is important, Benton states ‘But towering far above loyalty to kin are a warrior’s loyalties to his companions in arms […].’ See Benton 1991 [1979]: 162.
text of medieval legislation concerning women’s wardship and inheritance. With regard to Saxon legislation, we have the thirteenth-century *Saxon Mirror (Sachsenspiegel)* by Eike von Repgow, which was possibly based on earlier (oral) law codes. According to this text, customary law of the region (*Lehnrecht*) prohibited Saxon women from acting as their children’s wards on the grounds that they themselves were assigned with wards (their fathers, brothers or husbands). While under early German law, a wife could represent her husband during his absence, even when involving third parties, this does not seem to be the case with the *Saxon Mirror*. On the contrary, the laws stipulated here do not seem to agree with what we have read in the *Rolandslied*. One must bear in mind, however, that the actual position of women was not always in concurrence with existing legislation. It is this point that Bettina Elpers makes in her study of regent mothers who acted as regents or wards and were charged with taking care of both children and property. We can assume that they were often supported by family members and vassals. Moreover, a woman who was subordinate to her husband and male relatives under customary law was permitted – under feudal law (*Lehnrecht*) – to control land and participate in warfare. The *Saxon Mirror* provides several examples of women who held fiefs, albeit via the husband who would have given her the enfeoffed land in order to support herself. According to the *Saxon Mirror* Ganelon was supposed to assign wardship to his closest male kin, i.e. Roland. This makes even more sense, as he was the son of the nameless wife and Baldwin’s brother. In the end, however, Ganelon’s immense hatred for Roland precluded such a move. Similarly, Ganelon expected little from Charlemagne, who would take Roland’s side. In a sense, Ganelon was left with no other option but to rely upon his wife and vassals.

Drawing from the *Très ancien coutumier* (1200-1245), Noel James Menuge concludes that Anglo-Norman women were considered unfit to be wards, because they would surely remarry, and as a result, deny the children from their first marriage of their rights. It was equally unwise to permit a woman to act as regent or ward, since ‘thirsting for his heritage, they destroy him.’ Only the lord to whom the dead father paid homage was able to act on this child’s behalf. From this perspective, it would be logical to view Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland* as the ward to whom Ganelon’s son was entrusted, even if Ganelon is not yet dead. The vassals played no role, possibly because they were considered potential usurpers. That no mention is made of the nameless wife could perhaps be seen as proof that she played no actual role in these agreements and had no choice but to accept what was decided. Sue Sheridan Walker concluded that, following the death of a husband, women usually accepted the fact that their feudal lands and their eldest son were held in wardship by (several) lords. Once again, we need to keep in mind the existing restrictions regarding female wardship do not necessarily mean that mothers made no attempt to secure such a wardship.

It thus seems that the positions of the nameless woman in the *Rolandslied* and *Chanson the Roland* reflect, to a certain extent, the legislative position held by women in these regions. At the same time, Pfaffe Konrad offered the nameless woman more space to act than his French counterpart. Perhaps he regarded this as a logical consequence of Ganelon’s troubled relation with Roland and Charlemagne. It is also possible, however, that Konrad considered Ganelon’s wife a suitable ward because, in reality, women were allowed to act as regents for their sons and absent husbands. When turning to the court of Henry the Lion, this is not such a farfetched idea.

**Matilda ruling in the absence of a husband**

Women acting as regents were most likely familiar to the German audience. Both Duke Henry’s mother and grandmother acted as regents during his minority. Moreover, during his first marriage to Clementia of Zähringen, he appointed his wife as regent or deputy (*Statthalterin*), meaning that she deputised for her husband whilst he was away in 1151 and 1154. In 1151, Henry left Lüneburg in order to claim Bavaria. The twelfth-century chronicler, Helmold of Bosau, writes that in preparation for this military campaign the duke assigned count Adolf of Holstein (+1164) as a guard over his lands of the Slavs and territories north of the Elbe. Helmold also mentions that Adolf was in the service of the Duchess Clementia, who remained at Lüneburg. In this episode, it is not explicitly stated that Clementia was involved...
in politics. But when Helmold tells that in the same year the Abodrite ruler, Niklot, turned to Clementia for help in order to have other Slavic tribes pay their taxes to him, it becomes clear that she was considered the right person to address. She took action by sending count Adolf with Niklot to support him. In 1154 Clementia acted again during Henry’s absence. The death of the bishop of Oldenburg resulted in the vacancy of this position. It was Clementia who decided that Gerold, her husband’s chaplain, should be sent to Oldenburg to occupy the episcopal see. The duchess thus exercised the right that was granted to her husband by Frederick Barbarossa.

In 1172-1173, Matilda seems to have been in a similar situation as Clementia and Ganelon’s nameless wife. Like Ganelon, Henry the Lion embarked on a journey leaving Brunswick for the Holy Land, perhaps also as an ambassador, as suggested by the Byzantine chronicler, John Kinnamos. According to Arnold of Lübeck, Henry was accompanied by 1200 men, a number that was likely just as fictive as the 700 men Ganelon gathered in the Rollandslied. Yet in both cases, these numbers probably impressed readers. Just as Ganelon’s nameless wife, Matilda remains at home. She is not in the fortunate position of already having a son, but she is with child and hopes to soon bring forth a male heir. In Chapter 2, I will discuss this in greater detail and will argue that it is very likely that Matilda acted as a regent during Henry’s absence. Because Matilda could not perform every duty by herself, she was supported by two ministerials. Roland wished to offer to his mother similar support and Ganelon requested that his wife receive his vassals’ assistance. When Ganelon pleads with his men to stay with the emperor while he travels to Marsile on his own, he tells the audience that his wife needs their support in maintaining her position. After all, he has left her with all his belongings, comprising many large farmsteads and great treasure.

Regardless of whether Ganelon’s wife ultimately did rule by herself or not, this passage from the Rollandslied illustrates that aristocratic women could act as regents, at least until their sons reached the age of majority and were old enough to rule by themselves. Had Ganelon and his wife been actual people living in twelfth-century Germany, they would have proved a valuable case study for Bettina Elpers’s book on maternal regents in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany. While she provides general outlines concerning female regency based on charters and chronicles, she equally demonstrates that each case should be studied individually as well. The nameless wife of Ganelon serves as a good fictional case. On the one hand, the nameless wife acted as a regent-mother for her infant son during Ganelon’s absence and death. On the other hand, it is an example that reveals that family members were involved in supporting the mother in maintaining her position and safeguarding her and her family’s properties.

While we can never be completely sure of the medieval author’s intentions, the emphasis on women’s responsibilities could be regarded as a strategy to draw the audience into the narrative. Considering their horizons of expectations, the reader and/ or listener possibly saw (maternal) regency as a reference to Matilda’s importance at court. As the duke’s consort, she was entrusted with the care of his estates, familia and vassals.

A wife’s responsibility to care for the estates while her husband is away and a mother’s duty to raise her son were, however, were not the sole tasks that aristocratic women were expected to perform. A passage in the Rollandslied suggests that they were expected to keep the fama and memoria of the husband and family alive as well. One might even suggest that a woman’s promotion of fama and memoria became more urgent when her husband was waging war. Her responsibility to care for the ‘here and now’ as well as the hereafter are discussed next.

133 Helmold of Bosau, Chronica Slavorum 136; Ehlers 2008: 77; Elpers 2003: 204.
134 Helmold of Bosau, Chronica Slavorum 149; Ehlers 2008: 93.
136 ‘About those times, the duke of Saxony, a numerous and prosperous people, came to Byzantium in order to reconcile the king of Germany [with Manuel] (for they practiced great suspicion toward one another). After he had achieved what he came for, he departed’, from John Kinnamos 1976: 214. See also Fried 1998: 112.
137 Fried 1998: 112.
138 Elpers 2003: 205 and 210-211.
When reading these words, Ganelon's request to bring ditze vingelin (this ring) to his wife has been overlooked.\textsuperscript{141} Nevertheless, this tiny object, which is absent from the French text, is fascinating. Its meaning can be established in several ways.\textsuperscript{142} The audience perhaps interpreted the ring as the one item that confirms for the nameless wife that the message was indeed sent by her husband, Ganelon, as she will recognise it as his. In this manner, the ring is a token of his identity. Perhaps giving it to her also constitutes the transferal of his authority to her. Bestowing authority on someone was frequently signalled by investing that person with insignia. The sceptre, like the crown, did not only serve as a symbol of his identity. Perhaps giving it to her also constitutes the transferal that confirms for the nameless wife that the message was indeed sent by her husband.\textsuperscript{143}

Since the ring was also a symbol of the everlasting bond between a husband and wife, Ganelon's act can be seen as repeating the ritual of the wedding ceremony, which signals the married couple's commitment.\textsuperscript{144} The importance of the ring was emphasised by medieval theologians. According to Bishop Ivo of Chartres (r. 1090–1115/1116), a wedding ring was one of the components of a legitimate marriage.\textsuperscript{145}

Half a century later, Rolandas of Bologna viewed the ring as a symbol of the eternal faithfulness between husband and wife, because of its unbroken shape.\textsuperscript{146} It is thus evident that the ring was not just a precious object, but that it also strongly emphasised the bond between two people.\textsuperscript{147} For the audience, which was accustomed to rituals and the objects associated with them, the ring's symbolic meanings were probably efficient in their ambiguity. That Ganelon reminds the reader or listener several times that he is convinced he will never return, that his son will be an orphan and his wife a widow, only added to the dramatic meaning of the ring.\textsuperscript{148}

At the same time, Ganelon expresses his hope to 'return to her with great joy'. These words follow directly after he commands his vassals to bring his wife the ring. The ring may therefore also be viewed as an object that can restore the bond between a husband and wife if Ganelon is indeed so fortunate to return. Ganelon indeed returns safely, but only to be put to death in reprisal for his treason – never to see his wife again.\textsuperscript{149} Whether seen as an object revealing the messenger's identity or as a token of the everlasting bond between a husband and wife, the ring is the most personal possession the nameless wife has of Ganelon after his death. It therefore serves as an everlasting reminder of her husband. Accordingly, Ganelon's ring is ultimately an object bestowed in fear in order to not be forgotten by his wife and son. Friedrich Ohly labels this as a human primal fear ('menschliche Urangst') that can be compensated by objects left behind. These helped people to remember, thereby protecting the said individual's life.\textsuperscript{150} To the wife, the ring would be a precious memento of her loving husband and her child's father, whose fame should not be forgotten.

The twelfth-century readers and listeners of the Rolandslied may

\textsuperscript{140}bring ditze vingelin. / nootcele en alh trentin, / ob gesaenite in alh pecke. / usste manet in alh peke / dorthe in bppetite in alte. / daz ai gaste dilet anhe etch bitte / rucht dritt zw aftich antelinet. / ob de gaste ich ai / leder nieser stre. / 1120–1121. Kartschoke has translated 'gaste late' with 'Klosterleute' which I have translated with religious people, either monks or nuns.

\textsuperscript{141}Kartschoke 2007: 176 (1713 ff.). He does not comment on the ring in the Chanson de Roland where the ring is absent, there is no reference at all to the care for the hereafter. Ganelon only refers to the present and the temporal future when he urges his knights to be his son's vassals. His wife is neither asked to preserve her husband's memory, nor to take care of his liturgical commemoration. Of course this does not mean that both aspects did not matter to the French audience, but it does not seem to have mattered in this particular poem.

\textsuperscript{142}Chadele, LoMA, vol. 2, col. 856.

\textsuperscript{143}Ferguson O’Meaile 2001: 12 (coronation of king) 158 (coronation of queen).

\textsuperscript{144}Petersohn 1998: 74–75.

\textsuperscript{145}Kartschoke 2007: 676 (1713 ff.). He does not comment on the ring in the Chanson de Roland where the ring is absent, there is no reference at all to the care for the hereafter. Ganelon only refers to the present and the temporal future when he urges his knights to be his son's vassals. His wife is neither asked to preserve her husband's memory, nor to take care of his liturgical commemoration. Of course this does not mean that both aspects did not matter to the French audience, but it does not seem to have mattered in this particular poem.

\textsuperscript{146}Chadele, LoMA, vol. 2, col. 856.

\textsuperscript{147}Brundage 1999: 189. The other elements indicating a legitimate marriage were: a public exchange of vows, marriage gifs, and blessing by the priest.

\textsuperscript{148}Reynolds 2007: 22–22. The ring also plays an important role in the late medieval legendary story of Henry the Lion travelling to unknown countries. When he departs from his wife he presents her the half of a golden ring, so that she will recognise him when he returns. See Metzger 1995, vol. 3: 16–19. Metzger considers the picture on the epitaph from around 1420, where Matilda holds a ring, to be the first reference to the legend of Henry the Lion, 16. In his right hand Henry supposedly holds a box which contained the ring.

\textsuperscript{149}Brundage 1999: 189. The other elements indicating a legitimate marriage were: a public exchange of vows, marriage gifs, and blessing by the priest.

\textsuperscript{149}Wiegand 1981: 50.

\textsuperscript{150}Thiel 1991: 1450.

\textsuperscript{150}She is mentioned when Ganelon’s clan tries to persuade Charlemagne to show mercy on Ganelon out of honour for his sister, RL, 8760–8766.

\textsuperscript{151}Doh 1984: 8–10.
have thought of the ring in a similar manner, but it is also possible that this highly symbolic object was regarded as a negative reminder that Ganelon's departure from Charlemagne's court ultimately resulted in Roland's death. Whatever the audience's response might have been, the fear of being forgotten and the efforts taken to prevent its occurring are found nowhere in the French text.

A WAY TO REMEMBER: LITURGICAL COMMEMORATION

Ganelon orders his vassals to inform his wife that religious men should pray for him if he does not return alive.152 This arrangement concerning liturgical commemoration, also labelled memoria, was without doubt familiar to the twelfth-century audience. A religious community was asked – in exchange for the donation of money, property, costly crafted objects or materials such as wax, lead or wood – to pray for the dead in order to stimulate the spiritual welfare of the deceased. Mentioning a deceased person's name in prayers was done not only to invoke God's commemoration of the dead, but also to ensure that the memory of that person remained alive within the community of the living.153 This was important because the living hoped that the dead would act as intercessors with the saints. At the same time, the temporal future when he urges his knights to be his son's vassals. His wife is neither asked to preserve her husband's memory, nor to take care of his liturgical commemoration. Of course this does not mean that both aspects did not matter to the French audience, but it does not seem to have mattered in this particular poem. Only 154. 155

\[\text{152 Oeicle 1989: 19.} \]
\[\text{153 Oeicle 1984: 394.} \]
\[\text{154 Van Bueren et al. 2011: 191.} \]

\[\text{155 Against this background, the ring Ganelon gives to his wife might also be considered as an object that was to be donated to those benevolent individuals, i.e. monks and nuns, who were responsible for commemoring Ganelon.} \]

In the passage of the Rolandslied that concerns Ganelon's preparations before leaving his family, friends and followers, the medieval audience witnessed an 'all-embracing social event'. On the assumption that Ganelon would die, he organised his house by appointing his wife as regent, his vassals as her supporters and taking measures to ensure that the care for his eternal well-being was in order.154 While the Rolandslied concerns perhaps a fictional story, such memorial arrangements would by no means have sounded unrealistic to a medieval audience.

**FAMA AND MEMORIA AT THE COURT OF HENRY AND MATILDA**

Medieval people knew from experience that it was important to keep the fame and memory of relatives alive. Consequently, these aspects may have been added to the Rolandslied as a technique to engage the audience in the story. One way to preserve the memory of next of kin was to commission ‘histories’; narrations that established the potentially fictional origin and fame of a dynasty. Such histories were therefore also highly suitable for lauding contemporary rulers.155 Both the Anglo-Norman rulers and the members of the Welf dynasty were eager to commission such texts.156

\[\text{156 Oeicle 1989: 19.} \]
\[\text{157 The Anglo-Saxon Aelflæd, widow of Brighnoth, gave the} \]
\[\text{158 The Swedish Sparhiva, wife of Alfrid, gave the} \]
\[\text{159 The Gesta Regum Anglorum by William of Malmesbury} \]
\[\text{160 Oeicle 1968: 435-497.} \]
While we do not know if Henry and Matilda as well stimulated the writing of such texts, by hailing its patrons and linking them to important historical figures of the past, the Rolandslied shares a number of characteristics with these histories. In this manner, Henry and Matilda’s fame, like that of the kings of England, is sung and preserved through a *chanson de geste*. Reminders of ancestors’ fame and that of living family members were not confined to written texts. Gerhard Otto Oexle regards the gigantic bronze lion Henry commissioned around 1166 at Brunswick as an object of ‘profane memoria’. The lion represents and commemorates the duke’s rule and his right to administer justice. Additionally, it directly refers to the bronze statue’s patron, who was nicknamed ‘the Lion’. It has also been observed in relation to Henry’s descent from the Welf dynasty, since ‘Welf’ was also the word for a young lion cub.¹⁶¹ The bronze lion is therefore an embodiment of Henry’s presence and fame. The importance Henry and Matilda attached to fame is also evident when looking at the coronation miniature in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda [ill. 3.3]. Here they are depicted together with their parents and grandparents who can be identified by the aid of inscriptions. The miniature, which will be discussed extensively in Chapter 3, emphasises their royal descent and is a constant reminder of it as well. Henry and Matilda’s fame is like that of the other nobles interwoven with their lineage, because family descent was a crucial way of legitimising the power rulers were eager to hold.¹⁶²

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the coronation miniature also communicates the idea of liturgical commemoration, the second way to preserve one’s memory. Henry and Matilda are presented with the crowns of heaven. The scroll held by Christ addresses them directly, requesting that they follow him in order to obtain eternal life. This is witnessed and stimulated by the saints (John the Evangelist, John the Baptist, Blaise, George, Peter, Bartholomew, Gregory and Thomas Becket) flanking Christ on either side. The miniature is found in the gospel book presented by Henry and Matilda to the Church of St Blaise, with the intention that it be used for the spiritual benefit of their souls, which the canons of this church were expected to safeguard.

Objects, whether written or visual, were thus suitable instruments to preserve someone’s *fama* and *memoria*.¹⁶³ Written source material is far from overwhelming with regards to Matilda’s care for the present and future well-being of her family. Studies by Elisabeth van Houts and others point out that women employed both means to guarantee the memory of past family members. One could therefore imagine that the same was expected of Matilda.¹⁶⁴ Arnold of Lübeck’s statement that the duchess was very devout, prayed with great zeal and frequently attended mass could be considered as a first clue to her involvement in religious patronage.¹⁶⁵ From the thirteenth-century inventory in the *Obdientiet et reditus eccleste Hildesbemensis in variis locis* we know that Matilda donated several objects to the Cathedral of Hildesheim.¹⁶⁶ This inventory of acquired assets and revenues is part of the cathedral’s Chapter Book (*Liber capitularis*) and mentions among the donated objects by Matilda two shrines, several ecclesiastical vestments and a censer in the shape of a Greek cross. The Hildesheim inventory does not mention why this specific donation is made, but the fact that gift-giving was an act of reciprocity suggests that the gifts were presented in the hope that the donors would be absolved of their sins and be remembered eternally.¹⁶⁷ Of course, the donation may perhaps have been politically motivated as well. Another source informing us about the importance of the care for the hereafter is a charter issued by Henry and Matilda’s son, Henry Count Palatine (1223). It not only credits Matilda with donating the Altar of the Virgin to the Church of St Blaise, but it also explains that she made the donation ‘for the sake of their devout spirit and in their loving memory’.¹⁶⁸

So far we have seen that the duties of Ganelon’s wife – ruling in his absence and ensuring the care of his fame and *memoria* – correspond with the responsibilities of actual noblewomen in the twelfth century. In Chapter 2, I will argue that it is possible that Matilda acted as Henry’s regent in 1172-1173. The gift to Hildesheim and Matilda’s donation of the altar of St Blaise suggest that she also was responsible for the care of

---

¹⁶¹ Oexle 1994: 412-413.
¹⁶³ Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Danorum* 11.
¹⁶⁴ From the thirteenth-century inventory in the *Obdientiet et reditus eccleste Hildesbemensis in variis locis* we know that Matilda donated several objects to the Cathedral of Hildesheim. This inventory of acquired assets and revenues is part of the cathedral’s Chapter Book (*Liber capitularis*) and mentions among the donated objects by Matilda two shrines, several ecclesiastical vestments and a censer in the shape of a Greek cross. The Hildesheim inventory does not mention why this specific donation is made, but the fact that gift-giving was an act of reciprocity suggests that the gifts were presented in the hope that the donors would be absolved of their sins and be remembered eternally. Of course, the donation may perhaps have been politically motivated as well. Another source informing us about the importance of the care for the hereafter is a charter issued by Henry and Matilda’s son, Henry Count Palatine (1223). It not only credits Matilda with donating the Altar of the Virgin to the Church of St Blaise, but it also explains that she made the donation ‘for the sake of their devout spirit and in their loving memory’.

---

165 Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Danorum* 11.
166 Oexle 1993: 105.
167 From the thirteenth-century inventory in the *Obdientiet et reditus eccleste Hildesbemensis in variis locis* we know that Matilda donated several objects to the Cathedral of Hildesheim. This inventory of acquired assets and revenues is part of the cathedral’s Chapter Book (*Liber capitularis*) and mentions among the donated objects by Matilda two shrines, several ecclesiastical vestments and a censer in the shape of a Greek cross. The Hildesheim inventory does not mention why this specific donation is made, but the fact that gift-giving was an act of reciprocity suggests that the gifts were presented in the hope that the donors would be absolved of their sins and be remembered eternally. Of course, the donation may perhaps have been politically motivated as well. Another source informing us about the importance of the care for the hereafter is a charter issued by Henry and Matilda’s son, Henry Count Palatine (1223). It not only credits Matilda with donating the Altar of the Virgin to the Church of St Blaise, but it also explains that she made the donation ‘for the sake of their devout spirit and in their loving memory’.

---

163 Oexle 1994: 145; Oexle 1998: 16. For the discussion about the date of the erection of the Lion, see Lüger.
164 Oexle 1993: 105.
165 From the thirteenth-century inventory in the *Obdientiet et reditus eccleste Hildesbemensis in variis locis* we know that Matilda donated several objects to the Cathedral of Hildesheim. This inventory of acquired assets and revenues is part of the cathedral’s Chapter Book (*Liber capitularis*) and mentions among the donated objects by Matilda two shrines, several ecclesiastical vestments and a censer in the shape of a Greek cross. The Hildesheim inventory does not mention why this specific donation is made, but the fact that gift-giving was an act of reciprocity suggests that the gifts were presented in the hope that the donors would be absolved of their sins and be remembered eternally. Of course, the donation may perhaps have been politically motivated as well. Another source informing us about the importance of the care for the hereafter is a charter issued by Henry and Matilda’s son, Henry Count Palatine (1223). It not only credits Matilda with donating the Altar of the Virgin to the Church of St Blaise, but it also explains that she made the donation ‘for the sake of their devout spirit and in their loving memory’.

---

163 Oexle 1994: 412-413. For the discussion about the date of the erection of the Lion, see Lüger.
164 Oexle 1993: 105.
165 From the thirteenth-century inventory in the *Obdientiet et reditus eccleste Hildesbemensis in variis locis* we know that Matilda donated several objects to the Cathedral of Hildesheim. This inventory of acquired assets and revenues is part of the cathedral’s Chapter Book (*Liber capitularis*) and mentions among the donated objects by Matilda two shrines, several ecclesiastical vestments and a censer in the shape of a Greek cross. The Hildesheim inventory does not mention why this specific donation is made, but the fact that gift-giving was an act of reciprocity suggests that the gifts were presented in the hope that the donors would be absolved of their sins and be remembered eternally. Of course, the donation may perhaps have been politically motivated as well. Another source informing us about the importance of the care for the hereafter is a charter issued by Henry and Matilda’s son, Henry Count Palatine (1223). It not only credits Matilda with donating the Altar of the Virgin to the Church of St Blaise, but it also explains that she made the donation ‘for the sake of their devout spirit and in their loving memory’.

---

163 Oexle 1994: 145; Oexle 1998: 16. For the discussion about the date of the erection of the Lion, see Lüger.
164 Oexle 1993: 105.
165 From the thirteenth-century inventory in the *Obdientiet et reditus eccleste Hildesbemensis in variis locis* we know that Matilda donated several objects to the Cathedral of Hildesheim. This inventory of acquired assets and revenues is part of the cathedral’s Chapter Book (*Liber capitularis*) and mentions among the donated objects by Matilda two shrines, several ecclesiastical vestments and a censer in the shape of a Greek cross. The Hildesheim inventory does not mention why this specific donation is made, but the fact that gift-giving was an act of reciprocity suggests that the gifts were presented in the hope that the donors would be absolved of their sins and be remembered eternally. Of course, the donation may perhaps have been politically motivated as well. Another source informing us about the importance of the care for the hereafter is a charter issued by Henry and Matilda’s son, Henry Count Palatine (1223). It not only credits Matilda with donating the Altar of the Virgin to the Church of St Blaise, but it also explains that she made the donation ‘for the sake of their devout spirit and in their loving memory’.
Queen Bramimonde: women as mediators and advisors

As the woman who appears most frequently both in the *Rolandslied* and *Chanson*, Queen Bramimonde has received ample scholarly attention. Because she is a pagan queen and therefore a problematic role model, she might not seem the most obvious person to study when discussing the responsibilities of women. There are, however, several reasons for discussing Bramimonde’s duties and actions. For one thing, many aspects of the Christian and pagan court are mirrored in both texts, suggesting that the author’s notions regarding noble behaviour did not vary significantly for either of the two courts. There is no reason to assume that this applied to the male characters only. Moreover, the pagan queen is no different from the female (and mothers). This makes them both the ‘other’, meaning that their sex distinguishes them from men and sets them apart from the male world. Perhaps this is the reason Konrad does not attribute Bramimonde with more negative qualities than the other women. Moreover, it is evident that Bramimonde will convert to Christianity and this makes her less pagan. A parallel emerges between Bramimonde and Gyburg, the wife of Willehalm and a converted Arabic princess (formerly known as Arabel), in Wolfram of Eschenbach’s *Willehalm* (1210-1220).

She is credited with much the same characteristics as Bramimonde (wise advisor, prepared to fight, courtly hostess), but plays a more prominent role in the story. She, for example, argues that Christians and pagans are both created by God. It is possible that the character of Gyburg evolved from the hereafter. This is what the Gospel Book, to be discussed in Chapter 3, was also meant to communicate. The second woman appearing in the *Rolandslied*, the pagan queen, Bramimonde, cannot be credited with caring for the memoria. When it comes to the pagans, this theme is entirely absent. What Bramimonde does care for, however, is the here and now.

Queen Bramimonde stood up. She kissed him, gave him a piece of jewellery and spoke: ‘Bring this to your wife. Charlemagne is a powerful king, but he never owned such a piece. Nor was there ever made a similar piece on earth. I will show you my friendship. Try to bring me Roland. If I could kill him with my own hands, I would give people and land for it.’

In the *Chanson de Roland*, Bramimonde is also introduced after Marsile, Valdabrun and Climborim have presented their gifts. Here too Marsile kisses Ganelon (on the neck), but contrary to what happens in the *Rolandslied*, he is not the only figure involved in the act of kissing. In the *Chanson*, Valdabrun and Ganelon kiss each other on the face and chin; Climborim and Ganelon exchange kisses on the mouth and face. Subsequently, Queen Bramimonde comes forward and says: ‘I care very much for you sir’. She then presents her gift to Ganelon, but she does not kiss him. In both texts, Bramimonde offers a gift to Ganelon, but it is only in the *Rolandslied* that she kisses him (it is unclear whether this is on the mouth or cheek). In what way are all of these kisses, and especially that of Bramimonde, to be interpreted?

In the first time the reader or listener encounters Bramimonde in the *Rolandslied* is when Ganelon is rewarded for instructing Marsile as to when and by what means Roland’s army should be attacked. Out of gratitude for Ganelon’s support, King Marsile offers him a kiss on the mouth and endows him with many precious objects. Next, Valdabrun (Valdebrun) presents Ganelon with a sword and Climborim (Oliboris) gives him a helmet – all in an effort to have Roland brought to them. Neither of the two men kisses Ganelon. After this, Bramimonde comes forward and addresses Ganelon:

Bramimonde. Based on this brief analysis of Bramimonde, we are now able to discuss the pagan queen’s actions in light of the responsibilities medieval Christian women had at their courts.

158 Harrison 1981: 678

159 Kisselotha 2001: 78-111 who argues that the resemblances between both courts demonstrate the crisis in differentiation.
A pact sealed with a queenly kiss

The kiss was a meaningful gesture to the medieval audience, because this non-verbal act was an important part of public ritual. But like many gestures, the kiss was ambiguous and therefore difficult to interpret, if only because some people made a distinction among various kinds of kisses. In his De spirituali amicitia (On spiritual friendship), the twelfth-century English monk Aelred of Rievaulx cites four kinds of physical kisses that he considered to be natural: a kiss that reconciles enemies; a kiss that signifies peace (e.g., given in church after mass); a kiss based on love between a husband and wife or between friends after a long separation; and a kiss ‘as a sign of catholic unity’, for instance, when a guest is received. Of course, the context in which the kisses are exchanged contributes to the meaning of the kiss and provides us with some idea about its degree of appropriateness.

While the episode where Ganelon receives Marsile’s kiss on the mouth does not entail the entire ritual of vassalage, this kiss does seem to reflect the ceremony of homage and fealty (osculum feodale). It could also very well have been a kiss of friendship (amicitia) as part of a treaty. The kiss is the first part of the ratification of their agreement that Ganelon will betray Roland – this Ganelon swears he will do. The second part consists of the gift-giving, what might be considered as a definitive action that seals their deal. The same help is requested, or maybe even reinforced, by Valdabrun and Climborin and is ensured by Ganelon as well. Although the kisses of Valdabrun and Climborin are absent from the Rolandslied, it is evident that the gifts these two men present to Ganelon are also meant to seal the pact. Not only does Ganelon accept the gifts as a token that the deal was indeed clinched, but he also expresses his alliance by saying dü hast mich immer gewun- nen (RL 2538) and ich gemache dir Ruolanten (RL 2562).

The kisses suggest equality among the men, because even though the Saracens took the initiative, each performed virtually the same physical act reciprocally. In the story of Roland, however, such reciprocity does not necessarily mean that these kisses are to be viewed in a positive light. After all, such an act also bears strong connotations with betrayal. Not without reason, Ganelon is described as ungetriuwe herzoge (RL 2535). He does not betray the one he kisses, and yet, his kiss still resembles that of Judas. While kisses exchanged between men in a relationship of fealty were normal, one may question how appropriate it was for Bramimonde to perform this same gesture as it occurs in the Rolandslied.

In his article on depictions of the kiss as a gesture, Michael Camille discusses the legal kiss (among others) and remarks that women did not engage in this ritual because it was considered indecent. Le Goff, by contrast, is not convinced that ‘decency’ had anything to do with the exclusion of women from the kiss. Women were allowed to participate in the ritual of homage that signified the inequality between lord and vassal, but were expelled from the bond of fealty symbolised by the kiss because it marked the phase of equality between the partners. As women were not considered equals due to their sex, they could not take part in the ritual kiss. Le Goff adds that, in reality, this rule was probably not followed strictly, particularly when women in possession of royal authority were involved.

Bramimonde might also have been such an exception. This would fit her character, as she acts as an ‘independent and active participant’ who is capable of performing political duties in all of the passages in the Rolandslied. The audience’s view of Bramimonde’s kiss as appropriate or inappropriate would perhaps have depended on whether they interpreted the act as following that of her husband’s or as an act taken without her husband’s consent. In addition, the audience’s reading was also likely to be affected by the fact that Bramimonde’s kiss went hand in hand with the gift that she had just presented to Ganelon as a token of their friendship and their agreement to destroy Roland. Regardless of the exact (emotional) response triggered by the gestures of the kiss and gift, they provide some indication that a queen, like Bramimonde, was allowed to be actively involved in the political affairs of their husbands. The next question to be addressed is in what way we are to interpret the jewellery that Bramimonde presents to Ganelon as gifts to his wife.

176 Slitt 2010: 147-164.
177 Kissing is difficult to study due to the absence of formal recording or public observation. Moreover, the sources which mention kisses do not seem to reflect reality. See Frijhoff 1991: 210-211.
178 Burrow 2004: 50.
179 Burrow 2004: 52 with an overview of the variables involved in kissing, such as the sexual sphere (public or private), age, gender and social status.
180 Le Goff 1980: 240 ff. For the general outlines of such a ceremony, see Burrow 2004: 12. For the idea of friendship as part of a treaty see Althoff 2004: 71.
181 The investiture of the fief, symbolised by offering a material counter-gift, seals the vassalage. See Le Goff 1980: 253.
182 Burrow 2004: 32.
184 Le Goff 1980: 261. He gives Dona Urraca (r. 1109-1126) as an example. Thomas Martin gives a more detailed account of her rule and the way art and architecture functioned as dynastic propaganda. See Martin 2005: 1134-1171.
185 Harrison 1981: 674.
Bramimonde’s jewellery: family ties sealed with a special gift

In the *Rolandslied*, the exchange of kisses is followed by the gift giving. The costly gifts Marsile bestowed upon Ganelon are named. Such an overview is absent from the *Chanson de Roland*. In imitation of her husband and the two dukes, Bramimonde presents jewellery to Ganelon (*si gah ime ain gesmûde*, RL 2571) and adds that he should give it to his wife (*nu bringez disem wilbe*, RL 2572). While there are no clues regarding the exact kind of jewellery given, we are told twice that it is a unique piece, and from this, we may probably also conclude that it was quite costly. As the jewellery is not meant to be worn or used by Ganelon, but is intended for his wife, it is likely to be a piece especially suited for a woman.168 The gender-specific character of the jewellery is also underscored in both texts by the fact that Valdabrun and Climborin present military gifts (helmet and sword) generally used by males only.

Why would Bramimonde offer Ganelon jewels for his wife? That a woman would present a feminine object to another woman provides probably only part of the answer. As gift-giving was always reciprocal, the main reason for such a gesture was that it would not only implicate Ganelon in the scheme of killing Roland, but likewise the rest of his family. This made the alliance stronger. Although it is not explicitly stated that he accepts the gift, it was probably evident to the audience that he did. The piece of jewellery served as a confirmation of his agreement with the pagans. Moreover, the object also served as a visual reminder of the deal to Ganelon and his wife. Ganelon’s reply, however, is less gallant than when the men presented him with their gifts. This has nothing to do with his appreciation for the jewels, but rather concerns the belligerent words that accompanied Bramimonde’s giving; that she would like to kill Roland herself.187 Ganelon finds her arrogant behaviour offensive (*ir höchvart müet mich vil sêre*, RL 2584). In all likelihood, Konrad added Ganelon’s reaction – which is not found in the *Chanson de Roland* – not only to demonstrate that the warlike Saracen queen over-

168 Elisabeth van Houts states that the giving of precious metals was gendered: From wools it is evident that jewellery which be worn went to daughters or sisters, while decorated drinking horns and cups were passed on to sons or grandsons. See Van Houts 1989: 108. It must be noted that these gifts stay within the family and are therefore of a different kind than gifts to vassals and friends.

167 Kartschoke also remarks that these words are odd, but for a different reason. He finds it strange that the pact between Ganelon and the Saracens only concerns the death of Roland and now also involved the death of all the people (the whole army? All of the Christians?). See Kartschoke 2007: 685-686.

187 Muslims were likely to view and judge Christians in a similar way. Muslim writers mention Christian women fighting during the crusades and consider this to be strange, barbaric and ugly. See Nicholson 1993: 335-349. There are many examples of women engaged in battle. See Edgington and Lambert (eds.) 2002. Their book provides examples of women’s involvement in the crusades and their defence of territories at home. Compare RL 2577 and ChdR 635-636. Kinoshita translates ‘Jo vos aim mult’ with ‘I love you well’. See Kinoshita 2001: 91.

190 The hiding of the brooches is an interesting gesture. Probably Ganelon tries to reveal that he has been bribed.


188 Muslims were likely to view and judge Christians in a similar way. Muslim writers mention Christian women fighting during the crusades and consider this to be strange, barbaric and ugly. See Nicholson 1993: 335-349. There are many examples of women engaged in battle. See Edgington and Lambert (eds.) 2002. Their book provides examples of women’s involvement in the crusades and their defence of territories at home. Compare RL 2577 and ChdR 635-636. Kinoshita translates ‘Jo vos aim mult’ with ‘I love you well’. See Kinoshita 2001: 91.

189 The hiding of the brooches is an interesting gesture. Probably Ganelon tries to reveal that he has been bribed.

192 Marsile asks Ganelon how he can kill Roland. Valdabrun requests to help them in the matter of bright Roland and Climborin wants Ganelon to show them how they may slay Roland. Bramimonde requests none of these things.
Bramimonde’s actions were not unfamiliar to the medieval audience. There are numerous examples of women engaged in gift giving in order to consolidate ties, two of which will be discussed next.

**THE GIFTS PRESENTED BY MATILDA AND HER MOTHER ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE**

Once again, Arnold of Lübeck informs us of Matilda’s involvement in her husband’s affairs. When on 23 September 1179, Henry burned down Halberstadt, and with the city its churches, he also imprisoned its bishop, Ulrich. Arnold writes:

> [Duke Henry] did not release the bishop straight away, but had him [Ulrich] taken to Hertenburg [Artlenburg], commanding that he, although imprisoned, would be treated honourably. The very devout Duchess Matilda cared so much for him that she, out of reverence for his sacred office, gave him plenty of good vestments and with great dedication she took care of all his needs, so that according to his position he would lack nothing.194

The turmoil in Saxony in 1178-1180, caused by the ongoing conflict between Henry the Lion and his opponents, forced Henry to transfer his family from Brunswick – at the centre of the turmoil – to Artlenburg.195 Opposition to Henry was fierce. It not only included the bishop of Halberstadt, but also the archbishops, Philip of Cologne, Wichmann of Magdeburg and Siegfried of Brandenburg. Margrave Otto of Meissen, Count Bernhard of Aschersleben, Landgrave Louis III of Thuringia and others joined this alliance against the duke.196 Once Henry had taken Bishop Ulrich as his captive, he brought him to Artlenburg Castle.197 There the duchess was charged with the care of her husband’s important prisoner. Perhaps Arnold introduced Matilda as lovingly and caring towards Bishop Ulrich to emphasise that Henry the Lion regretted that the cathedral in Halberstadt had gone up in flames.198 It was, however, not necessary to stage Matilda in this scene just for this reason, as just a few lines before, Arnold had already stated quite explicitly that the duke deplored what had happened. It is more likely that Arnold wished to demonstrate that Ulrich was looked after properly in accordance with his rank. To what degree Matilda’s care for the bishop was personally motivated is immaterial in this context. Of greater interest is that Arnold’s description of Matilda – that she ‘cared so much for’ Ulrich – resembles that of Konrad’s words with regards to Bramimonde’s presentation of precious jewellery to Ganelon: *ich bán dûr gerne minne* (RL 2577). As argued above, Bramimonde’s gift was meant to seal the bond between Ganelon and Marsile. One could imagine that Matilda’s gift to Bishop Ulrich was also politically motivated. In order to compensate Ulrich for taking his freedom, he was offered costly vestments (and probably more). According to Arnold of Lübeck, Matilda was perfectly capable of performing this duty, because, as he had stated before, she was a devout and virtuous woman. Moreover, this was not the only occasion on which Matilda is known to have bestowed such a gift. Before her death in 1189, she and Henry donated several liturgical vestments and liturgical vessels (*vasa sacra*) to St Mary’s Cathedral in Hildesheim.199 It should be noted that Matilda is mentioned prior to her husband. In addition, she is designated as *ecclesie nostre devotissima* (dedicated to our church) a point that led Colette Bowie in her study of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughters to conclude that Matilda may have been regarded as the church’s matron.200 Matilda was considered capable of handling such affairs. Undoubtedly, she was acquainted with the importance of gift giving from an early age. Sybille Schröder extensively studied Henry II’s practice of gift giving. It was an important strategy that manifested his rank and rule and therefore legitimised his rulership. But it also firmly defined relationships, established hierarchy and solved conflicts.201 Textiles were commonly used as payments for services, but wine and objects crafted in gold and silver were also

---

194 Nic tamem ac pessimo captivitatem ilium requavisist, et dominum episcopum Hertenburg [Artlenburg] deduci fecit et eum honeste, sub custodia tamen, tractari precepit. Quem religiosissima ducissa Machthildis pietatis affectu et eum honeste, sub custodia tamen, tractari precepit. Nec tamen ad presens captivitatem illam relaxavit, sed

195 A map with the military campaigns between 1178-1181 in Ehlers 2008: 327. In September 1180 Henry had withdrawn to Halberstadt, because due to the loss of East Saxony the territory at the north of the river Elbe was his main support and at Christmas the same year the former duke and his family stayed at Lüneburg. See Ehlers 2008: 319-320. Henry, however, also had to give up this territory in June 1181, after he had lost Brandenburg, the Artlenburg and Lübeck. See Ehlers 2008: 341.


197 Artlenburg is also known as Ertheneburg, located at the northern bank of the Elbe and not far from Lüneburg. It was a strategic position for expansion to the north. Henry inherited the castle through Lothar III, used it for several diets and had it burned down in 1181 when waging war against Frederick Barbarossa. See Ehlers 2008: 235.


199 MGH UU HdL: 179, no. 122.


201 Ehlers 2008: 179, no. 122.
Schröder’s study is of interest, because it demonstrates that, contrary to what we might expect, the bestowal of textiles as gifts was by no means limited to women. Interpreting gifts as gender specific, both from the giving and receiving party’s point of view, must be done with due caution.

Matilda’s mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, also presented gifts. Most of these were to religious institutes, but secular beneficiaries also received land, money and privileges. Eleanor does not seem to have presented many material gifts, but it is more than likely that the written sources are incomplete or simply do not mention such gifts. One exception does exist, however: a ring that she gave to a certain Richard Animal. A present of this sort is of a more personal nature somewhat similar to the precious jewels given by Bramimonde. It was Matthew Paris who recorded in his Liber Additamentorum (Book of Additions, 1250-54) that Richard later donated the ring to St Albans. In his text, he writes that the ring bears an intensely coloured sapphire. This eye-catching blue stone is clearly visible in Matthew’s drawing [ill. 1.3]. According to him the ring was decorated with the initials ‘R’ and ‘A’, referring to Ricardo and Animal respectively. The initials were each inscribed on one side, as can also be seen in the drawing. Was Matthew correct in concluding that the letter ‘A’ stands for Richard’s surname, Animal? He specifically states that the gem formerly belonged to...
Bramimonde and the Unheard Opinions and Advice of a Woman

The other instances in which we encounter Bramimonde in the *Rolandslied* are after Roland is killed and Charlemagne decides to avenge his death and that of the others. The first passage is when Marsile has escaped to his palace in Saragossa after Charlemagne had killed the pagans near the Ebro. During the fight Marsile had lost his arm.218 Although we do not know the audience’s response to this episode, the scene describing a one-armed soldier-king was designed to generate irony.

Bramimonde grieves over this lost battle and although it is not explicitly stated it seems that she and other pagans go to their temple and have the images of pagan gods destroyed.219 They blame their gods (Apollo, Mohammed, Tervagant) for not having prevented the loss of Marsile’s arm and the defeat of their army. In the *Chanson de Roland* this episode is depicted in similar fashion, although with more eye for Marsile who dismounts under an olive tree and gives up all his signs of a warrior (sword, helmet and byrnie). He swoons with pain from his bleeding arm because he has lost his right hand completely.220 Bramimonde and more than twenty thousand men curse France and its emperor and they blame Apollo for their loss and abuse his image.221

In both texts the defeat of the Saracens is connected to the failure of their gods. In the eyes of the Christian writer and his audience this was to be expected and was justified exactly because of their trust in pagan gods. Many examples from the Old Testament support the idea that the Christian God condemns idolatry.224 At the same time the smashing of the idols and the vanishing of the pagan’s faith, as supported and even initiated by Bramimonde, seem to be a prelude to the conversion of Bramimonde at the end of the story. An audience that was already familiar with the *Rolandslied* might have considered this evident.

The Caliph, or Emir, Baligant has received the message that the Saracens had been defeated at the Ebro. He sends two messengers to Marsile and say that their gods will support the king. In the *Rolandslied* Marsile

210 The loss of his arm becomes evident only after reading about the blaming of the pagan gods, RL 7142-7145, RL 7283.
211 RL 7135-7142.
212 ChdR 2570-2575.
213 ChdR 2540-2541.
214 Moses warns the people of Israel against idolatry by reminding them that God killed the people following Baal, Deut. 4: 3-4; 12: 29-31. See also Kings I 18:25-40 and 2 Chronicles 33: 1-13.
not taken seriously by Emir Baligant, for they come from a woman, will cost him dearly. If we consider the story to reflect social reality to a certain extent, the responses to Bramimonde's actions reveal the double standard towards women. Due to their volatile nature women should not interfere too much and cannot always be trusted. And at the same time, if they are wise and loyal, they can offer invaluable advice. We will see that Bramimonde's advice is not always taken for granted.

**Bramimonde as an Exemplary Wise Queen**

Baligant and his men are defeated by Charlemagne, and in the *Rolandslied*, Marsile is struck dead upon witnessing this. Then Charlemagne arrives at the city of Saragossa, whereupon Bramimonde decides to open the gates to let the emperor enter. She kneels before him and confesses that she has been following the wrong gods, but now has the opportunity to change to the true faith. She immediately wishes to be baptised (RL 8622-8630). After all the pagans – Bramimonde is not explicitly mentioned – have been baptised, Charlemagne and his vassals take Bramimonde to Aachen. There she observes how Charlemagne mourns extensively over his dead men. As a consolation, the queen turns to the emperor and tells him that according to her faith – her new Christian faith – his men died for truth, and for this reason, they will live eternally. Referring to Charlemagne's own words, she states that it is not the righteous, but rather the ungodly, who should be lamented because their death is irrevocable. This passage from the *Rolandslied* is not found in the *Chanson de Roland*.

Bramimonde's opening of the gates signals the triumph of Christianity. The importance of this moment was emphasised visually: the kneeling Charlemagne and his men (ill. 1.1). What is more, this victory is even more strongly underscored by Bramimonde's conversion and her understanding that only her new faith will bring eternal life. However, her prudence cannot be attributed only to her conversion. Throughout the story, she is portrayed as a queen supporting her husband. It is she who warns the pagans that Roland's death, though it might seem a victory, ultimately signals the Saracen's defeat. She knows that Charlemagne is too strong an opponent because of his infinite wisdom and the support he receives from God.

Sharon Kinoshita has pointed out that many episodes in the *Chanson de Roland* reveal similarities between Marsile and Charlemagne in terms of their respective courts and customs. Bramimonde and Aude are therefore critical figures, because they highlight the fact that there were indeed dissimilarities between pagans and Christians. Bramimonde's mutable behaviour, resulting in her conversion, may have given proof that pagan society was collapsing, while Aude epitomizes the steadiness of a feudal Christian order. As Kinoshita observed, issues of identity and otherness were certainly acknowledged, at least by those members of twelfth-century society who were engaged in the Crusades and active in territorial expansion. It is therefore possible that Bramimonde was interpreted as a symbol of the triumph of Christianity.

Admittedly, the pagan queen is an obvious ‘other’, not only because she is a Saracen, but also because she is a woman, like Matilda. Yet this does not mean that an audience would be unable to recognise her responsibilities as queen and wife. Bramimonde's behaviour may very well have resulted in her being rebuked when she tried to enter a male world dominated by violence. In this way, she also resembles medieval women who, on occasion, were viewed negatively by men because they talked too much and were unable to keep secrets. Based on this social reality – and the likely situation that the audience's response was anything but uniform – Bramimonde could be considered an exemplary queen. This did, however, not mean that women refrained from politics or that they never engaged in fighting in one form or another. After all, Bramimonde, subjugated by the Christian army, adapts herself according to Christian standards established by men. The *Rolandslied* is a text inhabited by heroic men fighting for their overlord, their brothers and God. There was no place for women on this battlefield. This is not to say that women played no part in politics or that they never engaged in fighting in one form or another. Matilda is not known to have ever taken up the sword, but it does appear that she advised her husband at the Saxon court.
In Arnold of Lübeck’s praise for the ducal family, we find no references to Matilda in terms of what Arnold – and other male readers – might have considered as ‘inappropriate’ conduct. Nowhere is she criticised for interfering in Henry’s affairs or giving unsolicited advice. On the contrary, Arnold lauds her behaviour by employing various topos. With the exception of her care for Ulrich of Halberstadt, there is little information to go on when attempting to reconstruct the political influence Matilda might have exercised on her husband and the manner in which she dealt with the embassies. The dedication text in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, to be discussed in Chapter 3, sheds some light on her involvement in her husband’s affairs. The dedication text in the Gospel Book credits them both with enhancing the fame of Brunswick and Saxony by building a city wall and churches and by embellishing these churches with reliquaries. Matilda can therefore be seen as a supporter of Henry’s politics. In Chapter 2, I will argue that her greatest opportunities to participate actively were presented in the year following Henry’s departure for the Holy Land in January 1172.

Conclusion: almost all the world is playing a part

In this chapter, I have proposed that the late twelfth-century Rolandslied, nowadays known to us as manuscript P from the University Library of Heidelberg, offers material with which to critically investigate the topic of literary patronage. By reassessing the famous epilogue written by Konrad, I have argued that it is too limiting to regard Henry the Lion as the sole patron of the Rolandslied. The words des gerte diu edele herzoginne, aines rîchen küniges barn testify that Henry approached Konrad with a request to translate the French text into German upon the duchess’s express wishes, suggesting Matilda’s matronage. It was at her instigation that the text was translated, and though it cannot be proven, it is likewise possible that she also influenced its content.

Specifically, it is my contention that this fictional text is related to its social context. By way of tracing its audience’s horizon of expectations the Rolandslied can be used as a source that sheds light on the responsibilities of medieval noblewomen. We can expect the writer to make an effort to draw his intended audience into the world of heroes and their deeds. To this end, dialogues, emotional outbursts or evocations were added. Moreover, men and women are portrayed in the various stages of their lives. In addition, gender-specific elements, such as armour and jewellery, but also gender-related behaviour, were included in the story. By examining a variety of interpretations when studying the duties of the women in the Rolandslied, I have suggested that the readers and/or listeners of these texts were a heterogeneous group consisting of men and women, as well in various stages of their lives. Each responded differently to the responsibilities and consequential actions of women, according to their beliefs, experiences and gender. After all, the intended audience did not merely consist of Matilda and Henry. The Rolandslied was read or performed at their court and probably included an audience of counts, ministerials, noble ladies, children and clerics. One could argue that by presenting fictional examples of three different women in distinct phases of their lives, each possessing their own responsibilities, the noble ladies in the audience could themselves identify with the story. Whether deemed as negative or positive, the female characters of the Rolandslied very likely served as models. These models could either be followed by the female audience or not. It is the same manner in which Charlemagne’s paladins and Marsile’s pagan warriors served as models for actual knights living at court.

The Rolandslied is a testimony to the fact that ‘almost all the world is playing a part’. John of Salisbury applies these words in a moralistic sense: yes, everybody is playing his part, or incorporating that of someone else, often ignorant of the reality surrounding them until the wheel of fortune turns their lives into a tragedy. Of course, he was right, but only to a degree. What he failed to mention is that people were often forced into a role. The study of the Rolandslied presented here has shed light on the actions of fictional women whose role in life, like men’s, was often derived from changing circumstances and expected behaviour. This was by no means restricted to fictional women, as will become evident in the next chapter in which I will argue that changing circumstances offered Matilda the opportunity to exercise authority.
Matilda as a consort: authority and motherhood
A charter dated 1 February 1168, known through a seventeenth-century copy, tells that Henry and Matilda were betrothed in Minden Cathedral on that day.¹ Although many chroniclers mention that Henry and Matilda were married, actual information on their wedding is scarce. In his overview of events occurring in 1168, Albert of Stade in his \textit{Annales Stadenses} (1240-1256) writes that the nuptials (\textit{nuptias}) were celebrated in Brunswick with great splendour.² On arrival at the Brunswick residence, the ducal couple is said to have festively distributed coins among the people.³ This is at least how Julius Menadier envisioned the use of the bracteates (thin silver coins struck on one side) depicting the busts of Henry and Matilda. He therefore designated them as wedding coins issued in order to commemorate this event [ill. 2.1 & 2.2].⁴

Menadier’s contention that Henry and Matilda’s bracteate was issued on the occasion of what he believed to be the couple’s wedding in 1168 is often regarded as a fact, though some scholars have expressed their doubts.⁵

¹ Acta sunt hec Minde anno dominice incarnationis MCLX - VIII, indictione I, quando Heinricus dux Bawarie et Saxonie Machtildem filiam regis Anglie ibidem subarravit, kalendis februarii. Data Minde per manum Hartwici Utenfeldensis Bre - mensis canonici, MGH UU HdL: 111-113, no. 77. The issue of engagement or wedding will be dealt with in 2.2.
² Nuptias Brunswick magnifice celebraz. Cited after Albert of Stade, \textit{Annales Stadenses}: 346. The word nuptias was also used to describe the wedding festivities of Empress Matilda and Emperor Henry V in the Chronicle by Ekkehard of Aura, \textit{Ekkehard Uraugiensis chronica}: 247. See also the Introduction.
³ Menadier 1891-1898b, vol. 1: 220. Several specimens of the so-called wedding coin have survived. Menadier mentions a specimen in Münzsammlung der Kgl. Museen in Berlin (now Staatliche Museen Berlin: Münzkabinett) and one in a collection not specified. It needs to be emphasized here that numismatists by referring to it as bracteates or a coin suggest that only one specimen has survived. Numismatic studies do not always mention how many specimens have survived. Moreover, they are not always clear in their information on the collections these coins are in. And finally, older publications (often relevant surveys) did not publish photographs, but drawings. One can never be sure how truthful they are in their imagery and inscriptions (legends).
⁴ Menadier 1891-1898a, vol. 1: 44. When referring to bracteates of Henry and Matilda I often use the singular, but there were and are, of course, more specimens. See also the appendix.
That he connected this coin type to this event was partly motivated by the assumption that when a woman was depicted as a consort this must have been the result of the marriage, a fine example of paternalism. However, in this chapter I will argue that this coin type can also be interpreted differently. Based on the depiction of the sceptre in the hand of Matilda, the coin might be the visualisation of the consors regni idea. Consequently its dating may be revised. While Menadier dated this bracteate type to 1168, I put forward a dating of around 1172. This means that it was issued in the period in which Henry made preparations to go to the Holy Land, while leaving the pregnant Matilda behind in Brunswick. In this chapter I first propose that it was Henry’s absence that offered Matilda the opportunity to exercise authority, as is communicated through the coin (2.1). Next, I will argue that the duke’s journey may be viewed in the context of the absence of male heirs and Matilda’s pregnancy, demonstrating that offspring was not merely a woman’s affair (2.2).

In 1954, Thilo Vogelsang studied the consors regni in the Middle Ages, a formula referring to shared rulership between a husband and wife already mentioned in the Old Testament in the story of Esther and Ahaseveros. That the wife was the co-ruler at her husband’s side was a consequence of their marriage. Vogelsang concluded that this idea was not limited to royal and imperial ruling couples, but also applied to the high nobility. Nonetheless, the concept of consors regni has mostly been studied in relation to queens and empresses. Franz-Reiner Erkens pointed out that it originated from an imperial tradition. His article on Ottonian and Salian empresses is relevant because it reveals that it is difficult to establish to what extent consors regni can be interpreted as a well-defined partnership. Gudrun Pamme-Vogelsang’s art-historical study of the depictions of royal couples in the High Middle Ages suggests that they usually do not reflect marriage or coronation ceremonies, but emphasise ideas about husbands and wives sharing sacral and legitimate rule: the concept of consors regni. Such images also underscored the spouse’s responsibilities in supporting her husband through intervention, prayer and virtue. In her study of medieval German queens, Amalie Fößel pointed out that the absence of the consors regni clause – as can

be found in charters – does not mean that the idea of co-rule did not exist, nor does it provide evidence that women were uninvolved in their husband’s affairs. Based on the study of charters as sources of the history of women, Charlotte Broer argues that the study of words, e.g. consors regni, and their meanings is challenging, because a change in the choice of words does not necessarily mean a change in reality or practice (or the other way around). Matilda, in fact, was never explicitly referred to as consors regni in charters. Yet, from Fößel’s and Broer’s point of view, this does not necessarily imply that Matilda was not perceived or acted as such. After all, it was her marriage to Henry that brought her into the consortium, and consequently, it is likely that she was viewed as co-ruler. Therefore, I think it is appropriate to use the term consors regni, and its English equivalent ‘co-rule’. Appropriation of this royal expression is suitable for a woman of royal birth, who was of higher rank than non-royal duchesses. Although her marriage to Henry implies that Matilda was a consors – partner – from that time on, it was not necessary to visually communicate this idea immediately after their engagement in 1168. I would suggest that the visualisation and communication of the consors regni idea through Henry and Matilda’s bracteate became evident around 1172. In January 1172, Henry embarked on a journey to Jerusalem, only to return a year later. His tour has received much attention from modern historians, not in the least because Henry’s motives for embarking on this journey are not at all clear. By that time, Matilda had lived at her husband’s court for four years and had reached majority. In other words, Matilda was ready to take on domestic, religious and political responsibilities during Henry’s absence. This is not to say that she did so without the support of those relied upon by her husband. In all likelihood such men were already in the service of Matilda. There are, however, no sources providing detailed information on this matter, although the chronicler Arnold of Lübeck – to be discussed in greater detail in 2.2.2 – confirms that the duchess received assistance from Henry’s ministerials.

From the hypothesis that Henry and Matilda’s bracteate was issued around 1172 in order to visually communicate their co-rule, another
question arises. Was Matilda able to turn her authority into actual power, or to put it differently: what did the consors regni mean in practice? Admittedly, the limited charter evidence makes it difficult to answer this question straight forward. There are circumstances, however, that would at least have provided Matilda with the opportunity to exercise authority. At this point, we should distinguish between Matilda’s authority and her power. Usually, power is associated with the male domain: men exercised military command, they held justice, and they issued money.18 Recent studies, however, have pointed out that women could also be involved in these activities (although less frequently).19 Moreover, it has been questioned whether land tenure, military command and money were the only ways to wield power. Taking part in events that mattered and attempting to influence them was also possible through mediation and advice, or what we would today call diplomacy. The degree to which women were able to wield power – whether the ‘manly’ or the softer sort – was determined by several circumstances such as age, medieval ideas about women’s place in the natural order of society and the political situation.18 In her book Women, Power and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages, Erin Jordan stated that authority can be understood as the legitimate right to act.19 Because of her marriage to Henry the Lion, Matilda was a duchess and shared in his authority. Moreover, her status as the daughter of the English king, Henry II, enhanced her authority. However, the fact that Matilda held authority does not mean that she also exercised power. Power is more abstract and often based on personal capacity to make decisions (for example, by using force or engaging in battle).20 In Pauline Stafford’s words, power ‘is the ability to take part in the events, to have the means at your disposal to give some chance of success in them.’21 Charters may offer proof of a woman’s power, but as previously stated, such direct evidence is virtually non-existent where Matilda is concerned. Does this mean that Matilda did not exercise power? Perhaps charter evidence of Matilda’s power is lacking because it simply disappeared. Even if we accept that there are no explicit proscriptive sources (charters) for Matilda’s power, in the chapter on the Rolandslied I have demonstrated that women could make decisions or affect their husband’s actions by mediation, advice and alliances. Such actions were often not recorded formally, but this does not mean that women did not act. In this chapter, I will follow up on the idea of women’s responsibilities. Moreover, I will suggest that Matilda was viewed as co-ruler, together with Henry, and in accordance with this notion, she was given an opportunity to act at the time he left for the Holy Land in 1172.

An interpretation of Henry and Matilda’s coin type as a means to express co-rule and authority, however, is not without its complications. First, there are no written sources that mention why this specific bracteate was issued. Second, coins depicting husbands and wives have not been studied in great depth. Finding visual evidence to underscore my hypothesis was therefore not an easy task. Those twelfth-century coins that do include depictions of spouses are found in the Appendix. Moreover, changes in the iconography of the representations found on these coins were not always related to shifts in political thinking, as pragmatic concerns were also a factor. Rulers issued new coinage every one or two years. It was necessary to adjust the iconography in order to distinguish new coins from the old ones. Lastly, there is no consensus regarding the interpretation of images in which both husbands and wives are depicted. Do they refer to actual co-rule or not? Whatever the conclusion, scholars have suggested that a change in iconography may reflect changing political circumstances, e.g. a victory over an enemy or the recently obtained advocacy of a monastery (Klostervogtei).22

A specific problem arises in trying to establish the meaning of the sceptre. Does it only refer to authority or does it also indicate power? Or are we to regard the sceptre as an ‘insigne’ – a term that, in medieval usage, was not restricted to objects of royal stature23 – merely indicating noble status, as Susan Johns has suggested in her study of seals depicting twelfth-century Anglo-Norman noblewomen?24 It is my contention that its meaning can be best established by addressing each occurrence as a unique case. By examining the sceptre in the hands of a specific noblewoman, given the context of what we already know about her, we may be able to determine what this attribute communicated in more precise terms. As the message of co-rule would have required an audience, we will first briefly reflect on the use of...
The term ‘bracteate’ dates to the seventeenth century. It was, and still is, used to indicate regional silver coins struck on one side. These coins were not medals or ‘Schmuckbrakteaten’ distributed on special occasions, but actual currency used in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries issued by mints. Such mints exploded in number during the reign of Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190), with most of them run under the nobility’s supervision. Because old coins were exchanged for newly struck ones at the annual markets, the issuing authority was able to profit from striking money (in the case of Henry and Matilda’s bracteates, this was Duke Henry). Twelve old coins were worth only nine new ones, offering a profit of twenty-five percent for the issuing authority. This means that old coins fell out of favour when new ones were issued – at least in the region where the coins were issued and where they still had some monetary value. According to Elisabeth Nau, regional coins were usually only valid in the region they were struck. This might explain why the discovered hoards containing Henry’s coins with the depiction of a lion were restricted to Brunswick, Lüneburg, Bardowick (about seven kilometres north of Lüneburg) and its environs. This suggests that the use and spread of the bracteates was limited to a specific region. The sixty-three extant bracteates depicting Henry and Matilda together would indeed seem to confirm this, as they were all found in a single location near the Benedictine monastery of St Aegidius (founded 1115), in the southern part of Brunswick near the Oker River (illus. 2.3). The hoard, which also comprised an additional 149 bracteates issued by Henry the Lion on which he is depicted alone, was probably concealed there around 1180.

While there is no denying the economic function of these coins, the iconography of the depicted representations suggests that they were as well a medium of communication. The relatively large surface of the bracteates and the possible audience for which they were intended before turning to the coin’s iconography.

27 Of the 215 mints during Frederick’s reign 81 were in the hands of the secular nobility. See Nau 1977, vol. 3: 89. Frederick, owning 28 mints, was the superior moneyer who granted the right to issue to his vassals. Therefore almost all feudal lords had their own coinage.
28 Kühn 1995a: 2, 405-407.
30 Kühn 1995b, vol. 2: 405. A map with places where hoards were found in Kühn 1995a: 77. This map reveals that the trade of Henry’s coins was used in the region between the rivers Weser and Elbe. See also Nau 1977, vol. 3: 95.
31 Lüneburg only became a mint after Bardowick had been taken from Henry. See Kühn 1995a: 405.
32 Grote 1834: 17 and plate IV figs. 35 and 56. Figs. 55 and 56 represent the two specimens of the same type found in the hoard. Grote gives no references to earlier publications or other sources between 1756 (when the hoard was found) and 1834 and he does not inform the reader where these were stored after the discovery. Kühn 1995a: 79. On the context of hoards, see Kluge 1979: 7. The other coin found in the hoard was issued by Margrave Otto I of Brandenburg (r. 1170-1196).
bracteates, with a diameter varying roughly between 25 millimetres and 50 millimetres, provided enough space for a design that could convey specific ideas. It is this communicative function that is the focus of this chapter on Henry and Matilda’s bracteate. Such an approach implies there is an audience to receive such a message. Unfortunately, very little has been written on the topic of audiences with regards to coinage of the High Middle Ages. This is perhaps understandable, if acknowledging the difficulty of determining who exactly bought and spent bracteates. More importantly, we have no idea of what the user’s response to the coin’s imagery might have been. Yet it is plausible to think that the people who possessed them were familiar with the persons depicted and, ideally, were cognisant that Henry and Matilda were depicted as equals, both holding his or her own sceptres. Matilda’s depiction on a coin of Henry the Lion is likely to have drawn attention, as it differed from all previous coins of Henry. Because this coin type was found only in a single hoard, one can conclude that the number of people who had access to these coins was probably limited, and similarly, that the communicated message reached a select audience. At the same time, it seems to me that those individuals who could afford to have money, or who otherwise required money for their trade, were exactly the ones with whom Henry the Lion wished to communicate. The bracteates featuring both Henry and Matilda were meant to convey that, in the duke’s absence, the duchess was to be seen as his co-ruler. While the communication of this message not needed to be restricted to the moment when Henry was absent, I think this likely for two reasons. For one, the duke is forced to make arrangements that will secure his position during his absence. Communicating authority by issuing a new coin type may have been part of this strategy. Additionally, as far as we know this coin type has been issued only once and was found on just one location, near the Aegidius monastery, suggesting that the bracteate type was issued on an occasion of local importance. How the bracteates reached the public remains unclear. Perhaps they were distributed on the annual market. It is also possible that they were thrown at the local audience. At the same time, it seems to me that those individuals who could afford to have money, or who otherwise required money for their trade, were exactly the ones with whom Henry the Lion wished to communicate. The bracteates featuring both Henry and Matilda were meant to convey that, in the duke’s absence, the duchess was to be seen as his co-ruler. While the communication of this message not needed to be restricted to the moment when Henry was absent, I think this likely for two reasons. For one, the duke is forced to make arrangements that will secure his position during his absence. Communicating authority by issuing a new coin type may have been part of this strategy. Additionally, as far as we know this coin type has been issued only once and was found on just one location, near the Aegidius monastery, suggesting that the bracteate type was issued on an occasion of local importance. How the bracteates reached the public remains unclear. Perhaps they were distributed on the annual market. It is also possible that they were thrown at the local audience. Although there are no twelfth-century documents to confirm this latter practice, in the late Middle Ages this occurred quite frequently, e.g. when the Burgundian dukes made their grand entry into an important city or made an appearance at banquets and weddings. Throwing coins would have been a highly suitable way to communicate the consortium of husband and wife, particularly in the duke’s absence.

In order to investigate whether the coin could have served as a visual representation of Henry and Matilda’s shared rule, the first section of this chapter is dedicated to an iconographic analysis of the bracteate itself as well as the sceptre as a female attribute (2.1). That the coin’s general iconography was not unusual is evident when examining the type that was issued at the time of Henry the Lion’s first marriage to Clementia of Zähringen, which was annulled in 1162. In this case, neither Henry nor Clementia is depicted with a sceptre. As a matter of fact, the visual evidence discussed in this chapter will reveal that this attribute is unique to representations of twelfth-century noblewomen in which they are depicted together with their husbands. Moreover, to comprehend the full meaning of this insignia, it is necessary to review various depictions of women holding sceptres. I will demonstrate that the portrayal of Matilda – together with Henry and holding a sceptre – was explicitly designed to communicate co-rule. It is a detail easily overlooked. In her book, Queens in Stone and Silver, Kathleen Nolan highlights the importance of (subtle) choices made in iconography. She argues that the Capetian queens introduced iconographic and formal (shape, size, two-sided) alterations to their royal seals – when compared with their male contemporaries and their female predecessors – and that they did so because they wished to communicate notions of authority and family relations. While coins differ from seals, it is possible to compare the two media based on similarities related to size, geographic dispersion and a direct association with authority. My aim to suggest that the iconography of Henry and Matilda’s bracteate, like that found on seals, may be interpreted as a carefully constructed image that was meant to communicate co-rule. To support my argument that the sceptre in Matilda’s hands is important to deciphering the coin’s meaning, I will provide a detailed analysis of the sceptre as a woman’s attribute. Matilda’s sceptre was not just an embellishment, but rather a possible clue to the authority she held precisely because she was the duke’s wife. In 2.2.1 I will investigate a number of situations in which Matilda was obliged to act or wield power.

References

Damen 2007: 245-246; Vale 2001: 218-219. Although Vale mentions that the custom of throwing coins at the entrance of churches was well-established, he provides no reference.

Nolan 2009: 33-34 and 163.

For the connections between women’s seals and authority and the possible problems of interpreting women’s seals see Bedos-Rezak 1998: 61-82 and Jahre 2003: 122-151.
When Matilda arrived at Brunswick at the age of twelve in 1168, there seems to have been no need to communicate the message of consors regni. As a minor and foreigner, she was not yet capable of actively being involved in her husband’s politics. This situation changed in 1172, when Henry the Lion left his territory for more than a year. Admittedly, the written record related to Matilda’s actions in the years 1172/1173 is not abundant. In spite of this, I have tried to chart, as carefully as I could, all evidence referring to the various actions and duties that she was expected to perform. Based on the surviving charters, the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda donated to the Church of St Blaise, and other written sources, I will discuss the consors regni in relation to the bracteate, both in theory and practice. The argument that this coin type may have indeed communicated co-rule is supported when turning to Henry’s first wife Clementia. She ruled during her husband’s absence, thus demonstrating that she engaged in her husband’s affairs at this time. As we shall see, the same also applies for other historical female figures.

2.1

The iconography of Henry and Matilda’s bracteate

The coin type decorated with the ‘portraits’ of Henry the Lion and Matilda was already familiar to Henry. Two specimens that differ from Henry and Matilda’s bracteates also show a man and a woman flanking a tower [ill. 2.4]. They are portrayed in profile on top of two arches; beneath the two arches, a lion is depicted facing right. There is no legend to identify the issuing authority, but the lion makes it perfectly clear that this type is related to Brunswick and Henry the Lion (see also paragraph 2.2.1). Due to its more crude style (flat, schematic and less detailed compared with Henry’s coins issued at a later moment), this coin is dated around 1150. In all likelihood, the woman is Henry’s first wife, Clementia, whom he married in 1147 and separated from 1162. Henry’s reason for issuing this coin type is unclear. It may possibly be related to Clementia’s activities as regent, as discussed in Chapter 1 (1.3.2), in the years 1151 and 1154, at which time Henry was away.40

COMMUNICATING CO-RULE

Clementia is one of a number of women who acted as rulers in the twelfth century. Bettina Elpers’s study of regent mothers in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany has shown that women, by virtue of their marriage, were entitled, perhaps even expected, to care for their sons. This also meant that they ruled in their son’s stead. This is reflected not only in charters and chronicles, but also in literary texts. In the Rolandslied, discussed in Chapter 1, Ganelon’s nameless wife finds herself in a similar position. Her husband departs, leaving her behind with their son, Baldwin, and entrusting her with the care of his property. Just as Henry appointed Adolf to support Clementia, so too did Ganelon ask his vassals to support his wife and swear loyalty to his son. Finally, Queen Bramimonde as well assumes her husband’s rule after his death.

38 These specimens were found at Duderstadt and Bourg-Saint-Christophe. The specimen found in Bourg-Saint-Christophe is in the Cabinet des Médailles de Lyon and discussed by Berghaus 1954: 80. Berghaus considered the specimen to be issued in commemoration of the marriage of Henry and Matilda in 1168. Gerhard Welter preferred to link the specimen to Clementia. See Walter 1973, vol. 2, no. 1; Jürgen Denicke thought this a daring idea. See Derickse 1983, vol. 1: 21.

39 Köln 1995b, vol. 2: 404, ill. 383 or 492. The depicted coin in Köln seems to be the same specimen as the one depicted in Berghaus 1954: plate III. The title regent was not used in the twelfth century. See Elpers 2003: 7. Both Elpers and Erkens use the term to refer to women acting on behalf of their underage sons. See Erkens 1991, vol. 2: 256 and Elpers 2003: 7. A definition of regent or regency (or Statthalter) is not in LexMA. Statthalterin is used by Kellermann-Haaf when discussing Yrkane’s responsibilities in Reinfrid von Braunshweig. See Kellermann-Haaf 1996: 209.

40 Although most examples discussed by Elpers concern widows with sons, and this defines the situation as one of maternal regency (Mütterliche Regentschaften), she acknowledges that death is only one of the moments when husbands were absent. See Elpers 2003: 5. The sources do not inform us how these women became maternal regents: simply as the result of the marriage, were they assigned as regents, and if so by whom (their husbands before they died, their husband’s advisors after he had died)? The first option seems the most plausible.
Although we cannot be sure, it is possible that the issuing of Henry and Clementia’s bracteate is to be understood in the context of Henry’s absence. In this scenario, the coins would have functioned as visual reminders of their joint rule, a necessary message at a time when a ruler was engaged in affairs that enabled others to question his authority and territory. There is no proving beyond a doubt that Clementia’s regency was linked to the issuing of the coins on which she is depicted together with Henry. It might explain, however, why Henry and Matilda were also depicted together. The iconography might refer to the transfer of ducal authority from Henry to his wife. Considering her position as partner of the duke, or consors regni, Matilda may have held authority in theory. The question remains, however, as to whether she was able to translate this authority into actual power. For this reason, it is safer to speak of Matilda’s ‘authority’ versus her ‘power’. I argue that the sceptre depicted in the hand of Matilda on the bracteate can best be seen as a possible allusion to her authority.

2.1.1

A visual analysis of the coin: the construction of an image

The iconography of coins as a carefully constructed representation. Together with its inscription (legend) the issuing authority’s profession – a nobleman, an abbot, a bishop – and/or his territory were referred to, as means of showing his status. The pictorial elements on Henry and Matilda’s coin type and their meaning will be discussed next by comparing this type with that of other married couples. While the depiction of the sceptre in the hand of Matilda in relation to the consors regni idea is crucial to my argument, the ducal couple’s bracteate comprises other iconographic elements of equal importance. Henry’s standard coin iconography included pictorial motifs, such as the lion and the architecture, while others were new and therefore generated a new meaning. I will point out that a combination of these selected elements tell us Matilda’s story as co-ruler is told through a combination of these selected elements, which likewise served to communicate the coin’s message to the Brunswick audience which was described in the chapter’s introduction.

The type or central motif: husband and wife

The central motif on the bracteate of Henry and Matilda is the ducal couple’s joint depiction. This is what distinguishes this type from the others minted under Henry’s rule. Only a few bracteates of this type dating from the twelfth century are known. Besides Henry and Matilda, there were (to the best of my knowledge) twelve other married couples ruling in the German territories, including Emperor Frederick and his son, Emperor Henry VI, whose images were depicted on coins, see the appendix. While husbands and wives sometimes appear separately on the obverse and reverse of coins, more commonly they are depicted next to each other. When women appear together with men on coins, they are usually depicted in mirror image across from each other: both seated, both crowned, both under an arch or flanking a tower. The shape of the coin and its moderate size favoured this manner of depiction. The distinction between the sexes is not so much determined by their clothing, but rather by their headwear – or lack thereof. In the case of Henry and Matilda, the duchess is wearing a veil and coronet; the duke’s hair is parted down the middle, with curls falling over his ears. According to the fashion of their time, both are wearing a chemise with tight-fitted sleeves and a dress with wider sleeves.

From the observer’s point of view, Matilda is depicted on the left and Henry the Lion on the right. They are represented in the form of busts, with arms and shoulders visible, and the head shown in three-quarter view. Other examples feature men and women portrayed together in a seated position or standing in full- or half-length. Differences in size of the persons depicted are not to be interpreted as an indication of status, but rather as the consequence of fitting other elements into the composition, such as buildings and animals. When territorial princes and emperors are depicted alone, they assume poses similar to those when two people are portrayed. Most
commonly, emperors are portrayed seated on the throne. Frederick Barbarossa, however, also appears on horseback. Most noblemen are depicted either standing in full-length, on horseback, enthroned, or in bust form from the waist up. Their iconography was either copied from that of kings and emperors, or from earlier noblemen whose ‘portraits’ were as well based on royal imagery.45

The ‘men on the right, women on the left’ composition of this bracteate is common. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and his two wives, Adelaide and Beatrice, are depicted in this fashion on some of their coins. Albert of Brandenburg (nicknamed ‘the Bear’), Walter of Arnstein and Ulrich of Wettin and their wives follow this composition as well [ill. 2.5-2.7]. According to the drawings in Menadier’s publication, some Bohemian coins show the queens placed on the right. On some of Frederick’s coins, Beatrice is depicted on the right. Their son, Henry VI, and his wife, Constance, are portrayed in the same manner. Admittedly, I have not found this same composition on coins of the nobility. There the ‘men on the right, women on the left’ composition is prevalent, although the limited number of extant coins depicting married couples may not present a complete picture. It is not clear whether the ‘men on the right, women on the left’ composition reflects an established hierarchy, as has been argued for religious imagery.46

In any event, the ‘men on the right, women on the left’ arrangement was not standard and, as such, it offers no direct solution for distinguishing the men from the women. In some cases, the women can be identified by their dress, but more often by their veil. Whereas Duchess Matilda’s appearance on this coin type was perhaps perceived as a novelty, the architectural motifs found on this coin type, were probably more familiar to the viewer.

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS: CITY OR CASTLE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF POWER

In the case of Henry and Matilda’s coin type, additional pictorial motifs are prominently displayed. The architectural elements consist of an arch flanked by two towers, comprised of four galleries and topped by merlons. Numismatists and art historians have not paid much attention to architectural representations on medieval coins.47 Peter Berghaus considered them embellishments on imperial and royal coinage, signifying nothing in particular.48 What has been written is usually of a survey-like nature inherent to the numismatic practice of organising coins according to type.49 Other
numismatists have sought to determine whether twelfth-century architectural elements are linked to earlier coins, thus distinguishing between tradition versus innovation. In the end, no extensive survey of architectural motifs on coins exists. Perhaps this is a consequence of the vast quantities of German material that survive, which prohibits a satisfactory overview. Another explanation could be that an iconographic approach – though studied by numismatists – still primarily belongs to the domain of art historians, who generally do not study coins.

Two numismatic studies concerning architectural motifs on coins are relevant to our discussion. Arthur Suhle, in an article on the depiction of Burg (castles) on bracteates, and Dietrich Mannsperger, writing on imperial coins, have both concluded that such pieces provide no clues with regards to the appearance of castles that once actually existed. Accordingly, the architectural representations found on these coins are to be interpreted as references to a ruler’s residence, and more specifically, to his town. Walls, towers, gates, temple and castle denote the seat of earthly powers. Suhle’s and Mannsperger’s findings are substantiated by the material gathered in the Staufer Catalogue of 1977. The architectural elements found there are usually similar – but not identical – to the architecture found on Henry’s coins. The arch and towers on Henry’s bracteates can either be viewed as a reduced depiction of the town of Brunswick or as a general representation of Henry’s castle or Burg (ill. 2.8 and 2.9). What we see corresponds with architectural structures and buildings featured on other medieval coinage. One example is a bracteate issued by Conrad the Great (r. 1127-1157), depicting a castle with three towers (ill. 2.10). In many cases, they are not meant to display a real site or building; they must instead be interpreted as a metonym. Walls, gates, towers and castle – whether separate or merged – are designed to represent a town, and in so doing, appear to symbolize the territories owned by the lord of that town. This would appear to be the case with one of Henry’s bracteate types, where the architecture is combined with the inscription: ‘I am Henry of Brunswick’. The architecture depicted refers to the town of Brunswick and refers to the duke, whose human ‘portrait’ has been replaced by the representation of a lion.

While architectural elements on Henry’s coinage were probably less important than the lion, the representation of Brunswick is certain to have mattered. The seal of the town Brunswick, devised prior to 1231, demonstrates that the lion, and the wall with its gate flanked by two towers were part of the town’s history and identity (ill. 2.11). Although the seal’s designer made an effort to depict the town more three-dimensionally and added details to enhance its lifelike character, the architectural elements are essentially the same as the ones depicted on Henry the Lion’s coins.
That the architecture mattered to the townsmen is understandable: it was a visual representation of their town, albeit an unrealistic one. In the case of Henry the Lion, the architecture on his coins is both a declaration of his relationship with the city of residence and a manifestation of his power. The users of Henry's coinage were in all likelihood aware of this relationship. Yet architecture was not the only means to emphasise this. Noblemen also employed animals as trademarks of their identity, for instance, as the powerful ruler. For this reason, these animals also appeared on coins. It comes as little surprise that Henry, nicknamed ‘the Lion’, would choose to place representations of lions on his coinage.

**The Lion and Other Animals**

On all bracteates issued by Henry, the lion is a recurring motif that referred to Henry, surnamed ‘the Lion’, or in more general terms, to Brunswick, the most important residence in the Welf territory. The lion appears on coins with images of Henry and on coins with architectural decorations alone. Although the lion always roars, it can either face right or left. Perhaps Henry’s most famous coin type is the one on which he is portrayed sitting on his throne, holding a sceptre in his right hand and a sword in his left ([ill. 2.8]).

It is evident that these insignia refer to Henry’s authority and rulership in general. More difficult to assess is the precise meaning of the sword and sceptre, primarily because so little research has been done on the meaning of insignia in the hands of noblemen. In his book on royal insignia, Percy Ernst Schramm wrote that the meaning of royal insignia is never self-evident, because it varies from country to country and from century to century. Considering the fact that the sword is associated with military status, it likely refers to Henry the Lion’s right and obligation to defend his land and people (and to ensure peace?). The sceptre might simply signal authority, but it may just as easily refer to Henry’s right to administer justice. Furthermore, Henry is flanked by two towers on arches. Below these arches, two lions (which could also be leopards or bears) are depicted at Henry’s feet. Stylistically, this specimen is related to Henry and Matilda’s coin. It is therefore generally dated around 1170. Because it differs both in style and iconography from Henry’s other coinage, it has been suggested that a special occasion must have served as an impetus for issuing this type. Jürgen Denicke suggests that Henry's recovery of Bavaria in 1156 might have been one such occasion. In this case, the two lions would then be considered as references to the duchies Saxony and Bavaria held by Henry at that time. The issuing of this type around 1156 would therefore be a more appropriate, with a date of 1170 in this case untenable.

The difficulty of securely dating coins is also evident from a bracteate on which the lion is depicted on a pedestal ([ill. 2.12]). Menadier concluded that the appearance of the lion on Henry’s coinage was related to the erection of a gigantic bronze lion in front of his castle at Brunswick. He believed that the bronze lion was constructed in 1166, and that the coin, which now only exists as a drawing, could thus be dated to the same year. From this he concluded that the coin of Henry and Matilda must have been made shortly thereafter. Yet there is some reason for doubt with regards to the dating of the bronze lion. The earliest written source mentioning its construction is Albert of Stade, who wrote his *Annales Stadenses* around 1256. The account of the bronze lion is found in his entry entitled ‘1166’. A closer examination reveals, however, that Albert cites other notable events in this very same entry that are in fact known to have occurred as early as 1165 and as late as 1181. This discrepancy brings the precise dating of 1166 into ques-
tion. Accordingly, the only certifiable conclusion that can be drawn is that the bronze lion was erected at some point within this timespan. Hence, Henry may very well have included the lions on his bracteates prior to the bronze statue's erection. After all, his nickname had been ‘lion’ (leo) from 1156 onward, serving as an excellent reason to incorporate the lion on coins. Whatever the case may have been, it is evident that the lion on his coins and the impressive animal in front of his castle were visual expressions of Henry’s name and identity. In light of Henry’s power and the regional use of his bracteates, the lion on his coinage was clearly considered a direct reference to his authority as ‘Münzherr’ and duke. Its presence on Henry and Matilda’s coin type was by no means a novelty.

An overview of coins in the Staufer Catalogue of 1977 reveals that the addition of an almost heraldic emblem to coins was not restricted to Henry the Lion. Many of his contemporaries selected objects befitting their names, often in reference to the name of their castle. Count Walter II of Arnstein and his wife were depicted with an eagle (‘Arn’ meaning eagle). Count Burchard II of Falkenstein, unsurprisingly, chose a falcon [ill. 2.13]. Moreover, the use of the lion was not restricted to Henry the Lion. His uncle, Henry Jasomirgott (r. 1141-1177), Margrave of Austria, issued a coin that also bore a lion, (though its design differs greatly from the lions on Henry’s bracteates). And Duke Leopold V (r. 1177-1194), a later margrave of Austria, chose a leopard-lion for his coin (and again, this design is so different from Henry’s that a distinction is easily made). That Henry the Lion attached great value to his name is evident when observing the legend on his coins. This too was a common feature, in all likelihood very well known to the bracteates’ users.

### The Legend: dux heinrichs o leo

The legend, or inscribed textual content, of Henry and Matilda’s specimens reads: OPIEO. LE OEL DUX HEINRICHS O LEO A. Some of these letters – here underlined – are mirrored, with the reason for this being unclear. The unusual spelling is not restricted to this coin type. Some letters in the legend on the bracteate featuring Henry enthroned are also mirrored [ill. 2.8]. The same phenomenon is also seen on a number of his bracteates on which only the lion is depicted. In virtually every case, one can read that the coins were issued by Duke Henry the Lion. While there are variations in the legend’s content, the description ‘Duke Henry [the] Lion’ is encountered frequently: it was not limited to the coin on which Henry and Matilda are depicted together. On Henry’s bracteates, the inscriptions were always placed outside the field that contained the central motif (or type). In this manner, the legend is always separated from the coin’s iconography. There were, however, no well-defined rules for inscriptions on coins. As a matter of fact, a legend was not even obligatory. Several of Henry the Lion’s bracteates are devoid of inscriptions, with the lion and the hoard’s date being the only clues to confirm that the coins were indeed likely to have been issued under Henry’s authority. Objects related to the issuing person or his house – such as the lion, the eagle, or plants – could be equally strong signifiers in revealing the issuing authority’s personal identity.

With regards to the legend of the coin that depicts both Henry and Matilda, it is not an exception that Henry’s name alone is mentioned. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Margrave Albert of Brandenburg, Count Ulrich of Wettin and Emperor Henry VI are all depicted together with their wives on bracteates, see the appendix. In all these cases, only the husband’s names are mentioned in the legend.

---

62 Albert of Stade, Annalen Stadenses 44.
63 Ehlers 2008: 258 for Henry’s nickname ‘the Lion’.
64 See the appendix.
66 Legend according to Walter 1973, vol. 2: 1, no. 2. The legend contains some mirrored letters and some of these seem more decorative than functional. +OPIEO. LE OEL
67 Kühn 1995a: 11.
In the next section, we will see that in addition to legends, architecture and animals, attributes (insignia) were also crucial in communicating authority. Precisely because coins could be used as means of communication, every detail was essential. This I would especially argue when it comes to the sceptre. This insignia is by no means unique to Henry or any other male figure, particularly in the case of kings and emperor. Where the sceptre does appear to have been a novelty is in the hand of Matilda.

2.1.2

Married couples and the sceptre as a female attribute

The expression ‘to wave the sceptre’ is derived from the notion of the sceptre as an attribute of authority and an expression of power. In his book on signs of rule (Herrschaftszeichen), Percy Ernst Schramm mentions that this attribute was first used by emperors and kings as a sign of their rule. Like the crown, the king was invested with the sceptre during the coronation ceremony. It became such a powerful sign that when kings and emperors were depicted – on coins, seals or in manuscripts – they often held a staff or rod as a visualisation of their authority as ruler. This could either be a long staff (baculum) or a short rod (sceptrum), although from the eleventh century onwards, the latter seems to have been preferred in the Holy Roman Empire. Schramm has pointed out that the use of insignia was of importance to churchmen as well. The Concordat of Worms – the agreement between Pope Calixtus II and Emperor Henry V in 1122 that brought the Investiture Controversy to an ‘end’ – states that the elected bishops and abbots of the German Empire were to receive the ring and staff from the hands of the Pope and invested with the sceptre by the emperor. Similarly, the emperor was allowed to present bishops with the sceptre only. This was a shift in thinking, clearly demonstrating that the insignia had acquired their own meaning: the crosier and ring were religious insignia testifying to a visualisation of their authority as ruler. This could either be a long staff depicted – on coins, seals or in manuscripts – they often held a staff or rod as a visualisation of their authority as ruler. This could either be a long staff (baculum) or a short rod (sceptrum), although from the eleventh century onwards, the latter seems to have been preferred in the Holy Roman Empire. Schramm has pointed out that the use of insignia was of importance to churchmen as well. The Concordat of Worms – the agreement between Pope Calixtus II and Emperor Henry V in 1122 that brought the Investiture Controversy to an ‘end’ – states that the elected bishops and abbots of the German Empire were to receive the ring and staff from the hands of the Pope and invested with the sceptre by the emperor. Similarly, the emperor was allowed to present bishops with the sceptre only. This was a shift in thinking, clearly demonstrating that the insignia had acquired their own meaning: the crosier and ring were religious insignia testifying to their meaning: the crosier and ring were religious insignia testifying to the emperor was allowed to present bishops with the sceptre only. This was a shift in thinking, clearly demonstrating that the insignia had acquired their own meaning: the crosier and ring were religious insignia testifying to the emperor was allowed to present bishops with the sceptre only. This was a shift in thinking, clearly demonstrating that the insignia had acquired their own meaning: the crosier and ring were religious insignia testifying to

...
and Ermengard, and Ulrich of Wettin and Hedwig all demonstrate that attributes were not necessarily depicted [ill. 2.4, 2.6 and 2.7]. Since the sceptre is an attribute of authority and, in some cases, even an expression of actual power, this insignia enforces Henry's image as a powerful duke ruling from Brunswick (even when he was not there).

Can the same be argued for Matilda? After all, she also carries a sceptre. This in fact distinguishes Henry and Matilda's coin type from other coins on which husband and wives are depicted together.\(^79\) Unlike noblemen and royal women, noblewomen are rarely depicted on coins holding their own attribute. The depiction of Matilda holding a sceptre is thus unique, a distinction of which the audience was possibly aware. For this reason, a more detailed look at this insignia is justified. Those reticent in following my argument that Matilda's presence on the coin might possibly indicate co-rule, would perhaps suggest that the duchess was added to the coin's iconography merely to underscore Henry's enhanced status following their marriage. After all, the lion, the legend and the architecture clearly represent Henry's ducal authority and power. Had this indeed been the case, then one should expect to find Matilda on other coin types as well. Moreover, the sceptre would not have been an obligatory attribute for Matilda. An analysis of the sceptre in the hands of noblewomen will provide the necessary proof in demonstrating that Matilda's sceptre may be considered as a sign of authority and that the message it communicated was one of co-rulership.

**Female attributes: sceptres**

That Matilda holds this insignia is clearly visible. Like her husband, she carries a fairly long rod, topped with a flower bearing three leaves. This is virtually identical to the fleur-de-lis employed by the Capetian kings and queens. As we have seen, most male attributes were related to their position as knights. Because of their sex, women were generally not allowed to hold this position. It is for this reason that they were not depicted holding swords, shields and banners. Nor were they dressed in armour. Like the crown, exclusively worn by queens and empresses (and therefore not discussed in this chapter on Henry and Matilda's coin), the sceptre was an attribute that can also be viewed as less gender-specific.

The observation that noblewomen are not shown with a sceptre when depicted together with their husbands – queens and empresses being the exception – does not mean that women were never depicted with this insignia, whether discussing coins or other media. Studying the visual evidence from the Holy Roman Empire, one may conclude that there are two categories of women who were portrayed with sceptres in hand. The first category comprises depictions of royal-imperial women together with their husbands, with both partners holding sceptres. This iconography first appears in liturgical manuscripts. Such images serve as a visualisation of the queen, analogous to the biblical Queen Esther, who enters the consortium by virtue of her marriage to the king. As a result she shares in the sacral sphere associated with Christian kingship.\(^80\) After 1050, kings and emperors, as well as their consorts, are no longer found in liturgical manuscripts. This has been explained as a consequence of the Investiture Controversy, where the king – and accordingly, his wife – was no longer able to claim his Christ-centred kingship.\(^81\) This does not mean that images of royal couples disappeared entirely. As so few objects have been preserved from the twelfth century, it is difficult to assess the manner and frequency of such depictions. Judging from the twelfth-century material that is available, however, one may conclude that the queen's image and presence – together with that of her husband – was communicated primarily through coins.\(^82\) The second category of representations with women holding sceptres is one in which the figure is portrayed alone. Here the sceptre is held not only by queens (again on coins and seals), but also by women of the high nobility.

To analyse all of the available visual sources based on the historical context and the pictorial traditions that undoubtedly shaped them, would be an impossible task given the specific scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, this brief overview of female representations featuring the sceptre in...
the Holy Roman Empire hopes to provide a modest contribution to the study the high nobility’s use of insignia, a topic that has received too little attention. Moreover, I have only included those depictions made during the lifetime of the women under discussion. My analysis of the sceptre in the hands of noblewomen – a new motif – will provide sufficient evidence in support of the notion that Matilda’s sceptre was to be seen as a sign of authority and accordingly was meant to communicate the message of co-rulership. In an attempt to define the sceptre’s meaning more precisely, the duties and responsibilities of these women will be taken into account.

The earliest depictions of secular women holding a sceptre are most likely to have appeared in eleventh-century liturgical manuscripts. The first noblewomen to be portrayed with the sceptre were probably Queen Cunigunde (r. 1002-1024, † 1033) and Empress Agnes (r. 1043-† 1077) [ills. 2.14 and 2.15]. Both are depicted together with their husbands, who in turn carry sceptres as well. There is reason to assume that queens and empresses of the Holy Roman Empire held this insign of authority because they shared in their husband’s imperial authority as consors regni. This co-rulership is communicated verbally on two occasions. In the Pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde, donated to Bamberg Cathedral (deducible from the presence of St Paul and St Peter), the poem accompanying the miniature says that Cunigunde is Henry’s illustrious co-ruler (Cunigunda sibi corregnante serena). This indicates that she was at least perceived as co-ruler. The same message is communicated by the inscription above the heads of Henry III and Agnes, who donated their gospel book to St Simon and Juda at Goslar, stating that Henry and Agnes rule through Christ (per me regnantes. vivant/ beinricus et agnes). As Amalie Fößel pointed out in her study of medieval queens, both women were successful in turning this authority into an actual exercise of power thanks to their active participation in the political and religious affairs of their husbands, via interventions and regency. In these two cases, the presence of the sceptre appears to underscore these women’s active involvement.

There are no extant visual sources between 1100 and 1150 that provide us with information concerning the insignia of empresses depicted together with their husbands. Only when Frederick Barbarossa marries Ade-laida of Vohburg do images of royal women holding a sceptre once again appear. In the twelfth century, these images are not found in liturgical manuscripts, but rather on coins. Images of Cunigunde and Agnes, as well as depictions of Frederick Barbarossa’s wives, Adelaide of Vohburg (r. 1147-1153) and Beatrice (r. 1156-† 1184), suggest that the sceptre in the hand of a woman clearly carried both royal and imperial connotations. This topic will be discussed next.

**Queen Adelaide of Vohburg and Empress Beatrice of Burgundy**

Both Frederick Barbarossa and his first wife, Adelaide of Vohburg (* 1128-† after 1187), are depicted enthroned and richly dressed, with their heads turned towards each other [ill. 2.16]. As a sign of their rule, they wear crowns. Frederick holds a lance in his left hand and a cross-topped rod in his right;
Adelaide has an open book in her right hand and a sceptre crowned with five leaves in her left.⁸⁸ Because the legend identifies Frederick as king, this coin type is likely to have been issued after 9 March 1152, Frederick’s coronation as king, but before March 1153, at which time he separated from Adelaide.⁹⁹ The fact that Adelaide is seldom referred to as consors regni does not itself prove her presence was passive: it is the scarce mention of any personal intervention in matters of state that suggests her action radius was limited.⁹⁰ It is therefore difficult to interpret the meaning of Adelaide’s sceptre, thought it seems to have signified the authority she held through her marriage.

Frederick married his second wife, Beatrice (* 1145–† 1184), in June 1156 at Würzburg. From that time on, she used the title dei gratia Romanorum imperatrix augusta, though she was not crowned empress until July 1167.¹⁰¹ Beatrice is depicted together with her husband on bracteates that were issued somewhere between 1156 and 1184. On one of these, Beatrice – like Adelaide – is depicted on Frederick’s right. She holds a short rod crowned by a lily of the same type depicted on Matilda’s sceptre [ill. 2.17].¹⁰² Both emperor and empress are portrayed at half-length, wearing crowns and similar attire. In his right hand, Frederick holds a rod surmounted by a cross, a reference to the Holy Roman Empire. In compositional terms, it visually separates the king from his wife.

The second coin was struck in approximately 1180 [ill. 2.18]. Here a cross separates Frederick and Beatrice. Unlike the other two bracteates, however, they are now depicted enthroned, both of them holding a sceptre crowned by a lily. Judging from the iconography on the coins of Frederick Barbarossa, it seems clear that the lily-crowned sceptre is not to be seen as a symbol specifically related to a female figure, but rather as an insignia referring to the rulership of both the emperor and his wife. Contemporary sources referring to Beatrice are rather limited. Yet Amalie Fößel has determined that Beatrice frequently travelled with her husband, was actively involved in the affairs of her home territory, the county of Burgundy, and that she also intervened on behalf of monasteries, churches and bishops as cited in Frederick’s charters.⁹³ In the two charters issued by Beatrice and Frederick together, she is referred to as his consort.⁹⁴ And in two of Frederick’s charters, she is mentioned as carissima consors.⁹⁵ The royal couple’s mutual activities may even indicate that the notion of consors regni was communicated through their coinage as well.⁹⁶ A marriage was considered crucial for a king. Coins were a highly suited medium for communicating to others that his spouse shared in his rule. Perhaps the depiction of a royal couple is to be seen as a statement that their marriage stands for the continuation of the dynasty, and consequently, the royal house’s prosperity. This is at least what Andrea Stieldorf suggests in her study of royal women’s seals in the Holy Roman Empire. Here too,
women, like their husbands, are depicted seated on the throne and wearing a crown. In Stieldorf’s view, this royal iconography, also to be found on coins, was employed to underscore the spouse’s position of support and legitimacy towards her husband and children. If this were the case, then it would apply equally to the interpretation of Henry and Matilda’s bracteate. There is, however, a nuance to be observed. Stieldorf acknowledges that the use of women’s seals was often restricted to their own personal domains or ‘domestic’ affairs. In so doing, she implicitly suggests that these activities are separated from politics and power. In my opinion, this represents a limited view of politics and power, because it dictates what we are to understand as ‘public’ in a far too narrow sense. Such a critique is likewise voiced.

Limited view of politics and power, because it dictates what we are to understand separated from politics and power. In my opinion, this represents a

98 99

One needs to be aware, however, that Cunigunde, Agnes and Beatrice appear to have actively supported their husbands through interventions, regencies and the management of their own estates. As such, it is highly unlikely that they were merely passive consorts of the emperor. In their case, the term consors regni was not simply a concept, it was something that was actually put into practice. The iconographic element perhaps best suited for communicating this practice may well have been the sceptre. To prove this with certainty is a difficult matter: in a sense, the object’s interpretation was greatly dependent upon the eye of the beholder.

The sceptre as an attribute, however, was not limited to representations portraying women with their husbands. Royal and imperial women depicted alone were also shown holding a sceptre. While no representation of Matilda alone exists, it is useful to examine the extant visual material of women who are depicted without their husbands in order to better comprehend the sceptre’s meaning in general. By studying these representations of women in relation to the political activities in which they were involved, we may perhaps gain insight into Matilda’s presence on the coin as a visualisation of the consors regni idea. The evidence discussed next suggests that the sceptre was a visual motif imitated by high noblewomen, probably based on their relation to the imperial house.

The earliest representations of women – depicted without their husbands and bearing sceptres – are thought to have appeared on wax seals, followed later by coins. According to Andrea Stieldorf, Empress Matilda (r. 1114-1125 in Germany) and the aforementioned Empress Beatrice, spouse of Frederick Barbarossa, were the first women to be depicted in such a manner.

In her view, the function of the sceptre in representations of women is analogous to that of men: it demonstrates co-rule, which is not to be confused with actual participation. Because Stieldorf implicitly associates participation with public power, her definition of a spouse’s participation is simply too narrow. Notwithstanding, the earliest evidence does indicate that the first occurrence of this insign is in a royal setting.

99 On Empress Matilda’s seal see Barrie 1970: 104-107. The legend reads S + MATHILDEI DEI GRATIA ROMANORUM REGINA. It is interesting to note that Matilda also issued coinage with the title imperatrix. See Chibnall 1991: pls. 6a and 6b. It has been suggested that the pennies she issued were struck around 1141, the period of her greatest success because King Stephen was imprisoned. See Archibald 1984: 337.

100 Stieldorf 2000: 15 and 31.


102 Another German noblewoman depicted holding a sceptre was Adelheid of Meisen-Ostranitz († 1095), among others, married Henry II of Laach († 1095) and brought with her the Palatinate of the Rhine. See Kahsnitz 1992: 89, fig. 62, Ø 8.2 cm. Her seal shows her portrayed in half-length, holding in her right hand an open book in which she seems to be reading and in the other a lily. The legend designates the countess as Adelheid. Palatinorum comitissa, giving her name and title. See Kittel 1970: 277-278, fig. 191.

103 Stieldorf 2000: 10.

104 Stieldorf 2000: 34, no. 4.
is not convinced that the seal testifies to Beatrice’s – or any other queen’s – political position in the Empire other than her role as wife. Bernd Kluge, however, contends that the coins on which Beatrice is depicted holding a sceptre may indicate that she was indeed actively involved in the political affairs of her time.

Information concerning these royal women is too limited to make any comprehensive statements concerning the meaning of the sceptre as a means to express power. Just as in representations featuring husband and wife, the sceptre in the hands of women who are pictured without their husbands also communicate a degree of authority. It was not just a female attribute chosen to visualise nobility, as was indeed the case with noblewomen’s seals in the Anglo-Norman realm, according to Susan Johns. That these royal women used their own seals and could issue their own coinage indicates that they were also able to exercise power. Coins issued by Judith of Thuringia and her sister, Bertha of Lorraine, confirm that messages of authority and power were by no means restricted to royal coinage. They either appropriated the sceptre from their queens – just as noblemen imitated elements of the king’s iconography on their own coins – or they appropriated it from their husbands.

The sceptre in the hands of Landgräfin Judith of Thuringia and Duchess Bertha of Lorraine

The sisters, Judith and Bertha, were not just any noblewomen, they were Frederick’s half-sister and sister respectively and, therefore, closely related to the imperial family. The sisters are depicted with a sceptre. Considering their ties to Frederick, this suggests their insignia had royal connotations. Due to the absence of substantial biographies on these women, the evidence for their involvement in politics remains largely obscure. Both of their husbands are said to have died early and therefore the mothers maintained close relations with their sons. It is likely that these two women were granted opportunities to become involved in political affairs. This is corroborated by the coins that each of them issued as well as a seal belonging to Bertha – media that would have been used to communicate their authority. It is highly likely that they adopted the sceptre as an insign for precisely this reason.

Judith of Thuringia (* 1133/34 –† 1191) was the daughter of Count Frederick II of Swabia and the half-sister of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Around 1150, she married Landgrave Louis of Thuringia († 1172). Several images referring to her authority exist. On one of her bracteates she is depicted standing between two sceptres. While her son Hermann is not portrayed, his name does appear next to his mother’s in the legend (ill. 2.19). Hermann was Judith’s second son. The fact that his name is mentioned in the legend as opposed to her first son, Louis III, may indicate that this coin type was issued after Louis’ death during his return from the Third Crusade in October 1190. As Judith’s name is stated and she is depicted in full-length (though barely legible), the bracteate must have been issued prior to her death on 7 July 1191. The juxtaposition of a mother with a legend referring to her son is interesting. Hermann’s presence, inscribed on the bracteate, probably signalled and communicated the commencement of his rule as Landgraf in 1190. That his mother, Judith, is also depicted clearly demonstrates her importance to the family and house. With this in mind, the two sceptres can perhaps best be understood as references to Judith’s rule and that of her son, for whom she acts as a regent. A slightly altered message was perhaps communicated through one of Judith’s other coin types.

The Landgrafèn is also portrayed riding a horse (ill. 2.20). It is likely that this motif – so common for men – was appropriated by women (albeit riding side saddle in this case), the same as that which occurred with the royal iconography used for queens and empresses. Judith must have been at least familiar with the iconography, as both her husband, Louis II
of Thuringia, and their son, Louis III (r. 1172–1190), were represented on horseback on their coins [ill. 2.21 and 2.22]. Wolfgang Eichelmann has suggested that Louis II deliberately employed this iconography to emphasise his relations with the imperial house. King Conrad III was depicted in this fashion on his coins from 1132 onwards. The same motif appears on a coin type issued by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.

Judith, following either the iconography of her husband or that of her half-brother, is holding a lily-sceptre in her left hand, while she clutches her mantle with her right hand. Above the rear side of the horse, a half arch with two towers is depicted. The architecture might be a reference to the Runneburg Castle at Weißensee, which Judith commissioned to be built in

114 Suhle 1938: 80. Perhaps Judith’s ‘horse coin’ was issued around 1180/81, when she acted as a regent for her sons, Louis III and Hermann I, during the period that they were imprisoned by Henry the Lion.119 While the exact nature of her involvement in politics cannot be readily established, the existence of the bracteate on which Judith is depicted with a sceptre and on horseback – a typically male iconography – seems to indicate that she had indeed once ruled. It is clear that she had an opportunity to do so, reflecting the influence of a woman’s lifespan on her chances of wielding power. Judith not only outlived her husband, but her sons, Louis and Hermann, were also frequently absent from their territories during their lifetimes, possibly offering their mother the opportunity to oversee territorial affairs. As further detailed information on Judith is lacking, her movements cannot be traced. Fortunately, when turning to her half-sister, Bertha of Lorraine, the written sources have more to tell.

Bertha of Lorraine (*ca. 1130–?1194/95) was a full sister of Frederick Barbarossa. In approximately 1138, she married Duke Matthew of Lorraine (* 1119–† 1176).116 On her coins, Bertha is depicted holding a sceptre surmounted by a lily [ill. 2.23 and 2.24]. Although some of these specimens are quite worn out, one can still see that Bertha – identified by the legend be[r]t[a] – is portrayed on the obverse at half-length, turning her veiled head to the left and holding a lily-sceptre in her right hand. A better preserved specimen shows the duchess, again holding a sceptre, wearing a tightly fitted dress with elegantly draped sleeves and a headdress resembling a barbette-fillet [ill. 2.25].118 This iconography is not found on her husband’s coins, on which he is depicted at half-length in armour, holding a round shield (targe) in his left and a sword in his right. Matthew is thus depicted as a knight, while Bertha is depicted with the only attribute of authority that was permitted her sex: the sceptre. It is not surprising that Bertha possessed, and perhaps even issued – her own coins. It was she who governed Lorraine during the absence of her son, Simon II (r. 1176-1205), while on a crusade. Here too, the sceptre must be regarded as a symbol of authority. This would nicely

114 Suhle 1938: 80. 
115 Louis II was a supporter of Henry the Lion and turned against him in 1179; in 1180 Frederick made Louis III count palatine of Saxony and shortly thereafter he was imprisoned by Henry who kept him in Brunswick and Segeberg for one-and-a-half year. See Walter 2004: 42.
116 On Bertha also known as Berthe de Souabe; see Erich and Williams 1992: 82 (with references). Lorraine was situated within the Holy Roman Empire. The uncertainty of Bertha’s birth date makes it difficult to establish at what age she married.
119 Erichmann 2010: 10. 
116 Suhle 1938: 80. According to Suhle Bertha had the right to issue coins during her son’s absence.
coincide with Bertha's involvement in her husband's affairs. We know that Bertha is mentioned more than once as the person who consented to her husband's donations to religious communities. After Matthew's death in 1176, Bertha was herself once more involved in the donation (of land) to religious institutes. Donations made to religious communities demonstrate that caring for the hereafter was one of the duties for which women were responsible. Bertha likewise involved her children in these acts of donation. In all likelihood, she did this not only to include them in their father's commemoration, but also to establish and strengthen ties between the family and the monks at the abbey. Such ties would not only have fulfilled spiritual needs, but would also have served other purposes, such as asserting authority, promoting prestige or imposing power.

2.1.4 Some concluding remarks on Henry and Matilda's bracteate

From a practical, compositional and iconographic perspective the bracteate type with the portraits of Henry and Matilda is not unique. Other twelfth-century examples of married couples depicted on coins are known. Nor is it special that Henry is depicted on the right and Matilda on the left. The lion is a prominent feature, indicating that Henry the Lion was the issuing authority. His authority is also confirmed by the coin's legend, which not only designates him as Duke Henry, but as 'lion' as well. While the use of the lion is neither limited to this coin type nor exclusively employed by Henry the Lion, the audience is very likely to have understood that the duke was the issuing authority, because the area in which the bracteates were dispersed was confined to the region between the rivers, Weser and Elbe. The architectural element was a widespread motif that the audience would have read as a metonym, referring to Henry and Matilda's residence and territories. The mentioned elements – the presence of women, their position...
on the left, the legend and the architecture – were not new to Henry’s coins. They were therefore familiar to twelfth-century Brunswick public. However, the sceptre held by Matilda is unusual and has therefore received the greatest attention. With the exception of queens and empresses, none of the noblewomen portrayed together with their husbands on twelfth-century coins carry a sceptre, see the appendix. This is not to say that noblewomen never carried this insignia. It is in this light that Matilda’s image must likely be considered.

Due to the scarcity of sources, we are unable to draw any solid conclusions. Judging from the coins and seals of noblewomen in the Holy Roman Empire that have survived, it seems that they were commissioned only after the death of their husbands. The women then ruled on their own or together with their sons. Matilda would be in a similar position in 1172, when her husband departed for the Holy Land. Because of their sex, women could not be depicted as knights holding a lance, sword and shield. To visualise their authority, the horse and the sceptre were the only remaining options. The coinage of Judith and Bertha suggests that women belonging to the emperor’s family were particularly prone to choosing the sceptre as their insignia. In this case, the sceptre cannot be traced back to the seals or coins of their husbands, for there was simply no precedent. These women may have chosen this attribute based upon its explicit connotations with authority. The sceptre was used to communicate this message not only by men, but also by queens, empresses and noblewomen. The use of seals and coins by women, such as the Empresses Matilda and Beatrice, was often limited to their own (inherited) territories and affairs. The iconography found on these works of art communicated a message that was identical to that of their husbands: the sceptre – in combination with other attributes – signified not just status, but also authority. This leads me to conclude that the sceptre was considered the female attribute of authority par excellence.

While we have established that the sceptre in the hands of a noblewoman signals authority, we are still not sure how this visual formula relates to the actual power that these women held. A woman’s ability to translate her authority into power depended not only on the character of the woman in question, but more importantly, was also influenced by her lifespan and

land tenure. In taking matters into her own hand, the options available to a woman were highly dependent on whether she was married or widowed, had children, or held land. It is possible that we would have known more about Matilda’s actions if Henry had died before her, or if she had stayed behind in Brunswick in 1182, when Henry was forced to go to England. In the second part of this chapter, I will investigate whether Henry’s absence in 1172 provided the duchess with an opportunity to wield power.

2.2  
Matilda in action: ruling in the absence of her husband

At some point in 1171, Henry probably began preparing for his visit to the Holy Land. At this time, he was without a son and heir. His first wife, Clementia, whom he separated from in 1162, had given birth to a son, but this child had died during infancy as the result of a fall from a table at Lüneburg. Although Henry also had a daughter, Gertrud, the absence of male progeny, like marriage and death, was a political issue of the highest order. According to Bernd Schneidmüller, Henry tried to solve this matter via a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This would certainly guarantee succession. Eckhard Freise suggested the same by stating that: ‘he [Henry] was concerned for his rightful heirs. The donation of lamps to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was also meant to evoke prayers for his [male] heirs, who were not yet born in 1173.’ One of the most important medieval sources regarding the lives of Henry and Matilda is the chronicle written by Arnold of Lübeck. Arnold chronicles the period commencing with Henry’s departure for the Holy Land in 1172, and ending in 1209, the year in which Henry and Matilda’s son, Otto IV, was crowned emperor on 4 October. The book was therefore probably written around 1210. As a monk, Arnold had learned much about Henry the Lion and his family through the abbot of his monastery, Henry of St Aegidius, at Brunswick. Arnold remained closely con-
nected to Abbot Henry, who became the bishop of Lübeck in 1172 and made Arnold the abbot of St John’s Monastery at Lübeck in 1177.⁴⁰ Henry’s jour-
ney to the Holy Land was by no means a story of Arnold’s own invention, as there are two sources confirming that he actually left Germany. The first is a charter of 1172 testifying that Henry visited the Holy Sepulchre. The second source is provided by the Byzantine chronicler, John Kinnamos, writing in the 1180s, who recorded that Henry arrived at the court of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos. According to Kinnamos, the duke’s visit was not related to a pilgrimage, but rather to achieving reconciliation between Frederick and Manuel.⁴¹ Arnold’s narration provides additional information about Henry’s journey, yet there is no mention of exactly why he undertook this enterprise. The chronicler does state, however, that Matilda was pregnant, and for this reason, she was unable to accompany her husband. To this he adds that Matilda gave birth to a daughter, named Richenza, during Henry’s absence.⁴² The fact that the same passage mentions that Matilda raised four sons as well – Henry, Lothar, Otto and William – clearly demonstrates the importance of having heirs. It is therefore tempting to associate Arnold’s comments on Matilda’s journey to the absence of male progeny. Perhaps he undertook his ‘pilgrimage’ in order to secure the safe delivery of the child that was about to be born. There are several sources that provide examples of men (and women) who seem to have undertaken pilgrimages in a desire to obtain a male heir. By discussing these sources, I will present an additional argument for linking Henry’s journey to the absence of male progeny.

### 2.2.1

**The sins of a father as the impetus for a journey**

In his book on pilgrimage, Jonathan Sumption provides several examples in which the relation between fertility (or the lack thereof) and pilgrimage is evident.⁴³ According to him, one case is found in the second book of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* (also known as *Codex Calixtinus*), a miracle book compiled between 1110 and 1120. This written source states that a Frenchman visited Santiago in 1108 to pray for the birth of a son: ‘as is customary’. At the Cathedral of Santiago he ‘wept, cried out, and prayed with all his heart’. The man then returned home, and after making love to his wife, she subse-
quently gave birth to a son, who they named James.⁴⁴

A second story, also cited by Sumption, is recorded in the *Gesta Principum Polonorum*, composed between 1112 and 1117. In the year 1085, King Wladislaw and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, still had no heir. As a con-
sequence, they undertook a series of fasts, vigils, and prayers. They also mag-
nanimously gave alms to the poor. The bishop advised the couple to send envoy to the shrine of St Giles (Aegidius) in Provence, bearing myriad gifts. Among these gifts was a golden image fashioned in the shape of a boy. The messengers also presented a letter addressed to St Giles and his monks. Upon the receipt of the letter and gifts, the abbot and monks partook of a three-
day fast and prayed. The chronicler concludes by stating that, even prior to the monks completing their fast, Judith found out she was pregnant with a son, later named Boleslaw III (1086–† 1138).⁴⁵ This episode illustrates that both king and queen were involved in the actions that they hoped would bring them a child.

There are also literary texts (romance stories) in which the absence of an heir forms the impetus for the main male character’s desire to under-
take a journey. In the prologue of *Wilhelm von Österreich*, written by Johann von Würzburg at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Duke Leopold visits the tomb of the apostle John, at Ephesus, in the hope that he will act as an intercessor to ensure the birth of a son. And indeed, when Leopold returns, he is given a son: Wilhelm, the story’s protagonist.⁴⁶ The same motif appears in *Reinfried von Braunschweig*, written by an anonymous writer after 1291. The story narrates of Reinfried, Duke of Brunswick, who receives an invitation from the Danish court to partake in a tournament. The duke falls in love with the Danish princess, Yrkane, takes her to Brunswick and marries her. The second part of the story is devoted to Reinfried’s journeys.

The impetus for his first trip (against the pagans) is the fact that, after ten years of marriage, there was still no male heir.⁴⁷ We hear Yrkane’s prayer for a child, with the author next stating that Reinfried as well hopes to receive a

---

Footnotes:

131 MGH UU HdL: 143-145; no. 94; John Kinnamos 1976: 214.
132 Arnold of Lübeck, Chronica 12. Freise thinks Henry and Matilda already had another daughter. See Freise 2001: 30. See also Chapter 3 on the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda.
133 See also Harris-Stoerz 2010: 104 (Childbirth and Pilgrimage) and 219 (Fertility).
134 For the reference to the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* see Sumption 2002: 81.
child. Just as with King Wladislaw and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, Reinfried offers a gold image of a child in the hope that this will provide him with an heir. Then the Virgin appears before Reinfried and promises him he will receive a son. In exchange, he must embark on a crusade. Here too, there is a relation between the absence of a child and a journey to secure the dynasty. Reinfried von Braunschweig bears even greater relevance, as this story reveals several parallels to the life of Henry the Lion. Both Reinfried and Henry married princesses, both travelled to the Holy Land and both of their wives gave birth to a child while they were away. Any reference to Henry the Lion does not necessarily mean that a Welf nobleman commissioned the text, or that the story was written for a Welf audience. That said, the story does recall the magnificent past of the dukes of Brunswick and evokes the desire for an heir. In all likelihood Otakar III did not leave before 20 October 1164, because he is mentioned in a charter of that date. Unfortunately, Otakar III died on 31 December 1164 and never returned to Marburg alive. As a result, Cunigunde was appointed as her son’s regent. Not much is known with regards to her activities. However, at a time when Frederick Barbarossa was in continual conflict with Bishop Conrad of Salzburg, a supporter of Alexander III and the owner of extensive properties in Styria, the absence of war would suggest that Cunigunde had devised an effective strategy through which she was able to maintain peace in Styria.

The examples mentioned (miracle book, chronicles and romance stories) suggest that pilgrimages could be undertaken based on the desire for an heir. Conceivably, Henry the Lion embarked upon his journey to the Holy Land (January 1172-January 1173) out of gratitude for Matilda’s pregnancy and the hope that the child would be the long-awaited son. The wish for an heir may perhaps also explain Arnold of Lübeck’s remark that Henry travelled to the Holy Land as a penance for his sins. There was a tendency to attribute disease and misfortune to committed sins, which penitence could remedy. The lack of a son may therefore have been interpreted in a similar manner. After all, the apocryphal story of Anna and Joachim, the parents of the Virgin Mary, demonstrates that a childless marriage was considered abnormal and viewed as punishment for sins that one of the partners had committed. When Joachim arrives at the temple to present his offering, he is turned away. The priest tells him that a man who fails to increase his flock should not be in such a holy place.

In the Middle Ages, the absence of offspring did not always result in the annulment of a marriage. Children were nevertheless considered an essential part of marriage in the view of both the family and society in general. This is also suggested by the countless men and women who travelled to Vézelay in the hope that Mary Magdalene would intercede with God on their behalf to stimulate pregnancy and ensure a safe delivery. Mary Magdalene’s association with pregnant women is evident from the story of the Miracle of Marseille, in which Mary acts as an intercessor on behalf of a pagan ruler and his wife. The Virgin serves not only as the midwife who assists in the child’s birth, but also as the protector of mother and son. Arnold of Lübeck vaguely labels Henry’s journey as ‘penitential’. This has led to much debate concerning Henry’s actual motivation for traveling to the Holy Land. Whatever the exact reason might have been, Henry is unlikely to have undertaken such a hazardous enterprise had he not felt a
pressing need to do so. Arnold of Lübeck states that the journey itself was not only well planned, but that serious preparations were also made for those remaining behind. It is this passage that confirms the notion that Matilda may have acted as a regent.

2.2.2

Duchess Matilda in charge

It was noted above that Abbot Arnold of Lübeck was familiar with Henry the Lion and his family. Both Henry and his son, Otto IV, play prominent roles in this chronicle written around 1210. Although Arnold states that his chronicle is a continuation of Helmold of Bosau’s *Chronica Slavorum*, his narration does not revolve around events concerning the Slavs. Instead, he is interested in the main events of Henry the Lion’s life: his journey to the Holy Land, the conversion of the Slavs, the investiture of bishops and his exile to England. Matilda and her royal lineage are also mentioned. According to Bernd Ulrich Hucker, Arnold presents this image of Henry in order to glorify Otto IV, who deserved to be a king because of his father’s glorious deeds. Accordingly, Hucker labelled the abbot’s chronicle as a *historia regum*. Arnold devotes one longer passage to Matilda in which he combines everything that he regards as useful in relation to the duchess. We learn that Matilda was the daughter of the English king, a fact that is often commented upon in other chronicles as well. Moreover, she was pregnant when Henry departed for the Holy Land. This pregnancy resulted in the birth of a daughter, Richenza. Matilda is also fortunate enough to have given birth to four sons, whose names are also mentioned by Arnold. As already stated, Arnold mentions the sons on the occasion of Henry’s preparations for his journey instead of in another context. Evidently the passage underlines Matilda’s fertility and links Henry’s journey to his male offspring. According to Arnold Henry the Lion left Brunswick well-prepared.

From this passage Joachim Ehlers concluded that Archbishop Wichmann of Magdeburg (r. 1152-1192) was appointed as regent or deputy over Saxony. However, Wichmann and Henry the Lion had a complicated relationship, characterised by both peace and conflict. In 1166, Wichmann joined the coalition against Henry that tried to besiege his castle, Haldensleben (about 30 kilometres north-west of Magdeburg). In response, Henry plundered the land in Magdeburg’s vicinity. Henry’s decision to appoint Wichmann as regent is, considering their turbulent relation, somewhat difficult to comprehend. Matthias Puhle suggests that Henry chose the archbishop as his ward over Saxony because of his exceptional personality, but also admits that we know nothing about their personal relationship. Wichmann’s position as regent over Saxony by no means implied that he and Henry were to remain everlasting allies. Wichmann would also try to establish his own position as a lord in Saxony. He was also a supporter of Frederick Barbarossa.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


159 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


158 *Familia* probably refers to the aggregate of dependents of different kinds subservient to a lord. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 1: 535, no. 2.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


158 Even more specifically it refers to Saxony. See Ehlers 2008: 198.

159 *Familia* probably refers to the aggregate of dependents of different kinds subservient to a lord. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 1: 535, no. 2.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


158 *Familia* probably refers to the aggregate of dependents of different kinds subservient to a lord. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 1: 535, no. 2.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


158 *Familia* probably refers to the aggregate of dependents of different kinds subservient to a lord. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 1: 535, no. 2.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.


158 *Familia* probably refers to the aggregate of dependents of different kinds subservient to a lord. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 1: 535, no. 2.


154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated her children. Such omissions must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care of the newborn. See Ehlers 2008: 217.
Moreover, the nature of Wichmann’s duties as regent are entirely unclear. Even if we were to accept Arnold of Lübeck’s remark that the bishop gained temporary control over Saxony, this does not exclude the possibility that Matilda was also involved in such affairs. After all, Wichmann could not act as her advocatus, as he – like other churchmen – was not considered a legal person and therefore required an advocatus himself. Anyone who was in need of an advocatus could not himself (or herself) act as one.

According to Arnold, the duke’s ministerials, Egbert of Wolfenbüttel and Henry of Lüneburg, obtained command over Henry’s household, but they were also to be at Matilda’s disposal. That it was Henry of Lüneburg who was assigned the task of serving Matilda was perhaps not only the consequence of his loyalty to Henry the Lion, but possibly also related to Matilda’s dower settlement in the vicinity of Lüneburg. That Lüneburg was Matilda’s dower is stated in the Annales Pegaviensis, written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While Duke Henry was fighting his opponents in Saxony in the months of July to November 1181, the duchess remained behind in Lüneburg, which had been granted as her dower. According to the annals, Frederick Barbarossa willingly made a declaration to Matilda that the city would not be besieged. A similar account can be found in the late twelfth-century chronicle, Gesta regis Henrici II, which tells of events occurring in the years 1169 to 1192 both in England and on the Continent during the reigns of Henry II and his son, Richard I. Its writer states that the ‘emperor granted to the duchess […] permission to remain at perfect liberty and under his protection, and to enjoy all her dower freely and quietly; and the emperor further agreed that, if she should prefer to go into exile with her lord, he would place keepers for the purpose of protecting her dower.’

Nowhere does the author of the Gesta explicitly state the location of the dower; there is nevertheless little doubt that it was in fact Lüneburg.

Judging from the passages in the texts of Arnold and Helmold, we can infer that the care of the land is entrusted to a protector or custodian (tutelam or custodiam), respectively Archbishop Wichmann of Magdeburg and Count Adolf of Holstein. The difference between the two positions is that, while Wichmann could. Therefore Wichmann was not appointed to serve Matilda. Neither were Henry of Lüneburg and Eckbert of Wolfenbüttel assigned to the task, as far as can be ascertained. While the land (terra) in Helmold’s

That Henry involved Matilda in his affairs was not without precedent. His first wife, the aforementioned Clementia of Zähringen, remained at Lüneburg when Henry left Saxony. In 1151, Henry went to Swabia to fight Duke Henry Jasomirgott of Bavaria, to strengthen his claim on Bavaria. And in 1154, Henry joined Frederick Barbarossa on his war campaign in Italy. Helmd briefly mentions Clementia’s activities in these years in his Chronica Slavorum. Unfortunately Arnold, unlike his literary predecessor Helmold, makes no mention of Matilda’s duties. Nor are there charters providing insight into her actions. It is equally unclear in what ways she was advised and assisted by the two ministerials, Egbert and Henry. Nevertheless, a comparison between Helmold’s and Arnold’s texts with regards to Henry’s wives reveals that the two women were described with a similar wording. Commenting on a number of events in the year 1151, Helmd wrote:

The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father.

That Henry involved Matilda in his affairs was not without precedent. His first wife, the aforementioned Clementia of Zähringen, remained at Lüneburg when Henry left Saxony. In 1151, Henry went to Swabia to fight Duke Henry Jasomirgott of Bavaria, to strengthen his claim on Bavaria. And in 1154, Henry joined Frederick Barbarossa on his war campaign in Italy. Helmd briefly mentions Clementia’s activities in these years in his Chronica Slavorum. Unfortunately Arnold, unlike his literary predecessor Helmold, makes no mention of Matilda’s duties. Nor are there charters providing insight into her actions. It is equally unclear in what ways she was advised and assisted by the two ministerials, Egbert and Henry. Nevertheless, a comparison between Helmold’s and Arnold’s texts with regards to Henry’s wives reveals that the two women were described with a similar wording. Commenting on a number of events in the year 1151, Helmd wrote: The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father.

The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father.

The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father.

The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father.

The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father.
Noblewomen as Regents

Bettina Elpers's research on noblewomen acting as regent mothers following their husbands' deaths demonstrates that women indeed acted as deputies. 174

In close cooperation with her vassals, and in particular, Count Arnold, she begins immediately, with the duchess herself assigning her own assistants. That Matilda would perhaps have been involved in politics is not so farfetched, particularly when turning to Reinfried of Braunschweig, written after 1291. Although Petra Kellermann-Haaf recognised Reinfried's wife, Yrkane, as actively engaged in politics, thereby underscoring the idea that noblewomen were indeed involved in feudal affairs, she drew no connection between Yrkane and Matilda. 175 Yrkane, however, resembles Matilda in several ways. Firstly, Yrkane and Matilda are both royal princesses; Yrkane is the daughter of the Danish king, while Matilda is that of the English king, Henry II. Secondly, like Matilda, Yrkane remains at home when Reinfried leaves on a crusade. Thirdly, both women give birth to their child when their husbands are in the Holy Land. And finally, Reinfried bestows Yrkane with authority over Saxony, just as I have proposed that Henry did with regards to Brunswick. If only Arnold of Lübeck had been as detailed in his account as the author of Reinfried. The latter mentions that the duke's vassals agree to Reinfried's decision to make Yrkane his regent. They do so by swearing an oath of loyalty. 176 After Reinfried advises his wife on proper conduct and good rule, and instructs her to heed the advice of her vassals, 177 Yrkane's rule begins immediately, with the duchess herself assigning her own assistants. In close cooperation with her vassals, and in particular, Count Arnold, she reigns over the territory until her husband returns. 178

Admittedly, there are two ways in which Matilda's situation differs from that of the women described in her study. Firstly, unlike the deceased husbands in Elpers's study, Henry's departure was not meant to be final, i.e. he hoped one day to return. Secondly, at the time of Henry's parting, Matilda had not yet become a mother. That said, Matilda's position might not have been that different from the regent mothers studied by Elpers.

From the charters and chronicles gathered by Elpers, it is not easy to determine how these noblewomen came to be regent in terms of the exact protocol involved and by whom they were appointed. These sources only tell us that they acted as regents. It is reasonable to assume that when it concerned their own children, these women automatically held the right to act as regent mothers. It is equally possible that the situation was no different in the event a woman did not have children. Some husbands explicitly assigned their wives with this task. In a letter Count Robert II of Flanders († 1111) wrote before departing on a crusade in 1095, he referred to Clementia on Burgundy († ca. 1133) as: 'My wife named Clementia, who was put in charge of all my land and with it all my rights during my absence.' 179 Arnold of Lübeck's passage, like that of Robert's, suggests that Matilda was not only perceived as Henry's wife sharing in his rule (consors regni), but that she may have also been granted an opportunity to exercise power. Can the idea and practice of Matilda as consors regni also be established from any other sources?

2.2.3 Matilda and the consors regni in idea and practice

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Matilda is never literally referred to as consors regni in any of the extant sources written in the Holy Roman Empire and the Anglo-Norman realm dated prior to 1210 (the year Arnold of Lübeck wrote his chronicle). One may wonder, however, whether the absence of this clause might be interpreted a concept and practice that

144

chronicle is stated specifically (of the Slavs and 'north of the Elbe'), Arnold of Lübeck applies the same term but provides no additional information. Both Clementia and Matilda are named by their title 'duchess'; Clementia alone is preceded by the additional term of 'Lady' (domna). Both wives were seemingly expected to remain at their husband's primary residence, respectively Lüneburg and Brunswick, in order to look after matters.

173 der frowen wart dô offenbâr / hulde und eigenschaft geschworn. / der minnelîchen hôhgebeborn / wart ez allez getânen, / minneclîche Yrkânen, / ir liut ir lant, ir gelt ir deutsch und fût, Reinfried von Braunschweig 14384-14392.
175 Kellermann-Haaf 1986: 209 (sî saste phleger überz lant). Both wives were referred to as 'Lady' (domna), Arnold von Lübeck applies the same term but provides no additional information.
176 Kellermann-Haaf 1986: 209 (sî saste phleger überz lant). Both wives were referred to as 'Lady' (domna), Arnold von Lübeck applies the same term but provides no additional information.
177 Eipers 2003: 204.
by this time had begun to disappear. In principle, the *consors regni* clause is most frequently encountered in charters. Vogelsang’s use of *ordines*, historiographic and visual sources (coins, seals and miniatures), however, reveals that besides clauses, there were also ideas about co-rule. The consortium idea was not restricted to the royal house, but also thrived in circles of the German high nobility. We may assume that Matilda — through her marriage to Henry — entered this consortium and was therefore expected to act accordingly upon acquiring the age of approximately sixteen years. Although Matilda’s position in this consortium was not formally documented as that of *consors regni*, other words may also have been employed to communicate the same idea. Several studies exist that support this conclusion, as will briefly be discussed next.

Régine Le Jan sees the emergence of the title *comitissa* in ninth-century *West-Francia* as an imitation of the title of *regina*. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, when countesses made donations to their vassals together with their husbands, they were usually designated as *dominae*. Like *comitissa*, *domina* also indicated that the woman’s position was derived from her husband. Charlotte C.J. Broer observes a shift in the opposite direction with titles attributed to wives of the counts of Holland in the late twelfth century. Between the ninth and twelfth centuries, such women are labelled *uxor* or *coniunx*; from about 1200 onwards, they are referred to as *comitissa*. According to Broer, this shift does not necessarily signal an improvement in these women’s position of power. The words *uxor* and *coniunx* suit a wife of the count perfectly and are therefore of no lesser importance than countess. After all, as *wife* (*uxor*) or spouse (*coniunx*), the woman was still capable of becoming a regent mother.

Attributing meaning to medieval terminology is clearly a complex matter. At the same time, however, this complexity also demonstrates that the idea of *consors regni* would not necessarily have disappeared with the introduction of new clauses. Consequently, one must distinguish between the *consors* clause and the *consors* idea, but also between the actual position of the men and women in question and the then prevailing notions concerning women and rulership. That the *consors* idea had not ceased to exist seems evident. It has also been pointed out that women, as the partners of their husbands, were not excluded from holding rulership. For this reason, a brief discussion of the three charters associated with Matilda is justified when trying to establish her contribution to her husband’s rule.

**Matilda, daughter of the English king, engaged to be married?**

The earliest charter, known through a seventeenth-century copy, linked to Henry and Matilda marks the celebration of their engagement on 1 February 1168 with the donation of the estate (*curiam*) at Lahde, about 15 kilometres northeast of Minden, and all its belongings to Minden Cathedral. The *dispositio* — mentioning the content of the judicial act and the details concerning the donation — clearly states that Henry’s daughter, Gertrud, gave her consent to the donation of this alodial property. As related above, Gertrud, born after 1150, was Henry’s daughter from his first marriage with Clementia. In 1166, Gertrud married Duke Frederick IV of Swabia, son of Emperor Conrad III. Their marriage was a brief one, as Frederick died in August 1167. Gertrud was Henry’s only heir and it is in this capacity (*legitimi berae nosni*) that she consented (*consensu*) to his donation of property that would perhaps someday belong to her.

Matilda only appears in the charter’s *recognitio* — indicating place and time — and is described as *Machtildem filiam regis Anglie*. That she is referred to as the daughter of the English king is far from unusual, since it can be found in almost all of the other sources. The *filia regis* clause conveys that Matilda is Henry II’s daughter and highlights her status as princess, hence increasing her husband’s status. It can also be seen as an expression of the fact that Matilda, as a scion of very high lineage, was of higher status of the fact that Matilda, as a scion of very high lineage, was of higher status

---

178 This is evident from Amalia Follen study on medieval queens. See Follen 2000: 56-86 (*in consors regni* exp. 35).
180 Broer 1990: 160-162.
183 MGH UU HSL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Dithg.
184 charte dea nosni regis Anglie in the Chronicon universale anonymi 
185 Gertrud married Cout I of Denmark in 1175 and died childless on 1 July 1197. See Ehlers 2008: 375.
186 Acta sunt hec Minde anno dominice incarnationis MCLX -
187 Concerning the matrimonial union the earliest source is That of Heinrich of Bousa (1163-1172), who writes at accept avam duo in suum (book as his wife), Chronic *c. 1249-1272*: 250-251. In this passage in the Egmond chronicle the space for Matilda’s name was blank and was only later filled in with her name. Matilda is described as *uxor eius Machtildis*, *filia regis Anglie in the Chronic universal anonymi* Lauvстр DET (Leau, ca. 1218): 450.
than a regular duchess. At the same time the clause underscores that Matilda’s position is dependent on a man, as is almost always communicated in these kind of documents. All of this evidently interested the German chroniclers, but its presence in Henry’s charters underscores the fact that it was important to the duke as well. We have already seen that Matilda’s descent was mentioned in the epilogue of the *Rolandslied*. It hardly comes as a surprise that Matilda’s ancestry is also mentioned in the gospel book that Henry and she donated to the Church of St Blaise as well as inscribed on the pyx of the Altar of the Virgin in the same church. Both objects are discussed in the next chapter. That a woman’s family descent is mentioned time and again is certainly not restricted to Matilda. When women are mentioned in chronicles and charters, their ancestry is almost always underscored.††8

In this earliest charter, Matilda is neither described as *uxor*, nor as *ducissa*. As the *recognition* mentions that Henry and Matilda were espoused (*subarrarat*, derived from *subarrhare*),††9 the donation was probably made at the time they were engaged, but not yet married. Therefore, Matilda, the daughter of the king, was not yet designated as ‘wife’ and ‘duchess’, epithets referring to her married status and shared rule. It is thus possible that the ceremony that took place on 1 February 1168 was a betrothal rather than a wedding. During this initial ceremony, properties and rings would have been exchanged. If this was the case, the wedding ceremony might have been celebrated at another time and place. In this regard, the chroniclers who mention the wedding say nothing specific. As such, there is no way of establishing when the union was actually solemnised.††0 Perhaps the wedding was celebrated shortly after the betrothal in Minden. Albert of Stade, writing between 1240 and 1256, suggests this in his enumeration of the events of 1168, wherein he states that Duke Henry ‘took’ the daughter of the English king and celebrated a magnificent wedding in Brunswick.††1 The Anglo-Norman chronicler, Ralph of Diceto, also refers to a wedding having occurred in his *Opera historica*, written from 1171 to 1202.††2


††9 It seems that the chroniclers were not interested in the engagement or wedding itself, but merely emphasised the marital bond. *In tempore eleborum dominorum*, in that many charters mention a donation made by the ‘sons of a duke’ or ‘sons of a count’. The donor is also often identified as the duke’s illegitimate son. This is evident from the material gathered by Bettina Elpers 2003. See for example Elpers 2003: 102 about Cunigund of Vohburg († 1184), wife of Margrave Ulrich III. Niermeyer 2002, vol. 2: 1298. Niermeyer 2002, vol. 2: 1378. The phrase ‘to take as wife’ indicates a wedding rather than a betrothal. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 2: 1378.

††10 Perhaps the wedding was celebrated shortly after the betrothal in Minden. Albert of Stade, writing between 1240 and 1256, suggests this in his enumeration of the events of 1168, wherein he states that Duke Henry ‘took’ the daughter of the English king and celebrated a magnificent wedding in Brunswick.††1 The Anglo-Norman chronicler, Ralph of Diceto, also refers to a wedding having occurred in his *Opera historica*, written from 1171 to 1202.††2

††11 This concern the donation of the villages Barnstorf and Wendessen and houses in Hillerse and Northeim to the monastery of Northeim in exchange for the estate at Hone (about 75 kilometres south of Northeim).††2 With the exception of Barnstorf, which is located in Minden’s vicinity, the other donated properties are situated around Brunswick. The charter’s closing protocol (eschatocol) states: ‘All these things were done with the consent of the glorious lady Matilda, duchess of Bavaria and Saxony, and also with the devout permission of lady Gertrud, daughter of the duke and Clementia; prosperous until eternity’.††3 Two conclusions may be drawn from the mention that Gertrud had granted her permission. First, that Gertrud was still Henry’s only heir and was therefore entitled to inherit. Second, because of her right to inheritance, she was in a position to wield influence.

††12 In the same charter, Matilda is designated as *domina Matildis*, *Bawaria et Saxonic ducisse*. *Domina* refers to Matilda’s marital status through which she had obtained the title of duchess, sharing in her husband’s authority as duke of Bavaria and Saxony. More difficult to assess is why Matilda’s name is mentioned in the first place. The donation did not concern her

The second charter dates from 1170, known to us from a sixteenth-century cartularium. It concerns the donation of the villages Barnstorf and Wendessen and houses in Hillerse and Northeim to the monastery of Northeim in exchange for the estate at Hone. See *Piae 1187–30*, no. 152 (Barnstorf or Berneustot); 32, no. 177 (Wendessen or Wendessten); 37, no. 223 (Northeim, 37, no. 163 (Hillersum or Hillerse). MGH UU HIL: 123–124, no. 83. Barnstorf, Wendessen, Hillersum were Lutheran allotments and Northeim was an Northern allot. See *Piae 1187–30*, no. 152 (Barnstorf or Berneustot); 32, no. 177 (Wendessen or Wendessten); 37, no. 223 (Northeim, 37, no. 163 (Hillersum or Hillerse).

††13 With the exception of Barnstorf, which is located in Minden’s vicinity, the other donated properties are situated around Brunswick. The charter’s closing protocol (eschatocol) states: ‘All these things were done with the consent of the glorious lady Matilda, duchess of Bavaria and Saxony, and also with the devout permission of lady Gertrud, daughter of the duke and Clementia; prosperous until eternity’. Two conclusions may be drawn from the mention that Gertrud had granted her permission. First, that Gertrud was still Henry’s only heir and was therefore entitled to inherit. Second, because of her right to inheritance, she was in a position to wield influence.

††14 In the same charter, Matilda is designated as *domina Matildis*, *Bawaria et Saxonic ducisse*. *Domina* refers to Matilda’s marital status through which she had obtained the title of duchess, sharing in her husband’s authority as duke of Bavaria and Saxony. More difficult to assess is why Matilda’s name is mentioned in the first place. The donation did not concern her
dower property, Lüneburg, so this cannot be the explanation. Was it simply because Henry desired that his wife’s name be mentioned or perhaps only to record the fact that she was physically present at the time the transfer was sealed? Or did Matilda have an actual say in the event? Matilda is merely mentioned as domina, rather than uxor or coniux. Perhaps this indicates that Henry and Matilda had as yet not shared the bed, which would be understandable considering that Matilda was still only fourteen at the time. When turning to the third and final charter, the situation does apparently change.

MY WIFE, DUCHESS MATILDA

The third and last charter in which Matilda appears has survived in its original form. In this document, Henry’s donation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (1172) is finalised. Matilda, who did not join Henry on his journey due to her pregnancy, is mentioned in the charter. She is not presented as a co-donor, nor does she give her consent or act as a witness. Instead, she is cited as one of the beneficiaries of a donation made by Henry. Henry states that he is donating three eternal burning candles to ensure that his own sins may be forgiven, but also the sins of ‘my wife (uxoris).’ Duchess Matilda, daughter of the great king of the English, as well as my heirs, who were given to me by the grace of God, and my whole family. Both Matilda’s descent and her authority as duchess are also specifically stated. The addition of uxoris mee seems very meaningful, as it not only declares that the relation between Matilda and Henry is legitimate, but also implies that she is responsible for Henry’s offspring (the consequence of marriage), for whose spiritual wellbeing the donation is also to be made.

While chroniclers wasted few words on the various stages of Henry and Matilda’s marriage (engagement, wedding, children), the three charters shed some light on the process. The first charter speaks of an engagement, suggesting that rings and (moveable) goods were exchanged.

Based on the absence of commonly used words, such as consors, uxor or coniux, it seems unlikely that the 1168 charter is related to the wedding, which may possibly have been celebrated shortly thereafter. The charter issued in 1170 fails to provide any real clues. Matilda is referred to as domina and ducissa, but not as uxor. There is the possibility that these words were used to affirm that Matilda is Henry’s wife, as has been suggested by Régine Le Jan and Charlotte Broer with regard to other noblewomen. Ultimately, it is the charter of 1172 that clearly indicates that Matilda was considered Henry’s wife. In this text, the word uxoris appears to convey that the couple had shared the marital bed. That this was crucial in a marriage is evident when turning to the dedicatory text in the gospel book that Henry and Matilda donated to the Church of St Blaise.

MATILDA: A PARTNER IN THE CONJUGAL BED

Both the dedicatory text and some of the miniatures in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda will be extensively discussed in the next chapter. In this section, however, the focus is on Matilda’s appearance in the dedicatory text. Matilda – who, as we shall see, bears the title of duchess in the dedication and coronation miniatures in the Gospel Book – is Henry’s consorte thori. While not an actual consors regni clause, it is likely that thori – the Latin word for bed – here indicates that Matilda is considered a participant in Henry’s rule because she has indeed shared his bed. The word ‘consort’ by itself would have sufficed to convey that Matilda was Henry’s wife: the fact that thori has been added to consorte must therefore have carried special meaning. The addition of ‘bed’ underscores Matilda’s position as legitimate partner in the official bed and suggests that, at the time this text was written, they indeed had shared the bed. It was only in this bed that legitimate heirs could be created.

The importance of this idea is evident when turning to Empress Agnes († 1077). She was referred to as ‘Empress Agnes, our [Henry III’s] partner in bed and rule’, emphasising that the consortium and the marriage
were intertwined.\textsuperscript{198} Or as Franz-Reiner Erkens states in regards to Cunigunde, the epithets \textit{coniunx}, \textit{contextalis}, \textit{nostri thori consors} and \textit{regis copula} indicate that the emperor’s wife was more than just a person sharing his sacral rule. She was expected to be ‘fertile’, explicitly referred to in the coronation \textit{ordo}. This was important because the queen must give birth to successors to the throne to ensure the continuation of the dynasty.\textsuperscript{199} In discussing Henry’s reasons for visiting the Holy Land, I have already argued that fertility was an important issue. The subject of heirs will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter, where I will argue that the Gospel Book may have been commissioned and donated based on his desire for offspring.

\textbf{My wife Duchess Matilda: different words for an old idea}

There are no \textit{consors regni} clauses or accounts of personal intervention – at least stated in explicit terms – to prove beyond doubt that Matilda was her husband’s political partner and that she wielded real power. Nevertheless, in the charter of 1170, the titles \textit{domina} and \textit{ducissa} were used to underscore the authority that had clearly been bestowed upon her. In 1172, Matilda was designated as \textit{uxor}, indicating that she shared her husband’s bed. As a result, Henry considered her as his associate and she was expected to provide her husband with an heir, as is confirmed by the use of \textit{consorte thori} in the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book. This term approaches the \textit{consors regni} idea that, through marriage, wives shared in their husband’s rule. Unfortunately, the written sources discussed here provide no solid evidence concerning Matilda’s ability to exercise power. Yet when taking all of the evidence into consideration – limited though it may be – it becomes apparent that the wording of Arnold of Lübeck’s description of Henry’s wife was intended to convey the message that the ‘Duchess Matilda’ was indeed capable of ruling in her husband’s absence.

This idea could be communicated through words, as with the charters and the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book. But as I have argued above, it could also be expressed through coinage. By donating coins, a relatively large audience can be addressed in a short period of time. In the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that the audience of these coins consisted of the inhabitants of Brunswick. If we acknowledge that the court was at the heart of the town, however, then we must also take a courtly audience into account. After all, it was the members of the court who witnessed Henry’s charters, who joined Henry and Matilda in court festivities, and who accompanied the couple during the performance of the \textit{Rolandslied}, who would also have to be informed of the duchess’s rule during her husband’s absence.

\textbf{A courtly audience and ritual use of coinage?}

According to Arnold of Lübeck, Henry and his followers left Brunswick on the eighth day after the Epiphany (20 January 1172).\textsuperscript{200} Before Henry set forth for the Holy Land, he summoned several people from Saxony to join him.\textsuperscript{201} In all likelihood, the duke took this opportunity to demonstrate and constitute his wealth and power, and in addition, to strengthen his relations with his vassals and allies. During this meeting, rituals undoubtedly played an important role in communicating his position. Gerd Althoff has demonstrated that rituals had a demonstrative and public character. In this manner, they served to construct and clarify relationships between persons or parties. Such rituals – e.g. meals, the vassal placing his hands into his lord’s hands (\textit{immixtio manuum}) or gift giving – also functioned as demonstrations of reform and changes within the existing order. The audience served as its witness.\textsuperscript{202}

That rituals were indeed constituting acts is also evident in the \textit{Rolandslied} discussed in Chapter 1. In this text, gift giving was used as a ritual to seal the bond between Charlemagne and Marsilie (disregarding the fact that Marsilie’s motives were dishonest). At the same time, the exchange of gifts gave each court an opportunity to display its splendour. Moreover, Charlemagne’s presentation of his glove to Ganelon was a demonstration of loyalty between a ruler and his vassal. In this case, however, the dropping of the glove by Ganelon was a bad omen, a reference to Ganelon’s future disloyalty.

\textsuperscript{198} nostra thori nostrique regni consors Aprède imperative augusta. Cited after Fößel 2000: 61.

\textsuperscript{199} Ehlers 1995: 49.

\textsuperscript{200} Althoff 2001: 151-170 esp. 160.

\textsuperscript{201} Gerd Althoff, Chronica Slavorum 12.

\textsuperscript{202} Erkens 2004: 81.
Perhaps the bracteates on which Henry and Matilda were portrayed can also be viewed as being part of a constituting act. Although I have found no records of coins being distributed amongst friends and followers during the High Middle Ages, as if to underscore such relations. Conceivably, one or more coins could very well have been donated to each of the vassals and allies who were to join Henry on his journey as a means to establish or strengthen their bond. In this case, it would not only have been the coins' monetary value that mattered, but also their symbolic value.

The ultimate message conveyed by Henry could perhaps have been that there would be no vacuum of power during his absence, because he himself had prepared for everything in advance. After all, based on Arnold of Lübeck’s words, one could infer that Henry not only had the support of Wichmann and the ministerials, Henry and Eckbert, but that he also entrusted his wife, Matilda, with the authority to act on his behalf.

### 2.3 Conclusion: the bracteate as a witness to Matilda’s co-rule

In this chapter I have argued that the dating and interpretation of the bracteates with the depictions of Henry and Matilda as proposed by Menadier can be interpreted alternatively. Instead of connecting them to the commemoration of Henry and Matilda’s wedding in 1168, as Menadier did, I have proposed to view them in relation to co-rule. The coin type is outstanding for two reasons. First, only a few examples of coins depicting husbands and wives are known. Second, the bracteate of Henry and Matilda is the only one on which a non-royal or imperial husband and wife are both depicted holding a sceptre. Both elements, and especially the sceptre held by Matilda,

suggest that the impetus to issue this coin may have been related to a time when the communication of co-rule was thought necessary. I have argued that the year 1172, when Henry embarked on a journey to the Holy Land and Matilda stayed behind in Brunswick, was suitable moment to communicate Matilda’s presence and authority to the local Brunswick community. Although Matilda was never explicitly addressed as consors regni, the idea that women shared their husband’s authority through their marriage was still common.

Studying the bracteate type with the depictions of Henry and Matilda in combination with chronicles and charters has demonstrated that both pictorial elements and chosen words such as subbarhare, uxor, coniunx and consors thori offer a more nuanced view on Matilda’s duties at her husband’s court. Consequently an approach addressing a variety of sources would be beneficial in the study of medieval noblewomen and authority. As I already argued in Chapter 1, fictive stories such as the Rolandslied and Reinfried von Braunschweig, are valuable as well. While both texts confirm that women held authority and acted as co-rulers during their husband’s absence, the latter text also underscores the importance of offspring for medieval noble families. The examples of men embarking on pilgrimages in order to secure the safe delivery of their child or to invoke the pregnancy of their wives, suggest that the responsibility to be fertile was not restricted to women. The importance of the consortium is also evident when turning to the splendid Gospel Book commissioned by Henry and Matilda and donated to the Church of St Blaise – a topic to be discussed in the next chapter.
The Gospel Book and the verbal and visual construction of Matilda’s identity
For many decades historians, art historians and palaeographers could not directly study the famous gospel book that Henry the Lion and Matilda commissioned and donated to the Church of St Blaise. Somewhere in the 1930s, the manuscript disappeared, only to turn up at a Sotheby’s auction in 1983. On 6 December of that year, it was sold for over 32 million German Marks (about 16 million euros) to a consortium of institutes. One of its participants was the Herzog August Bibliothek at Wolfenbüttel, where the manuscript has been housed ever since.¹ The many articles and books written before 1980 that discuss the manuscript demonstrate that, though the book itself had gone missing, it had never disappeared from academics’ radar. Nevertheless, with its reappearance in 1983, renewed scholarly research came to light that addressed various aspects of the manuscript.² Further study of the manuscript was as well stimulated by the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Henry the Lion’s death in 1995.³ In the literature concerning the Gospel Book, two main issues are recurring: the year of its origin and the coronation miniature.

First, the manuscript’s dating has been hotly debated. The dedicatory text and the accompanying miniature, to be discussed below, each attest that Henry and Matilda commissioned and donated the book. This suggests that they did so after their engagement in 1168, but prior to Matilda’s death in 1189. Can we accept this dating, as Bernd Schneidmüller has suggested, or do we need to establish a more precise dating?⁴ The answer to this question has been deemed important, as it has significant repercussions for the interpretation of the book’s meaning. There are those who argue for a date of around 1175, suggesting that the Gospel Book was commissioned and donated at the time Henry reached the peak of his power.⁵ Others, however, have linked the Gospel Book’s donation to the dedication of the Altar of the Virgin in the year 1188 at the Church of St Blaise in Brunswick.⁶ At various points, I will address the dating of the manuscript in more detail, as I contend that the Gospel Book contains iconographic features that emphasise the importance of lineage and marriage, indicating an early dating of 1173/1175.

² For example the volume accompanying the facsimile edited by Klütsch (ed.) 1989; Fuhrmann and Mütherich 1986; Gosebruch and Steigerwald (eds.) 1992.
Second, attention has been paid foremost to the dedication miniature (Henry and Matilda present the Gospel Book) and the coronation miniature (Henry and Matilda receive the crowns of eternal life). Together these two miniatures, however, form only a small part of the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda. The book also contains Jerome’s letter, his prologue and canon tables. Each of the four gospel texts is preceded by an index with the chapters (capitula) as well as a foreword (argumentum) introducing the evangelist’s life. Following this brief introduction, one finds four to six miniatures, most of them depicting scenes from the life of Christ. Each of these small cycles is followed by an evangelist portrait and its accompanying gospel text. The Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda closes with the capitulare evangeliorum (fols. 212r-223v), an index with the text passages from the gospels to be read on special feast days as well as the days of the Lord, Mary and the saints. It is understandable that art historians have been chiefly interested in the Gospel Book’s painted content. Renate Kroos’s study is important because she analysed the other eighteen narrative miniatures in detail. By studying these together with the employed tituli, she demonstrated that the book was made in an environment of highly educated clerics. She also pointed out that the choice of miniatures and their sequence can be explained by the book’s use at Brunswick.

The illuminations and other visual features within the book have brought Ursula Nilgen to the conclusion that the Gospel Book is an eclectic work that was not based on any one particular model. While the choice of miniatures can in part be explained by its specific use at St Blaise, the cycle primarily narrates the life of Christ, as is generally to be expected of a liturgical book. Therefore, most of the miniatures chosen are by no means unusual, as will be discussed briefly later in this chapter. What may be considered exceptional, however, are the dedication and coronation miniatures at the beginning and end of the book, respectively: their inclusion in the Gospel Book was not strictly necessary for the manuscript’s use during the liturgy. Moreover, the fact that Henry and Matilda had themselves depicted on one of its pages demonstrates that the couple attached great value to their visual presence in the book [ill. 3.1-3.4].

The dedication and coronation miniatures offer an opportunity to observe how Henry and Matilda wished to present themselves – or perhaps it is preferable to say – how they themselves were presented. In the end, they were portrayed in a specific manner by the illuminator of the Helmarshausen atelier. In the twelfth century, this monastery, located not far from Hildesheim, appears to have had a flourishing scriptorium. In addition to the gospel book, Henry and Matilda ordered a psalter in which they are depicted together and which they used for private devotion. Based on the Gospel Book’s style and the name of Abbot Conrad in its dedicatory text, it must have been manufactured in Helmarshausen. Although the miniatures reflect traditional donor portraits and coronation scenes in several ways, there are details that suggest the miniaturist – or rather Abbot Conrad of Helmarshausen – made specific choices, with his patrons, Henry and Matilda, in mind.

These specific choices in word and image make the Gospel Book a suitable source for examining the manner in which Matilda is portrayed in an effort to ascertain her duties and responsibilities. A careful iconographic and textual analysis can shed light on how Matilda’s identity was constructed and whether there is any correlation with her husband’s constructed identity. I argue that the Gospel Book can be read as a document revealing the multiple identities of its donors. Consequently, it can provide insight into their duties and responsibilities as well. While the use of the word ‘identity’ may strike the reader as a modern notion, this is by no means the case. The term identity, or identitas in Latin referred to sameness and uniqueness in a variety of contexts. But it was more than just a concept: there was also an actual awareness of identity (regional, religious, legal, gender). Depending on the circumstances, one’s identity could also be subject to change (e.g. from married woman to widow). That identity can be signified through images is evident from Brigitte Bedos-Rezak’s study on medieval seals. In her recent book, When Ego was Imago, she states that personal identity is specified in a seal’s legend (e.g. + HEINRICUS DEI GRATIA SAXONUM DUX). At the same time, this identity can only exist within a given group. It is the group identity that is communicated through the seal’s image. This can be related to the group’s function as reflected in, for instance, the iconography of a knight on horseback (signifying those who do battle). But it can also be a group comprising a
family tie, often signified through heraldry.14 In short, the seal marked and invoked personal identity and authority.15 According to Bedos-Rezak, the medieval identity centered upon resemblance: the wax imprint of a person (a sign) indicates that such a sign of representation was in conformity with the social reality.16 Bedos-Rezak’s ideas on the relation between identity and seals are instructive when returning to the Gospel Book. Functioning the same as legends on seals, the inscriptions above Henry and Matilda’s heads are statements made in direct reference to them. Moreover, in both media, images of the ‘owners’ are employed. Finally, while a clear distinction can be drawn between iconography and heraldry, the Gospel Book conveys a sense of group identity. As a result, the images in the Gospel Book tell us something about the personal identity of Henry and Matilda as well as their collective identity.

Perhaps the search for identity also provides insight into the reasons why the costly Gospel Book was commissioned. Evidently, the presentation of the book as a gift to the Collegiate Church of St Blaise at Brunswick was motivated by a desire to ensure care for the afterlife and to be commemorated. This was the primary task of the canons and vicars of the collegiate church. At the same time, the iconography of the dedication and coronation miniatures, together with the dedicatory text, indicate that the care for the present, i.e. the here and now, was equally important. The donation must therefore have had various meanings of political and religious import.17 Accordingly, I will investigate – as a second line of inquiry – the donation of the Gospel Book as means to invoke the birth of an heir or render thanks for its occurrence.18 When considered in relation to the births of Henry and Matilda’s children, the dating of the manuscript should therefore be situated somewhere between the years 1173 and 1175. Before this time, Henry had only one daughter, Gertrud, born from his previous marriage to Clementia. There were no boys, as the couple’s only son had died during infancy. Matilda’s first child, a daughter named Richenza, was born at some point in 1172, during Henry’s trip to the Holy Land. The birthdate of Henry and Matilda’s eldest son, Henry, is not completely clear, though estimates are that he was born somewhere between 1173 and 1175.19

This chapter consists of six parts. The first examines the idea that the images of Matilda in the Gospel Book are to be considered as ‘performative identities’ (3.1). I have chosen the word ‘performative’ because it underscores my point that the communicated identities in the Gospel Book are the result of constitutive acts ‘performed’ for an audience (both the canons and the court) at a specific location (St Blaise Church) and time (during mass). The subsequent three sections (3.2-3.4) address the dedicatory text, the dedication miniature and the coronation miniature in order to establish how Matilda’s identity was constructed. It will become evident that both Matilda’s and Henry’s identities are strongly tied to lineage and progeny. Based on the assumption that the emphasis placed on these two themes is a direct reflection of Henry’s and Matilda’s wishes, the question arises as to whether they can also be traced to other images in the Gospel Book. I contend that the Tree of Jesse and the frequently depicted Sponsus and Sponsa confirm the importance of lineage and marriage, a topic discussed in 3.5. That Henry and Matilda’s children are not depicted in the Gospel Book will be introduced in 3.6 as an additional argument underscoring that the book might have been donated in a gesture of gratitude. In this case, the manuscript would have been donated either to thank the Virgin Mary and the saints – to whom the book is dedicated – for Matilda’s pregnancy in 1172 or, acknowledging a second possible scenario, to secure the birth of a long-awaited male heir somewhere between the end of 1173 and 1175. Consequently, the debate surrounding the manuscript’s dating will be discussed throughout this chapter. Before turning to a detailed examination of the Gospel Book, the idea of identity as a result of performative acts will be addressed.

3.1
Identity as a performative act

The donations made to religious institutions were not only written down in dedicatory texts, charters, inventories and chronicles, but were also visual-
ised in stained glass windows, sculpture and metalwork. Until the twelfth century, ruling couples also chose to have their images added to liturgical books. The inclusion of the donor portraits of Henry and Matilda in the Gospel Book affirms that they too followed this tradition. Yet in the twelfth century, their portrayal in a gospel book is unique. Not a single liturgical manuscript bearing the image of their contemporaries – Lothar and Richenza, Frederick and Beatrice, Otto IV and Mary of Brabant, Henry VI and Constance – has survived. In my discussion of Henry and Matilda’s bracteate in Chapter 1, I mentioned that the absence of kings and emperors in liturgical manuscripts can be seen as a consequence of the Investiture Controversy, which desacralised kingship. This matter may not have affected Henry and Matilda, because they were not of imperial rank. It could be, however, that the couple chose to adapt an iconographic model that was retrospective, even though it was not literally copied. As a tribute to Christ, the Virgin and the saints, but at the same time as a demonstration of the patrons’ prestige, Byzantine and Salian elements – to be discussed later – were introduced to emphasise the precious nature of the image.

Previous scholars have certainly had an eye for the manner in which the ducal couple was depicted. Otto Gerhard Oexle, in particular, interprets Henry and Matilda’s portrayal as a representation of familiaria and memoria: two sides of the same coin, each complementing the other. In his view, these two concepts formed the impetus for the Gospel Book’s production, with the dedicatory text and the dedication and coronation miniatures serving to construct and communicate this message. Oexle acknowledges that Henry and Matilda, as the noble loving couple, were both responsible for the house’s fame and memoria. Enquiries such as how these images were constructed or why Matilda was included, however, are not addressed in any great detail. The same applies to Johannes Fried, who tends to interpret the Gospel Book from a more political perspective. Concerning the question of whether Henry the Lion had truly intended to become the king of Saxony, Fried views the manuscript as an affirmative response. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, Fried does not contravene the theory that the book was donated in the ducal couple’s desire to achieve eternal life. Both


25 Fried 1973: 325. Fried does not suggest that Henry had intentions to separate himself from Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. See Fried 1973: 343.

3.1.1 Women matter

Careful analyses have revealed that women's presence next to their husbands was important when it concerned the construction of both of their identities. The nine metres high stained glass window in the choir of St Pierre at Poitiers with the portraits of its donors, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine – together with four of their children – was likely donated between 1162 and 1172 [ill. 3.5]. Although the window was restored, along with others, in 1884 by the Parisian glass painter Louis Steinbeil, most of its original iconography seems to have been preserved.

The window’s donation was meant to secure salvation through the prayers of the church canons. At the same time, it served to communicate a message of power to a larger audience. Anyone who entered the church from the east could see the centre window of the choir. Henry and Eleanor’s donation would probably not have taken place without the cooperation of Bishop Jean Belmain (r. 1162-ca. 1182). While Ralph V. Turner is probably right in asserting that the window served as a continuous reminder of the Plantagenet dynasty’s authority and power over Poitiers, Henry II’s relation with Jean Belmain was troubled also leaves room for other interpretations.

Also unclear is whether Henry and Eleanor (Matilda’s parents) commissioned the window together. If only one person was responsible, then Eleanor is perhaps a more likely candidate than Henry. For one thing, Poitiers was Eleanor’s residence in Aquitaine: the inhabitants of the duchy felt a greater connection with Eleanor than with Henry. Moreover, Eleanor is depicted on the right side of Christ, a privileged place usually reserved for kings, thus emphasising the queen's elevated position.

Another possibility, however, is that we are dealing with an example of shared patronage, similar to that encountered in the Rolandslied. The epilogue of this chanson mentions that Duke Henry commissioned the text at the request of his noble wife: a message similar to what Jean Bouclet tells us in 1525, i.e. that Henry II ordered the construction of the cathedral at ‘la requeste de madame Alienor son epouse’.

In this case, however, there is no need to favour one theory over another, as an analysis of the window is instructive in its own right. That husband, wife and children are all included in the act of donating tells us a number of things about Eleanor and Henry. First, the window served as a visualisation of Eleanor’s status as the king’s wife, signified by her crown. It was also a demonstration of motherhood and dynasty, based upon the children’s presence. In addition, Eleanor’s presence confirmed Henry’s status as Duke of Aquitaine. The window was also meant to reflect the authority of both figures as individuals, i.e. Eleanor’s right to act as duchess and Henry’s right – through marriage – to act as duke. Moreover, by having themselves depicted as a couple, they communicated the idea of mutual presence and co-rule in a duchy that was politically unstable. Henry returned the duchy to Eleanor in 1168 in the hope that the Poitevins would accept his rule more readily through that of his wife.

Perhaps Eleanor’s privileged position on Christ’s right side was meant to communicate her power, or even more, i.e. her ability to actually exercise this power in her role as duchess. After all, her actions – like those of her husband’s – were limited, as the lords in Aquitaine essentially ruled in their own right.

3.5 The window in the center of the choir of St Pierre, Poitiers, ca. 1162-1172, 8.45 x 3.00 meters (right). At the bottom of this window Queen Eleanor and King Henry II present the crucifixion window (left).

32 Ragun 1995: 184 (mentioning earlier cleaning, relading and repairs).

33 According to Barbara Abu-El-Haj the window, like all finished and decorated basilicas, can be seen as a negoti- ated outcome. See Abu-El-Haj 1995: 224.
34 Turner 2009: 180.
38 Turner 2009: 176.
There are several reasons why Emma may have been included as a donor. First, the actual donation of the cross, in the 1020s, was indeed a mutual donation. What was depicted by the scribe, Aelsinus (or his brethren), was therefore a reflection of the actual situation. Second, the royal couple was important to New Minster, because they confirmed the community’s royal identity. Therefore, the scribe chose to visualise this moment and commemorate it. Cnut had restored several pieces of land to the New Minster and, together with his wife, donated a magnificent cross. Moreover, Cnut chose Winchester as his political base and was ultimately buried in the Old Minster. Elizabeth Parker suggests that one of the reasons for including the couple was to assert Cnut’s role as successor of Edgar, the founder of New Minster. By including the queen, her special importance to her husband’s political program was affirmed. In the Liber vitae, both king and queen are

3.6 Emma Aelgifu and Cnut donate a cross to the New Minster, Winchester, 1031, fol. 6r. London, British Library, Stowe 944. Parchment, 69 fols., 260 x 150 mm.

Henry II, as a king, therefore not only contributed to Eleanor’s identity as his queen, but she in turn, as duchess of Aquitaine, likewise shaped Henry’s identity as ruler over Aquitaine. Eleanor’s presence, her involvement in the depicted donation, and the inclusion of her children as motherly ‘attributes’ may all be considered as meaningful acts that collectively shape her identity. At the same time, the donor image illustrates that there are multiple identities involved, because the message communicated also refers to a family or dynastic identity.

An earlier image exemplifying the idea that a woman’s presence next to her husband was anything but meaningless, albeit in a different medium, is a miniature in the Liber vitae (1031) from New Minster Abbey at Winchester [ill. 3.6]. When examining the miniature, the eye is immediately drawn to the golden cross on the altar that was presented to the abbey church by King Cnut († 1035) and Queen Emma-Aelgifu († 1052), both of whom are pictured. As depicted in the miniature, Cnut touches the cross with his right hand and demonstratively holds a sword in his left. Portrayed as such, this representation not only underscores his worldly power, but also his responsibility to protect the Church in general and the New Minster in particular. An angel hovers above him and places a crown upon his head, signifying that he is rewarded with the crown of eternal life. Emma’s pose, in contrast to that of her husband, suggests that she is on the verge of touching the cross or that she has just withdrawn her hand. Moreover, she is not shown receiving a crown. Instead, she is presented with a veil over her already covered head, on which a jewelled circlet can be seen. Admittedly, the contrast in the depictions of husband and wife — i.e. the queen’s coronation is not represented nor does she physically touch the cross — may very well have been meant to convey the message that the queen was secondary to the king. Pauline Stafford, however, suggests an alternative reading. Emma is a queen, as affirmed by the title regina, and as such, she is to be associated with the sacral kingship of her husband. This is further strengthened by her link to the Virgin, who has been placed on Christ’s right side. The image thus refers to Emma’s partnership as well as her special status as queen and officeholder.40

In its current state, the Gospel Book opens with an index of the chapters in Matthew and the dedication poem informing us of the book’s donors [ills. 3.1 and fig. 1]. It is highly probable, however, that what is now the first quire was moved to the front of the manuscript during a later re-binding. In all likelihood, its current position, just in front of Jerome’s letter (the first page of quire 2), does not reflect the original quire order [fig. 1]. A scenario in which the dedication miniature on fol. 19r, the first folio of quire 4, was accompanied by the dedication text makes much more sense [ill. 3.2]. The Pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde (ca. 1007-1012) and the Gospel Book of Henry III and Agnes (ca. 1051) confirm that donor portraits and the dedicatory text usually are found across from each other [ills. 2.14 and 2.15].

### 3.2 The dedication poem: an insight into Matilda’s duties

- **Current order of quires**
  - Quire 1, fols. 1-4 (1 empty, 2-3v index Matthew, 4r empty and dedication text)
  - Quire 2, fols. 5-12 (5r empty, 5v-8v Jerome’s letter, 8-10v prologue Jerome, 10v-12v canon tables)
  - Quire 3, fols. 13-18 (canon tables)
  - Quire 4, fols. 19-22 (miniature)
  - Quire 5, fols. 23-32 (Gospel Matthew)
  - Quire 6-9, fols. 33-105 (Gospel Mark)
  - Quire 10-11, fols. 106-138 (Gospel Luke)
  - Quire 12, fols. 139-472 (Gospel John)

- **Suggested original order of quires**
  - Quire 1, fols. 1-4 (1 empty, 2-3v index Matthew, 4r empty and dedication text)
  - Quire 2, fols. 5-12 (5r empty, 5v-8v Jerome’s letter, 8-10v prologue Jerome, 10v-12v canon tables)
  - Quire 3, fols. 13-18 (canon tables)
  - Quire 4, fols. 19-22 (miniature)
  - Quire 5, fols. 23-32 (Gospel Matthew)
  - Quire 6-9, fols. 33-105 (Gospel Mark)
  - Quire 10-11, fols. 106-138 (Gospel Luke)
  - Quire 12, fols. 139-472 (Gospel John)

Fig. 1 An overview of the current order of quires and the suggested original order. The content of the quires is only given in general outlines. Note that I have not changed the foliation in the suggested order of quires.

---

44 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
46 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
47 In 1031, when the miniature was made, the community of New Minster consisted of seventeen priests, eleven deacons and nine boys in the verge to become priest. See Thompson 2004: 203.
48 It is more likely that the book originally began with Jerome’s letter to Pope Damascus who commissioned the revised translation of the so-called vetus latina, followed by Jerome’s prologue to his commentary on Matthew and the 57 canon tables providing the parallel texts of the four Evangelists originally designed by Eusebius. See Kroos 1989: 171. The canon tables are decorated with apotropaic holding scrolls with credo texts and with virtues and vices from Prudentius’s Psychomachia. See Schmidt 1899: 161-163.

---

174

175

Dressed in her double identity (one provided by birth, the other through marriage) was not only beneficial for Cnut, but was also crucial to the community of the New Minster, who could demonstrate their royal origins through Emma’s English connection. This is underscored by the depiction of the religious community at the foot of the cross. The image thus reveals the importance that the religious community attached to the construction of its identity by explicitly including the queen in the donation and by referring to her as Aelgifu.

The list of representations in which noble husbands and wives are depicted together is much longer. Suffice it to say that the two donor portraits presented here clearly demonstrate that these representations signify more than a simple reference to a married couple donating an object. The portrayal of a man and wife together served the construction of each person’s identity. In fact, such images also helped to construct the identity of the receiving party (a church or a monastery, along with the possible addition of other parties), what may essentially be considered as the audience of the ‘portrait’. In what manner Matilda’s identity was verbally and visually constructed through performative acts will become evident when discussing the ‘portrait’. In what manner Emma’s presence contributed to her husband’s prestige is explained by Stafford. She contends that the queen was deliberately labeled ‘Aelgifu’ instead of her original Norman name, Emma. Aelgifu was the English name that she assumed or that was given to her at the time she married her first husband, Aethelred († 1013). As a Danish invader, it was necessary for Cnut to emphasise Emma-Aelgifu’s English ties in order to strengthen his own identity as king. As Catherine E. Karkov has pointed out, Emma’s double identity (one provided by birth, the other through marriage) was not only beneficial for Cnut, but was also crucial to the community of the New Minster, who could demonstrate their royal origins through Emma’s English connection. This is underscored by the depiction of the religious community at the foot of the cross. The image thus reveals the importance that the religious community attached to the construction of its identity by explicitly including the queen in the donation and by referring to her as Aelgifu.

The list of representations in which noble husbands and wives are depicted together is much longer. Suffice it to say that the two donor portraits presented here clearly demonstrate that these representations signify more than a simple reference to a married couple donating an object. The portrayal of a man and wife together served the construction of each person’s identity. In fact, such images also helped to construct the identity of the receiving party (a church or a monastery, along with the possible addition of other parties), what may essentially be considered as the audience of the ‘portrait’. In what manner Matilda’s identity was verbally and visually constructed through performative acts will become evident when discussing the Gospel Book’s dedicatory text.

---

44 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
46 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
47 In 1031, when the miniature was made, the community of New Minster consisted of seventeen priests, eleven deacons and nine boys in the verge to become priest. See Thompson 2004: 203.
48 It is more likely that the book originally began with Jerome’s letter to Pope Damascus who commissioned the revised translation of the so-called vetus latina, followed by Jerome’s prologue to his commentary on Matthew and the 57 canon tables providing the parallel texts of the four Evangelists originally designed by Eusebius. See Kroos 1989: 171. The canon tables are decorated with apotropaic holding scrolls with credo texts and with virtues and vices from Prudentius’s Psychomachia. See Schmidt 1899: 161-163.

---

174

175

Dressed in her double identity (one provided by birth, the other through marriage) was not only beneficial for Cnut, but was also crucial to the community of the New Minster, who could demonstrate their royal origins through Emma’s English connection. This is underscored by the depiction of the religious community at the foot of the cross. The image thus reveals the importance that the religious community attached to the construction of its identity by explicitly including the queen in the donation and by referring to her as Aelgifu.

The list of representations in which noble husbands and wives are depicted together is much longer. Suffice it to say that the two donor portraits presented here clearly demonstrate that these representations signify more than a simple reference to a married couple donating an object. The portrayal of a man and wife together served the construction of each person’s identity. In fact, such images also helped to construct the identity of the receiving party (a church or a monastery, along with the possible addition of other parties), what may essentially be considered as the audience of the ‘portrait’. In what manner Matilda’s identity was verbally and visually constructed through performative acts will become evident when discussing the Gospel Book’s dedicatory text.

---

44 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
46 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
47 In 1031, when the miniature was made, the community of New Minster consisted of seventeen priests, eleven deacons and nine boys in the verge to become priest. See Thompson 2004: 203.
48 It is more likely that the book originally began with Jerome’s letter to Pope Damascus who commissioned the revised translation of the so-called vetus latina, followed by Jerome’s prologue to his commentary on Matthew and the 57 canon tables providing the parallel texts of the four Evangelists originally designed by Eusebius. See Kroos 1989: 171. The canon tables are decorated with apotropaic holding scrolls with credo texts and with virtues and vices from Prudentius’s Psychomachia. See Schmidt 1899: 161-163.
With regards to Mathew's gospel, it is more logical that the chapter index prefaces the text – as is the case with the gospels of the other evangelists – instead of being separated by the canon tables.

The dedicatory poem in Henry and Matilda's book is written with gold ink on unadorned parchment. The 20 lines in Leonine rhyme are not fully centred, resulting in a margin that is evenly laid out on the left, with an uneven margin on the right. The text has been studied from a paleographic point of view. In an article accompanying the 1989 facsimile, Peter Rück states that he finds the manuscript's dating of around 1188 too late, favouring instead the mid-1170s based on the absence of true gothic elements. Moreover, Rück contends that the script is earlier than that found on the pyx from the Virgin of the Altar in the Church of St Blaise – dated 1188 – which is often mentioned in connection with the Gospel Book. Several years later, Hartmut Hoffmann studied written documents from or closely related to Helmarshausen, as well applying a palaeographic approach to gain a better insight in the monastery's history. While he concludes that only one scribe was responsible for the entire text of the Gospel Book (thus excluding the miniatures and ornamented pages), in his view a more precise date cannot be derived from an analysis of the script. As such, he prefers a dating between 1173 and 1189.

In the end, there is no palaeographic consensus with regards to the dedicatory text's, and thus manuscript's, dating. The text's content, by contrast, does offer us a number of useful clues with regards to the book's dating, but also clues relevant to the subject here, i.e. the construction of Matilda's identity and her duties. For my analysis, I shall refer to Paul Gerhard Schmidt's translation of the dedicatory poem into German.

54 Hoffmann 1992: 46.
55 Translation by Schmidt 1989: 155. The numbering is mine.
3.2.1
Matilda as Henry’s partner

The golden page mentioned in the first line of Schmidt’s translation refers to the dedicatory text written in a gold majuscule, which attests to the love that Duke Henry and his wife hold for Christ above all else. In other words, Henry and his wife – whose name is not yet mentioned at this point – are first described as good Christians. In the second line, Matilda is referred to as the wife of Duke Henry (consorte thori). In my discussion of the charter evidence in Chapter 2, I have already pointed out that the phrase, consorte thori, is not to be taken for granted. The word thori (bed) indicates several things. For one, it testifies to the fact that Henry and Matilda, by the time this text was written, had shared the conjugal bed. In this manner, the phrase also underscores Matilda duty as spouse. At the same time, she is considered a participant in Henry’s rule. As the poem’s dedicatory text informs us later, she participates as his equal in the display of generosity.

It is only when the ducal couple’s lineage is emphasised in lines three and four, that Matilda’s name is first mentioned. It reads that she was indeed the daughter of Henry II of England, who was the son of Matilda, lady of the English people (she was never queen), who had inherited England from her father, King Henry I. The poem suggests further that Matilda’s husband is of even higher birth, because he is not just the heir of emperors, but above all, a descendant of Charlemagne. As every ruler wished to be an heir of the English kings. Her identity was gendered, but it was also related to the social group of highly noble people.

Line five in Schmidt’s translation informs the reader that Matilda, as Henry’s consorte thori, was assigned the task of producing offspring. The precise meaning of the phrase Matildam, sobolem quae gigneret illam remains unclear and has led to considerable discussion. The term, sobolem, may refer to only one child or perhaps all of the children, while the phrase as a whole can be interpreted in three different ways, i.e. that Matilda had already given birth to a child, that she is on the verge of doing so, or that she is expected to do so. Schmidt asserts that the first scenario (in the past tense) makes the most sense. In this case, the dedication text refers to the birth of either Richenza (1172) or Henry (1173/1175). Yet one can also interpret this phrase in the future tense, as opposed to the past tense. In this case, it becomes an expression of the desire for an heir, and suggests that at this point, the couple still had no children, or at least, no son. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the commissioning and donation of this book may very well have been based on the couple’s longing for a (male) heir, or alternatively, a tribute to an actual birth that has already occurred. The twelfth-century users of the Gospel Book – the canons and the courtly audience attending mass – were probably aware of the specific motives that led to the manuscript’s donation. For them, explicit references to the couple’s motivation, so eagerly sought by today’s scholars, were entirely unnecessary.

The poem continues in saying that Henry and Matilda’s child (or children) will bring Christ’s peace and prosperity to this land (patriae isti). The interpretation of ‘this land’ is by no means straightforward. Henry’s duchies were taken away from him in 1180. Following this event, he was allowed to keep only his alodial lands (Eigenbesitz, or patrimonium), i.e. the Saxon territories that he had inherited from his Welf, Billung, Süpplingburg, Northeim and Brunonian ancestors. The term patria, as it is applied here, may have referred only to the territories still in his possession. This does not mean that its use here is necessarily to be understood in terms of Henry’s downfall: after all, the poem mentions Henry and Matilda’s city, Brunswick (arbs), which was also located in Henry’s patrimony. Therefore, the word patria was probably chosen to emphasise the Saxon foundation of Henry’s power.

Although a man could share his bed with many women (concubines), it is evident that this is not meant here. Oexle has pointed out that Henry indeed could have been related to Charlemagne. See Oexle 1988: 21.
3.2.2

The act of giving makes virtuous donors

Schmidt translates *Hoc opus auctoris par nobile iunxit amoris* as ‘The work of God unites the noble love couple’ (line six). He suggests that this line was a reference to the dedication and coronation miniatures in which the ducal couple are depicted. The subsequent line, in which it is stated that the noble couple lives a virtuous life, explains that the donation of the book was one of their good deeds, just as their generosity ‘exceeds that of their ancestors’. Clearly, both Henry and Matilda are credited with being righteous and generous and supporting the town.

Although never named specifically, Brunswick is quite clearly ‘the city’ to which the poem refers, as this was Henry and Matilda’s most important residence. It is also the place where the Church of St Blaise, the institution that was to receive the book, was built by Henry and Matilda. According to the poem, it was this town that ‘spread the ducal couple’s fame across the entire world’ (line nine). Lines ten to twelve state that Henry and Matilda were responsible for the building of consecrated churches, that they donated relics and built the city’s walls. Schmidt argues against the use of this statement as proof that the text was written at any given time. Yet the chronicle of Albert of Stade (1240-1256), as we have seen, suggests that the building of the walls and the erection of the bronze lion (along with other significant events in the Holy Roman Empire) occurred somewhere between 1165 and 1181. Based on this information, some have proposed that the city walls were erected between 1165 and 1176. According to this theory, Matilda played no role in their construction. Acknowledging what is stated in the dedicatory text, however, one could conclude that Matilda may have been involved in the construction of the city walls. Had they been constructed at the time Matilda was lady of Brunswick, their dating could be narrowed down to the years 1168 to 1176. As such, the poem may possibly have included remarks concerning recent events. While there is no solid evidence to support this conclusion, it presents an important argument in favour of an earlier dating of the Gospel Book.

Line thirteen states that the couple are donating the Gospel Book to Christ, who also appears in the accompanying dedication miniature, referred to as *auru liber*. The original cover of the Gospel Book, which was probably removed in the sixteenth century, was possibly made of gold. Numerous book covers of this type have survived from the Middle Ages, serving as proof that this was common practice. In the dedication miniature, the gold cover of the book that Henry holds is unlikely to have been fabricated (ll. 3.2). It probably reflects the practice of decorating liturgical manuscripts with costly covers. Henry and Matilda donated, among others, this resplendent golden book to Christ, in the hope of obtaining eternal life. This hope is underscored by the addition of line fifteen: ‘may they be admitted to the flock of the righteous.’

3.2.3

Matilda as one of the makers of the book

Lines sixteen to twenty were intended to preserve the names of the book’s makers for all posterity, i.e. for us. Although most scholars regard Herimann as the book’s maker (*bic labor est Herimann*), the text reveals that, in reality, several parties or ‘makers’ were involved. Admittedly, determining who was responsible for what is far from an easy task. What is certain is that the Henry, Matilda, Conrad and Herimann each influenced the content of the book (including the dedicatory text) and affected the way its audience, to be discussed in 3.2.4, would perceive it.
Abbot Conrad of Helmarshausen is credited with advising the book’s maker, Herrmann, to design a reliquary for the relics of Modoaldus, which had been translated from Trier to Cologne in order to design a reliquary for the relics of Modoaldus, which had been translated from Trier to Helmarshausen in 1107. Another complication is that the ‘personal style’ of a scribe or miniaturist, such as that attributed to Herrmann, is difficult to establish as skilled craftsmen were capable of meticulously copying an existing style. Moreover, there is no certainty that Herrmann was a scribe or miniaturist in the first place: perhaps he was the head of the workshop, who supervised the work of his fellow monks. The key question that then arises is whether his presence in the dedicatory text can in any way offer some kind of clue to the dating of the manuscript? The only thing we really do know is that his name is cited in the list of monks for the period 1151/55 in the Corvey *Liber vitae*. Freise suggests that Herrmann was a young man at this time, thus concluding that he would have been too old to write the Gospel Book around 1188. This argument is unconvincing, however, as there is nothing to suggest that an older monk could not have written the book. In fact, one could easily argue that a project of this vast scale is more likely to have been assigned to an experienced monk. All considered, the dedication text thus provides no solid evidence with regards to the manuscript’s year of origin. Until otherwise proven, a dating ‘prior to 1180’ appears most reasonable.

Besides Conrad and Herrmann, the duke’s name is also mentioned in the Gospel Book – of course, the most likely explanation for why it has been attributed to Henry’s patronage. Yet throughout the poem, Matilda is treated as Henry’s equal when it comes to the fame of Brunswick, as well as the many donations made to the city and its churches. Moreover, it is clearly stated that the duchess was as well involved in the book’s donation. Hence, there seems no reason why the Gospel Book should be solely referred to as being that of Henry the Lion. When evaluating the book’s potential patronage, Therese Martin and others before her have pointed out that it is a far too narrow approach to interpret phrases that credit men with donorship at face value. Martin proposes that the ‘makers’ be studied in a broader sense, in order to establish nuances in the various roles played by medieval patrons and artists. This view is evident in her discussion of the so-called ‘Eleanor Vase’, an object that was presented by King Louis VII to Abbot Suger (r. 1122-1151) and that for many years belonged to the treasury of Saint-Denis. According to *De Administratione* (completed 1148), the abbot received this crystal bottle from the king, who had in turn received it from his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine as a wedding gift in 1137 (iii. 37). After having accepted
3.2.4  The Gospel Book’s audience

While it seems reasonable to assume that Henry and Matilda were able to understand (some of) the allegorical comments in the Gospel Book, it is unlikely that they were the intellectual masterminds behind it. However, the canons at St Blaise are certain to have to understand the book’s theological content. They were likewise the ones who were meant to actually use it during the celebration of mass. In this manner, the Gospel Book served the eighteen canons of St Blaise, who received a three-year education from the collegiate church’s scolasticus and held the office of presbyter, dean or sub-dean. The book was also used by their dean, who held the office of priest and celebrated mass, by the cantor and the custos who were both responsible for the sacristy, and lastly, by the provost, who administered temporal affairs. This is not to exclude the ducal couple and its entourage from the book’s audience. The ties between Henry, who possessed the ius patronus, and the canons were strong. Their connection was made visible through the proximity of palace and church, enhanced by a skywalk that linked the two buildings together. Via this pathway, Henry and Matilda arrived in the elevated part of the northern transept, from which they could attend mass and view the Gospel Book displayed on the altar. The relationship between the chapter members and their patrons was also manifested after the celebration of the mass, as the book was then kissed by both the canons and the secular attendants.

The celebration of the mass is visualized in a twelfth-century leaf – perhaps originally belonging to a missal – made in Weingarten in Swabia [ill. 3.8]. Although a bishop-saint is leading the service in the miniature, the manner in which it is depicted appears authentic. The bishop has consecrated the wine and is elevating the host, which he is about to present to the four people attending mass. Interpreting the miniature in any greater detail is difficult, as so little is known about this leaf. For instance, who are the four people gathered around the altar? They could possibly be in some way

80 Perhaps Louis VII donated the crystal vase to the St Denis on 11 June 1144 when the church was consecrated. See Turner 2009: 86.
82 Klee 1969: 9; Döll 1967: 152 and 164.
83 Döll 1967: 163.
84 Kroos 1969: 110.

the vase, Suger had it mounted and added an inscription to it. This inscription reads: ‘As a bride, Eleanor gave this vase to King Louis, Mitadolus to her grandfather, the King to me, and Suger to the Saints’. As Martin has pointed out, Eleanor is mentioned before any of the other males. In fact, the inscription is centred upon her: the queen is the person who received the vase from her grandfather, William IX, and who then passed it on to her husband, Louis VII. While Eleanor is not the one who actually donated the crystal bottle to the Church of St Denis, the inscription clearly states that she was indeed instrumental in its bestowal. Moreover Suger’s inscription also underscores the fact, that without Eleanor, there would have been no way of demonstrating the vase’s illustrious history. In this sense, Eleanor is also a ‘maker’ of the object and its history. When it comes to her involvement in the Gospel Book, Matilda’s name is perhaps applied in a different manner than that of her mother’s in the case of the Eleanor Vase. Notwithstanding, her presence on the book’s pages – in word and, as we will see, image – gave shape to its meaning and had an influence on its presentation as a gift.
connected to the Benedictine abbey at Weingarten, which was founded in 1056 by Welf VI and sold to Frederick Barbarossa in 1178. But perhaps they have nothing to do with Weingarten. Behind the bishop, one can see a cleric, a richly dressed nobleman holding a sword and a veiled lady. In front of him, on the other side of the altar, another lady wearing a veil and a dress with fashionably wide sleeves is depicted. The Eucharist requires the congregation’s participation. There is no reason to assume this was any different than the manner in which mass was celebrated in the Collegiat Church of St Blaise at Brunswick.

To summarise, the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda is not unusual in its style and content. When compared to those in the aforementioned Pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde and the Gospel Book of Henry III and Agnes, this one also provides information about the patron and donor, the object that is donated, to whom it is dedicated and to what end. From a female perspective, however, the poem in Henry and Matilda’s Gospel Book is quite remarkable. Matilda’s role in the poem is significantly larger than that of either Cunigunde or Agnes. Cunigunde is mentioned as co-regent, but her responsibilities remain unspecified. Agnes is not even mentioned, though she is depicted on the preceding page. The idea of Agnes as nostra thori nostrique regni consors Agneta imperatrix augusta (Empress Agnes, our [Henry III’s] partner in bed and rule), used to communicate that the consortium and the marriage were intertwined, is nowhere to be found. Matilda, on the other hand, is explicitly mentioned as Henry’s consort, who is expected to provide him with children. The poem affirms that Henry and Matilda are a married couple, both of noble birth. Henry is perhaps portrayed as being of higher descent, but at the same time, a clarification is given that this was a requirement for entering into a marriage with an English princess. Subsequently, Matilda’s responsibilities as

---

87 Pericopes Henry II and Cunigunde: ‘König Heinrich, freudig und leuchtend im Glanz des Glaubens, der größte durch vorn Urahn ererbte Herrschaft, die er glücklich genießt, hat aus geneigtem Herzen dieses von göttlichem Gesetz erfüllte Buch, umgeben von verschiedenen anderen prachtigen Kleinodien, voll von Liebe zu Gott und fromm zu den Weihgeschenken der Kirche gegeben, auf dass es ihr in alle Ewigkeit zur immerwährenden Zier gereiche. Fürst der Kirche, Schlüsselträger der himmlischen Halle, Petrus, mit Paulus dem gütigen Lehrer des Volkes, mach diesen Ergebenen durch deine Fürbitte über den Sternen selig, zusammen mit Kunigunde, ihrer erlauchten Mitregentin. Dies möge der Vater, der Sohn und der segenspendende Geist, der eine ewige und in allen (dreien) stets eine Gott gewähren.’ Cited after Fillitz 1994: 110; Gospel Book Henry III and Agnes: ‘This is the book of life / because it contains life in itself. / The celestial dew / of Christ pours out from his mouth / To all peoples / to us and our parents. / So that we might avoid evil / the good things having been established in mind, amen. / May he who makes these words obtain the celestial kingdom. / Emperor Henry (III) / who is not equalled in virtue / than whom no one wiser has been king / To the king of all he offers / this crown of books. / Because he wrote in gold / what wisdom said: / All these things will pass away / before my words will perish.’ Cited after Wagner 2010: 64.
88 Fößel 2000: 61. See also Chapter 2 on Henry and Matilda’s bracteate.
a wife are summarised. She is depicted as a generous woman in all likelihood, giving alms in accordance with Arnold of Lübeck’s description of her.99 Matilda’s care for the present and the hereafter are illustrated by her involvement in various kinds of patronage. None of these aspects are mentioned in the dedicatory text in the Pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde.100 The dedicatory text in Henry and Matilda’s Gospel Book thus provides a unique insight into the portrayal of Matilda’s identity as princess (royal daughter), wife, mother and benefactor. It is also evident that this identity is partly shaped by Henry the Lion. In return, his fame and wealth – essential to the duke’s identity – gain significance through Matilda’s presence and actions. The canons of St Blaise, whose first and foremost task was to commemorate the church’s founders and supporters through prayer, were reminded of the status, wealth, devotion and good deeds of Henry and his wife, Matilda, who is featured so prominently at his husband’s side in this poem. The canons were not only aware of the persons for whom they were required to pray, they realised their existence was completely dependent upon this powerful ducal couple.

3.3 The donation of the Gospel Book: Matilda as a devout and wealthy donor

The dedicatory text was originally accompanied by the miniature depicting Henry and Matilda’s donation [ill. 3.2]. While the poem is written in gold on unadorned parchment, the event portrayed in the miniature is framed by a highly stylised decorative border of leaves. The miniature is divided into two zones. In the lower half, Henry and Matilda are portrayed, on the left and right of Christ respectively. Henry is identified as duke (Henricus dux) and Matilda as duchess (Matilda ducissa), emphasising their office and status and the relation to each other as duke and duchess. Henry offers a book covered in gold and decorated with a cross to St Blaise, who is depicted as a bishop. The hands of the duke and the saint are joined in a gesture of intimacy.

Matilda is accompanied by St Aegidius, depicted as a monk with tonsure in a priest’s chasuble, who holds the duchess’ hand. In the representation of both Henry and Matilda, the holding of hands is a reference to similar gestures exchanged at festive appearances, e.g. as a sign of the king’s support upon entering the church. In the Pontifical (1007-1024) of Henry II, the emperor is guided by two bishops as he enters the church [ill. 3.9].101 He is also depicted in the Sacramentary of Henry II (1002-1014), this time receiving the crown while being supported by St Emmeran and St Ulrich [ill. 3.10].102 Another example is the Echternach Pericopes (ca. 1040), made for Henry III (r. 1039-1056). Henry’s mother, Gisela (+ 1043), is portrayed together with her retinue, comprising both men and women. Two abbots take her by the hand, identified as Humbert of Echternach and Poppo of St Maximin at Trier [ill. 3.11].103 On the other side of the leaf, Emperor Henry is portrayed in similar fashion. He is supported by the same abbots and is accompanied by his retinue of noblemen [ill. 3.12].104 Together these two miniatures bear witness to Henry’s and Gisela’s visit to the monks of the Willibrord monastery at Echternach, whose church is depicted behind the king and his mother.105

The Echternach Pericopes are valuable to our understanding of the representations in Henry and Matilda’s Gospel Book in more than just this one regard. They also demonstrate that both men and women could be held in high esteem. The same is evident in the depiction of Emma-Aelgifu and Cnut in the Liber vitae. Accordingly, the conclusion that Matilda was not involved in the Gospel Book’s donation, simply because she is not depicted holding or touching the book, is perfunctory. For one thing, her presence in itself is an indication of her involvement. Besides, as we have seen, the dedication text states that the donation was a joint one. This can be inferred also from Matilda being named one of the church’s founders (fundatrix).106 Moreover, Matilda holds an unidentified object in her left hand: a charter with appended seals, a pyx, and a paten have all been suggested.107 Whatever its nature, it could be that Matilda is portrayed as if to present this object to the

---

99 Arnold of Lübeck, Chronica Slavorum: 11. 90 See also Chapter 2 for some remarks about the Pericopes.

95 Above his head: icornem regem aevi natali festo ornit (May the king of this age be adorned on the day of his birth). Cited after Plotzek 1970: 25-37. Gisela’s miniature is preceded by an unreadable dedicatory text (fol. 2v).
97 Kötzsche 1984: 43; Kroes 1989: 165 (a scroll belonging to the donation of an altar, although these are usually depicted differently).
Virgin. Admittedly, the possibility exists that the duchess is merely clutching part of her mantle, a gesture that can be seen in other images of noblewomen, e.g. Queen Emma in the Liber vitae.

3.3.1
Dressed to impress: insignia and clothes as makers and markers of identity

In line with the lavish decoration of the Gospel Book in gold, red, green and blue, and the wide variety of ornaments that adorn the dedication miniature’s borders and background, Henry and Matilda are portrayed as a richly attired couple. By comparison, saints Blasius and Aegidius are wearing albs (long-sleeved tunics), dalmatics (wide-sleeved tunics), chasubles (outer garments) and pallii (narrow bands worn over the chasuble) that are more soberly adorned. The contrast between the ducal couple and the saints is therefore considerable. Over his light blue undergarment (cote), Henry dons a green long-sleeved tunic (bliaud) with medallions – perhaps embroidered with pearls – and red stripes. The bliaud (or Roc in German) is decorated with broad golden hems at the ankles, wrists, breast and waist. The careful observer can see that these borders are further embellished with woven or embroidered patterns. Even more impressive is the duke’s blue and golden cloak lined with squirrel fur, known as miniver. Henry’s pointed shoes are decorated with gold.

Matilda’s attire is no less impressive. A white veil covers her hair; above it rests a golden crown decorated with pearls. The crown’s size distinguishes it from a coronet, which would have been used to keep the veil in place. As there is no crown on Henry’s head – the crown was not a ducal attribute – we may conclude that Matilda is depicted here wearing a royal insignia in recognition of her status as princess. Her ‘queenly status’ seems further enhanced by the presence of the veiled Virgin Mary, who, as Queen of Heaven, is worthy of imitation, but can never truly be imitated. Although Matilda’s crown differs in shape and size from that of the Virgin, it affirms

191
Matilda’s royal status and underscores the importance of her high position to Henry’s own. Through his marriage to the eldest daughter of King Henry II of England, the duke’s status was even further enhanced. Accordingly, one can postulate that the duchess’s appearance in the miniature serves not only to confirm her physical presence, or her shared role in the book’s donation, but that it was equally essential to the construction of Henry’s noble identity as well. Taking this interpretation one step further, even the canons of St Blaise would have benefitted from her presence in the book, because it also served to underscore the chapter’s esteemed status. Finally, it depicts the ties between the patrons and the chapter, just as Cnut and Emma’s presence functioned in the miniature of the Liber vitae at Winchester.

The duchess’s garments are similar to those of Henry, though there are differences in the decoration. Henry’s bliaud is embellished with floral designs, Matilda’s with geometric patterns in gold and red. Matilda’s miniver-lined cloak is blue, red and white with, just as Henry’s, hems edged in gold. Whether the duke and his wife were ever actually seen wearing such richly decorated garments is irrelevant. With regards to their depiction here, what matters most is that the manner in which they are dressed communicates their high noble status and wealth. While the shape of their mantles in the Gospel Book is in accordance with the German fashion of their time, the ornamental decoration – bright colours, the large golden borders and ornate patterns – is undoubtedly inspired by the allure of costly Byzantine fabrics, which had always been popular in the West.

A comparison with a tenth-century ivory plaque bearing depictions of Emperor Otto II and his Byzantine wife, Theophanu, reveals that, though differences can be perceived, the geometric patterns of Matilda’s dress are similar to those found in the attire of both imperial figures. Byzantine decorative elements are found in Ottonian book illumination, with the influence of Byzantine textiles detectible in Salian art as well. Several manuscripts produced at Echternach under the reign of Emperor Henry III (r. 1039-1056) contain ornamented, textile-inspired pages. That the Byzantine style in the Gospel Book was chosen merely because it was en vogue seems unlikely. Its connotations with the imperial tradition were evident, and to the viewer, it must have been clear that this manner of attire was one that corresponded with the status that Henry and Matilda attributed to themselves. The choice of dress was crucial for the construction of their noble identity.

Throughout the Gospel Book, the style and richness of the figures’ clothing is perceivable. This draws a visual connection between Henry and Matilda and the Old and New Testament figures and saints, enabling the couple to partake in God’s creation and salvation. The Gospel Book’s status as a volume destined for liturgical use may also explain the splendid depiction of the ducal couple’s attire. In their psalter, designed for private devotion, Henry and Matilda are dressed more plainly [ill. 3.13]. The duke wears a blue bliaud; Matilda a white one. Both are decorated with gold hems. Henry’s mantle, slipping from his shoulder, is red with a blue tippet. His wife’s mantle is green with a blue tippet and a golden cord. Here too, Matilda wears a veil. Her crown, however, is lacking. Clearly, Henry and Matilda are dressed according to their rank, but the overall impression is less splendid than in the Gospel Book. Moreover, Byzantine elements are less obvious. Compared to the display of dress in the Gospel Book with other manuscripts produced at Helmarshausen, the overall impression of Henry’s and Matilda’s attire – just as that of their forbearers – is one of imperial grandeur.

### 3.3.2

**St Blaise and St Aegidius constructing Henry and Matilda’s identity**

In the dedication miniature, Henry and Matilda are flanked by two saints. This image is representative of an old motif, in which the person (or persons) who commissioned and/or donated the manuscript are portrayed with saints. In dedication miniatures of this type, the choice of the saint(s) was seldom random. That St Blaise is shown accompanying the ducal couple is to be expected: though the collegiate church was dedicated to several saints,
Döll 1967: 48. Schneidmüller states that St Blaise did not replace the other patron saints of the church, but that the church was simply referred to as that of Blaise. The eleventh-century arm reliquary and the fact that the main altar in the old church was also dedicated to Blaise points out that this saint already played a prominent role in Gertrud’s time. See Schneidmüller 2003a: 61.


MGH UU HdL: 11-14, no. 7.

Fuhrmann and Mütherich 1986: 51; Kroos 1989: 182; Plotzek 1995, vol. 1: 206. The saint’s feast day on 1 September is added to the calendar in Henry and Matilda’s Psalter and to that in the Baltimore Psalter also attributed to Henry’s patronage.


The Church of St Blaise was Henry and Matilda’s personal church, built on the palatine complex and attached to the palace by a skywalk. Via this bridge, the ducal couple entered the church through the gallery of the north transept. In all likelihood, their seats were on this gallery, providing a view of the choir while attending mass.

The choice of St Aegidius, who is depicted at Matilda’s side, is less obvious, as he was not a patron saint of the collegiate church. Another religious institution that did in fact bear his name, however, was a Benedictine monastery in Brunswick. This monastery and its church had been built at the request of Markgräfin Gertrud (ca. 1060-1117), Henry the Lion’s great-grandmother. Its construction was supervised by Abbot Henry of Bursfelde, with the completed building consecrated on 1 September 1115 (Aegidius’ feast day) in the presence of Richenza and Lothar. Initially, the monastery was dedicated to Christ and his mother. Soon after, Aegidius was added. The addition of this saint must have occurred at least prior to 1146, because by this time, the monks were referred to as fratribus sancti Egidii. While Matilda’s relation to St Aegidius in the dedication miniature may indicate that she supported the Aegidius monastery, there is no other evidence to suggest that this was indeed the case. He may very well have been chosen because he was important to the ducal family. In such a case, however, there were other saints associated with churches in Brunswick that might have been depicted as well: St Cyriacus, the patron saint of a church founded in the eleventh century; or St Magni, a church dedicated to Bishop Magnus (also eleventh century). This suggests that there is possibly another explanation for Aegidius’ presence.

Johannes Fried has posited that the saint’s importance lies in his relation to fertility. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Aegidius, also known as Giles or Gilles, was believed to be capable of providing kings with heirs. King Wladislaw and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, received their long awaited son, Boleslaw III (1086-†1138), after having turned to St Giles. A similar account is to be found in the Lay of Desiré (composed between 1190 and 1210?).

103 Döll 1967: 48. Schneidmüller states that St Blaise did not replace the other patron saints of the church, but that the church was simply referred to as that of Blaise. The eleventh-century arm reliquary and the fact that the main altar in the old church was also dedicated to Blaise points out that this saint already played a prominent role in Gertrud’s time. See Schneidmüller 2003a: 61.


105 MSH UU HDL: 11-14, no. 7.

106 Fuhrmann and Mütherich 1986: 51; Kroos 1989: 182; Pfitzen 1995, vol. 1: 206. The saint’s feast day on 1 September is added to the calendar in Henry and Matilda’s Psalter and to that in the Baltimore Psalter also attributed to Henry’s patronage.

story relates of a vassal of the Scottish king who has no children. Together with his wife, he visits the sanctuary of St Giles in Provence. The couple offers the saint a silver statue, and before they reach home, the wife becomes pregnant. The child that is born is given the name, Desiré (the desired one). The saint’s sanctuary at Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, located between Arles and Nîmes, was familiar to Germans as well. Its necrology reveals that a number of twelfth-century German pilgrims had requested that mass be said for their souls. Considering the familiarity with Aegidius/Giles, it is possible that Henry and Matilda were aware of the saint’s powers. Accounts of Aegidius’ healing miracles were also narrated in the Miracula beati Agidii (Miracles of St Giles), begun by Petrus Guilmelmus between 1121 and 1124. In the earliest surviving account from the thirteenth century, fourteen of the thirty cases reported concern miracles revealed to Germans. As tokens of gratitude, these miracles are also likely to have generated gifts in the German territories. Although none of the miracles in this book involve incidents related to infertility or childbirth, this may simply reflect the author’s lack of interest.

In summary, the presence of St Blaise at Henry’s side provides confirmation that he is the patron saint of the church to which the manuscript is donated. At the same time, the saint’s presence articulates the church’s ‘ancient’ origins: St Blaise had been its patron saint since the church’s foundation in the eleventh century. Blaise thus linked Henry to his ancestors, enhancing the duke’s status as patron. The miniaturist could have depicted St Blaise standing between Henry and Matilda, but instead, Aegidius was placed at Matilda’s side. This suggests that he held a special importance for her and that he was not merely a saint connected to the Welf dynasty in general. His reputation as a saint, who was addressed by both men and women in need of an heir, might possibly explain his presence in the dedication miniature. If this was indeed the case, the figure of St Aegidius served to construct Matilda’s identity as a (future) mother. This is a theme that we have already encountered in the dedicatory text and one that is relevant when examining those to whom the Gospel Book was presented.

On a purely historical basis, we know that the Gospel Book was donated to the Chapter of St Blaise. A closer examination of the dedication miniature, however, reveals a somewhat different story. The gestures of Blasius and Aegidius – who are pointing upward – and the direction of Henry’s glance together suggest that there is someone out of Henry and Matilda’s immediate reach who may in fact be regarded as the intended receiver of the gold-covered book: the heavenly Virgin Mary, designated as sancta Theotocos (God-bearer) and her son. Mary, dressed in a white tunic and purple dalmatic, is depicted seated on a backless throne in Byzantine style. The gold crown and globe surmounted by a lily represent her privileged position as the mother of the king whose teachings would lead Christians to eternal life. Her raised right hand indicates that she acts as an intercessor in heaven, symbolised by the mandorla that surrounds her. Her son is depicted in an imago clipeata (framed portrait), a roundel with the bust of the young Christ, which rests on her breast. This imago clipeata was derived from Roman imperial portraiture associated with military standards. Christ’s right hand is lifted to indicate speech and in his left, he holds the Book of Life (liber vitae). This book contains the names of the beloved, who lived according to the Gospel and who were therefore able to enter God’s kingdom. This is expressed by the banderole that partially covers the Virgin and Child, which states: ‘Enter the kingdom of Heaven with my help’. Mother and child are flanked by John the Baptist and Bartholomew, who again seem to have held a specific meaning for Henry, Matilda and the canons of St Blaise.

Like St Blaise, John the Baptist was the patron saint of the eleventh-century church. He is dressed in a tunic and his mantle of camel’s hair. He holds a palm leaf in his right hand; in his left, he holds a banderole that states per [n]os fundatur [v]ita. This text only makes sense when read in combination with the banderole held by Bartholomew, who is depicted on
Mary’s left side, which bears the text, *qui nos venerantur*. Together the two phrases can be read as: ‘Through our life will be given to those who venerate us’.117 St Bartholomew’s identity can only be ascertained through the inscription written above his head. Although he was not a patron saint of the church at this time, Bartholomew nevertheless seems to have been important to Henry and Matilda.118 This is possibly because his relics had for many years belonged to the so-called Welf treasure, preserved in the portable altar commissioned by Countess Gertrud (+ 1077) in the eleventh century, in the twelfth-century Walpurgis Shrine and in many other reliquaries.119 Bartholomew is also prominently depicted from the waist up next to St Peter in the coronation miniature, indicating a dynastic importance. Renate Kroos explains his presence in this miniature as a reminder of a significant political moment in Henry the Lion’s family history. On the saint’s feast day on 24 August in 1125, a general assembly (diet) was organised in Mainz during which Lothar III, Henry’s grandfather, was chosen as the new emperor.120 In this case, the saint’s presence underscores the duale couple’s relation to Henry’s ancestors, who attached special value to St John and St Bartholomew.

The inscriptions on the banderoles convey the importance of saints – including the Virgin – as mediators between living mortals and Christ in their desire for eternal life. Donations were one way of trying to secure salvation. It was the task of the canons of the Church of St Blaise, who actually received the Gospel Book, to pray for their benefactors in order to ensure that they would be remembered by God and his saints.

The Greek term *Theotokos* seems out of place in the Latin Gospel Book, but the term was occasionally used in Western hymns of the late tenth century and in eleventh-century German manuscripts.121 We encounter the title *Theotokos* in the Uta Codex (ca. 1025).122 In the Pericope Book of King Henry II (dated before 1014), the king offers the book to Mary, designated as *Theotokos* [ill. 3.14].123 Mary herself is labelled *Theotokos* in a representation of the Tree of Jesse of a Citeaux Lectionary (ca. 1120-1130).124 In the twelfth century, the name *Theotokos* also appears in Latin texts. It remains unclear whether the use of this word may be seen as a renewal of a Greek tradition or a continuation of something that was thought to be a Western ‘tradition’.125

The *Theotokos* is not a specific iconographic type, such as the *Madonna Lactans* (or ‘Lactating Virgin’), but rather a term that refers to any non-narrative depiction of the Virgin and her son. Mary can be seen standing or seated, while holding her son in any variety of ways. Similarly, Christ himself is portrayed in a variety of positions, i.e. seated, standing, or encircled by a mandorla. Nevertheless, the earliest representations of the *Theotokos* depict the Virgin enthroned with her child in her lap. Many of them were to be found in Rome, Constantinople and the rest of the Byzantine Empire from the fifth century onwards.126 The first Council of Ephesus (AD 431), where Mary was officially declared Mother of God, is considered the impetus behind the spread of depictions with the enthroned Virgin holding Christ.127 This image was dispersed all over the Christian world and is known in Carolingian, Ottonian and Romanesque art. German examples are found in ivory carvings, book illumination and sculpture, dating from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.128

A study of the image of Mary as *Theotokos* or *genitrix Dei* in relation to secular donors, based on the material that Sigfrid Steinberg and Christine Steinberg-von Pape, have gathered, demonstrates that both men and women turned to the Mother of God for support and veneration.129 In most cases, this is best explained by the fact that Mary was the patron saint of religious institutes. However, none of the examples of the enthroned Mary with child match the representation found in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda. Not only is the overall composition of these images less elaborate – the additional saints and scrolls are lacking – but they also miss the lavish ornamental decorations and bright colours present in the Gospel Book.
Book. Furthermore, the title Theotokos is not found in any of the examples provided. Instead, the Latin (and more common) designation Dei genitrix is used. In other cases, no title of any kind is attributed to Mary. Lastly, in contrast to the examples gathered by the Steinbergs, the ‘God-bearer’ depicted in the Gospel Book is not actually holding the physical child. The clipeus with the image of Christ is depicted in front of her midriff, without Mary touching it; instead, her hands are raised (orans). Despite the fact that they are not physically connected, mother and son are still connected through the text ‘Enter the kingdom of heaven with my help’, an invocation that can be attributed to both Mary and Christ.130

AN IMPERIAL MODEL FOR MARY AS THEOTOKOS?

The unique elements in the depiction of Mary and her son may be viewed as underscoring the importance of motherhood. This, at least, seems to be confirmed when investigating Salian manuscripts that might have served as a possible sources for the iconography of the dedication and coronation miniatures. When considering the chosen Greek term, Theotokos, the Byzantine style of Henry and Matilda's attire, and Böhme's suggestion that the manuscript's content could have been modelled after a Trier specimen, an attribution based on Salian manuscripts becomes highly tempting. Florentine Mütherich has previously pointed out various parallels with Salian manuscripts, such as the Pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde and the Gospel Book of Henry III and Agnes, in which dedication miniatures can be found ([ill. 2.14 and 2.15]).131 In no way does she suggest that the relation between these books and the Gospel Book is straightforward. That said, the theme of the heavenly coronation and representations in which wives are prominently depicted are undoubtedly common denominators in both cases.

The Speyer Gospel Book of Henry III and Agnes, also known as the Codex Aureus of Speyer, was made in Echternach and can be dated to around 1040. Henry and Agnes donated the book to Speyer Cathedral, the church founded by Henry's parents, Conrad II and Gisela. The manuscript contains a miniature (fol. 3r) that depicts the Salian imperial couple humbly handing the book that they had commissioned to the Virgin (sancta maria), the cathedral's patron ([ill. 3.15]).132 The couple is accompanied by the four cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude) depicted in the medallions on the borders. The border also contains a text addressed to the Virgin, who is entrusted with Henry's care, his parents and his wife, to whom he is 'connected based on love for a child'.133 The Virgin Mary, here depicted without her son, directly interacts with Henry and Agnes by accepting the book that Henry presents while blessing Agnes. Both members of the imperial couple are depicted as humble donors, bowing their heads before Mary. In the end, such features are not found in the dedication miniature of the Gospel Book. What the presentation miniature in the Codex Aureus does share with our miniature, however, is a number of characteristics associated with Henry and Matilda.

Like Emperor Henry III, Henry the Lion also presents the book to the Virgin, albeit with the assistance of St Blaise. Matilda, like Agnes, is not physically involved in the donation of the book. Yet the very fact that the women are present, as well as the manner in which the Virgin and Aegidius interact with Agnes and Matilda respectively, suggests that they are active participants in the donation and indicates their special relationship with these saints. Johannes Fried suggests that Mary places her hand on Agnes' head, in acknowledgement of the latter's hope that the Virgin will help her to produce a male heir. This would ultimately occur in 1050.134 Fried supports his hypothesis by drawing a comparison with the importance that emperors and kings attached to male heirs in general. Moreover, he suggests that the line iuncta prolis amore (united through the love for heirs) is not a reference to a child already born, but rather to the duty of both partners within the Christian marriage.135 Taking this one step further, the emphasis might have been placed on 'performing one's duty', precisely because a child had not yet been born (or perhaps only recently born). According to Stefan Weinfurter, Agnes is at least entrusted into Mary's care, demonstrated by the blessing gesture – which is not bestowed upon her husband – in order to secure the birth of an heir.136

131  Madrid, Escorial, Cod. Viribus 17, also known as Codex Aureus of Speyer.
133  Fried 1993: 46 and 48. Opposing to Fried's idea is Ludger Kürnigen who regards sanctum prolis amore as a reference to the love Henry and Agnes hold for Conrad and Gisela, who are depicted on the facing page. See Kürnigen 2001: 252. Moreover, he does not believe in the idea of the wish for an heir, because neither text nor iconography offer clues. See Kürnigen 2001: 251. It is however questionable whether medieval iconography ever offers straightforward clues to the modern reader.
134  Fried 1993: 47.
Although Christ is absent from his mother's lap in the Speyer Gospels, he is depicted on the facing page (fol. 2v). Shown at Christ's feet are Henry's parents, Conrad II and Gisela. They were the founders of Speyer Cathedral and the first to be buried there. Conrad states that he weeps over his sins before Christ, who made him emperor, in order to be forgiven. He and that he and his wife pray for eternal peace and light. That Conrad II is Henry's father is also expressed in the corner medallions of the dedication text on fols. 3v-4r (Heinricus rex Cuonradi regis filius). See Boeckler 1933: 9.

Moreover, it is possible that Henry himself knew of the Speyer Gospels. The duke is known to have joined his cousin, Frederick Barbarossa, several times at Speyer. Festivities and formal meetings at the court are certain to have included a mass in the cathedral. The size of the Speyer Gospel Book (500 x 350 mm) suggests that it was particularly suited for display on the altar, increasing the chance that Henry might have seen it. While the Marian iconography in this imperial manuscript greatly differs from the iconographic program of Henry and Matilda's Gospel Book, the conscious use of past imagery comparable to this one is conceivable.

---

3.15 Speyer Gospels Conrad and Gisela (fol. 2v) and Henry III and Agnes (fol. 3r), Echternach, ca. 1043-1046. Madrid, Escorial Cod. Vitrinas 97, fols. 304 x 330 mm.

3.14 Evangeliary of Henry II, Seeon, 1007-1014, fols. 7v-8r. Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Bibl. 95, fols. 124 x 176 mm.

---

\[\text{\textsuperscript{137}}\text{Boeckler 1933: 16.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{138}}\text{Boeckler 1933: 9.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{139}}\text{Mütherich 1986: 31.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{140}}\text{Mütherich 1986: 31.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{141}}\text{Kraus 1989: 168.}\]
What can be concluded from the *Theotokos* iconography? While the designation as *Theotokos* is not very common in the twelfth century, the idea that Mary functioned as the mother of God was. This was generally expressed by the popular phrase *Dei genitrix* and communicated through the depiction of Mary as a mother with the child on her lap. It is difficult to establish with any certainty why the term *Theotokos* was used, although we do know that it was used in Salian manuscripts. Such manuscripts were perhaps familiar to the Helmarshausen atelier. Even if we are unable to establish the ‘origin’ of the *Theotokos* in the Gospel Book, we can understand why the mother and child are depicted at its beginning. The portrayal of Mary as *Theotokos* is fitting for the start of the Gospel Book, because through Mary the incarnation of God was realised. Christ’s human nature is also communicated through the Tree of Jesse, depicted on the verso side of the leaf with the dedication miniature (fol. 19v). With regard to the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, it is tempting to suggest that the Greek *Theotokos* was purposely chosen to emphasise the themes of motherhood and birth (the dedicatory text and the presence of Aegidus/Giles) that are found on its pages. Henry and Matilda’s offering to the mother and child underscored their identities as a husband and wife and highlighted their acknowledgement of the importance of producing heirs. Accordingly, the book’s donation to Mary, who holds her child, serves to further construct Matilda’s identity as mother, as can also be deduced from the dedicatory text.

**MARY’S PRESENCE AS EVIDENCE FOR DATING THE GOSPEL BOOK AROUND 1188?**

Reiner Hausherr described the depiction of Mary *Theotokos*, the bearer of God, in the dedication miniature as proof that the Gospel Book was intended for the Altar of the Virgin in the Church of St Blaise [ill. 3.16]. The inscription on the pyx, hidden in the central support of this altar, describes Mary as *beate dei genitricis*, designating her as the mother of God. It is possibly the Virgin who is depicted enthroned on the pyx, though here she is portrayed holding two churches rather than her son. The inscription on the pyx also states that the altar was consecrated in 1188, at the instigation of Henry and Matilda [ill. 3.17]. It was this information regarding the Altar of the Virgin that would pave the way for a dating of the manuscript to approximately the same time.

Both Gospel Book and the pyx emphasise Mary’s role as mother, but does that necessarily mean that the manuscript was made for the altar? If they were designed as a pair from the start, one would expect the same terminology to have been applied. And one might also assume that the Latin term, *Dei genitrix*, would have been favoured over the Greek *Theotokos*, even though the Greek name is spelled in Latin. There are indeed parallels between the text on the pyx and the visual ancestry displayed in the coronation miniature, which will be discussed in 3.4. The translation of the text on the pyx reads:

> In the year of the Lord 1188 this altar was dedicated in honour of the Virgin Mary, mother of God, by Adelog, the venerable bishop of Hildesheim. It was donated and instigated by the illustrious Duke Henry, son of the daughter of Emperor Lothar, and his religious consort Matilda, daughter of Henry II, king of the English, son of Matilda, Roman Empress.

In the year of the Lord 1188 this altar was dedicated in honour of the Virgin Mary, mother of God, by Adelog, the venerable bishop of Hildesheim. It was donated and instigated by the illustrious Duke Henry, son of the daughter of Emperor Lothar, and his religious consort Matilda, daughter of Henry II, king of the English, son of Matilda, Roman Empress.

---

1.43 In 1223 the foundation was confirmed by their son Count palatine Henry, who stated that his mother was responsible for the foundation of the ‘altar of Saint Mary, which is the centre of the choir of St Blaise’, altare sancte Marie, good eat in modern choro beat Blasii, MGH UU HDL: 178-179, no. 121. The altar is also depicted in the thirteenth-century church nave. See for reconstruction of the location of the altar during the thirteenth-century church Niehr 1995, vol. 2: 217.
1.44 In the coronation miniature Henry and Matilda’s parents and grandparents are depicted. From left to right: regina anglici Henrici, regina anglici Henrici, regina matildis.
On the pyx, Duke Henry is the grandson of Lothar, but he is not explicitly labelled as the grandson of Empress Richenza and the son of Duchess Gertrud and Duke Henry (the Proud), the ancestors who are portrayed in the miniature. And while Matilda is designated as Henry’s wife and the daughter of the king of England on the pyx, she is not referred to as duchess, as is the case in the coronation miniature. Moreover, Matilda’s grandmother is referred to as empress on the pyx; in the miniature she is described as queen. Any similarity between the pyx and the Gospel Book in terms of lineage therefore occurs only on a general level. They are not exact matching pendants, as one would expect in the event that both objects were produced at the same time. Moreover, references to one’s ancestors were very common in the Middle Ages. Again and again, Matilda is referred to as the daughter of the English king. One must therefore question whether Henry and Matilda’s family lineage can be used as a valid argument for dating the Gospel Book. My comments on the dating of the Gospel Book to around 1188 based on the pyx inscription do not disprove the hypothesis that the altar and book were designed together. Nevertheless, to claim that the Gospel Book was made for the Altar of the Virgin and, as a consequence, that it too should be dated ca. 1188, to my mind seems to lack nuance. Even if the book had indeed been intended for this particular altar, there is no way of telling that the book was made around the same time. The fact that the altar was dedicated in 1188 does not rule out the existence of an earlier altar – perhaps located elsewhere – that may have as well been dedicated to Mary. We do know that there were three altars dedicated to the Virgin Mary and other saints in the eleventh-century church that had existed until 1173, at which time Henry had it torn down. Certainly, the Gospel Book could just have easily been used on any one of these altars. In any event, their whereabouts following the construction of the new church, on the very same location, remain unclear.

Another argument that might invalidate any theory based upon the allegedly inextricable relation between the Altar of the Virgin and the Gospel Book is the simple observation that the dedicatory text makes no mention of Mary whatsoever, but instead speaks of the ducal couple’s love for Christ. This in itself might perhaps suggest that the manuscript was intended for use on several altars, depending on the feasts to be celebrated. The absence of the Feast of the Annunciation from the Gospel Book’s capitulare (an index with passages from the gospels to be read on feast days), celebrated each year on 25 March, only serves to strengthen the notion that the relation between altar and manuscript is less evident than has previously been suggested.

In order to assess how Matilda’s identity is performed the coronation miniature needs to be taken into account. This miniature is also essential for my argument that lineage was deemed important as well. I will investigate how the coronation miniature confirms that the donation of the Gospel can be linked to the wish for heirs. On fol. 171v, the ducal couple are depicted together with their grandparents [ill. 3.3]. Kneeling before Christ, who is supported by two angels and flanked by eight saints, they receive the golden crowns of eternal life. Christ holds a scroll with the words: ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.’ This text is related to both the saints and the living mortals depicted, as it was read during the feasts of the martyrs. The bearded and nimbed Christ is depicted, almost in the centre of the miniature, from the waist up. Together with the angels and saints, he represents the heavenly realm.

On Christ’s right side stands John the Evangelist with a book, John the Baptist with a palm branch, and Blaise and George, both holding a palm branch. John the Baptist’s and Blaise’s presence can be explained by the fact that they were both patron saints of the church of St Blaise.
John the Evangelist was probably Henry's personal preference, as he was also the patron saint of the cathedrals at Ratzeburg and Schwerin, both supported by Henry the Lion. The figure to the far right, St George, was the patron of Henry and Matilda's private upper chapel in the palace. On Christ's left stand Peter with his keys, Bartholomew with the palm branch, Gregory and Thomas Becket with a palm branch. In the Church of St Blaise, St Peter is likely to have had an altar. St Bartholomew was connected to Henry through Lothar III, who favoured this particular saint. Becket was added because he was a popular English saint and had special meaning to the Plantagenet dynasty. The explanation for Gregory’s presence is more difficult to pinpoint. It could possibly refer to his role as the pope who sent Augustine on a mission to Britain at the close of the sixth century, where he became the first bishop of Canterbury. In this case, two of the four saints depicted at Matilda's side would seem to bear a particular English meaning.

In the upper row adjacent to Christ, the saints are depicted against a dark red background decorated with golden branches; the saints in the lower row against a golden background decorated with a blue border laden with stars. All of them have their heads turned towards Christ, with one hand raised as a sign of interaction and respect. Thomas Becket’s presence – as a “recent” English martyr – next to Matilda stresses his relation with the English royal family. That he is portrayed as a saint in the coronation miniature means that the manuscript was probably made after 21 February 1173, at which time Becket († 29 December 1170) was canonised by Pope Alexander III. An earlier dating, however, cannot be ruled out. On Easter of 1171, Thomas received a new shrine that was said to have attracted many pilgrims who were reporting miracles. It is for this reason that, early in 1171, John of Salisbury wrote that it seemed wise to recognise the saint's cult officially. The importance of Becket as a martyr is also evident from John's Life and Passion (1171-1172), which was not a biography of an archbishop, but rather the hagiography of a saint who had not yet officially been declared as such. For this reason, a dating of the Gospel Book around 1171/73 seems plausible.

It is evident that Henry is depicted kneeling, as his ornamented stockings (caligae) are visible. This gesture is one of humility, which is further emphasised because the duke wears no shoes. Over his white undergarment (cote), Henry wears a yellow-sleeved bliaud decorated with blue flowers and broad golden hems at the ankles, wrists, breast and waist. In line with the fashion of his day, Henry's cote and bliaud would have fallen to just above the ankles, but because he is kneeling, he has lifted his garments to prevent them from becoming entangled. One difference between the couple's attire is that Matilda is wearing a mantle over her blue bliaud (tunic). Therefore it is questionable whether absence of Henry's mantle is merely to be seen as an expression of humility. After all, if humility was so important Matilda would be depicted in the same manner. I would proffer that her richly decorated cloak is an element designed to underscore her status as a princess, especially when considering that Matilda's royal lineage seems to be emphasised in other ways as well.

Matilda's pose is less easy to determine: is she standing, kneeling or bending her knees while slightly bowing her head? The first option seems unlikely. Not so much because Matilda would then be depicted as a very small woman, but because her sleeves and mantle are obviously touching the ground. This is not the case with the clothing of the other women depicted here, i.e. this would not have occurred if she were standing. Moreover, it would be highly peculiar to depict Matilda in a standing position – taking Henry's pose into account – in a situation that implies humility. Considering that Matilda's legs cannot be seen (the red fabric embroidered with gold is the border of her mantle, not her stockings) and that her sleeves are touching the ground, it is likely that she is bending slightly at the knees, a gesture between standing and kneeling. This might also explain why Matilda is taller than Henry. At the same time, it should be taken into account that we are not observing a lifelike depiction of people, but rather a conceptual portrait having agency, which means that it is meant to communicate
ideas. As such, that Matilda is portrayed as being taller than her husband can be interpreted as another way to stress Matilda’s importance. This is also affirmed by the fact that Matilda’s height here ensures that the crown she is receiving actually touches her head, while Henry’s crown still hovers above.

Besides Matilda’s pose and the crown touching her head, there is a third element in the miniature that conveys that Matilda’s presence was intentional and that her royal status was emphasised in every way possible: the crowning hands of God. Some scholars believe that God’s hands are crossed, suggesting that Matilda receives her crown from His right hand.159 The left-right discussion is relevant, not only in this specific case, but also for the Liber vitae of New Minster (Winchester) and the window in Poitiers. Matilda is depicted left of Christ and being crowned with the right hand, counterbalancing her less privileged position. This would agree with the balance in the miniature’s overall composition, in which equal attention is paid to Henry and Matilda’s ancestors. The four figures depicted in the corners provide commentary on the coronation. In the upper corners, Sponsus and Sponsa speak of being adorned with crowns.160 In the lower corners, Paul and Zachariah also refer to the coronation, with the former stating that the crown of righteousness shall be given on Judgement Day.161 As a sign of respect, Henry and Matilda raise their hands, each holding a golden cross.162 A cross is also held by the other family members, serving as a visualisation of Christ’s words: ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me’ (ad regnum vite me subveniente venite). They all demonstrate that they have done so (Henry’s and Matilda’s deceased family members) or are willing to do so (the ducal couple and their living relatives). The crowns worn by the ducal couple’s ancestors have sometimes been misinterpreted.163 In fact, they refer to each person’s office as king, queen, emperor or empress and are not to be confused with the crowns received at the time Christ bestowed eternal life upon them. This is the only suitable explanation for the absence of crowns on the heads of Henry’s parents and an unidentified figure depicted in the right corner. The crowns Henry and Matilda receive are of a different kind than those of their royal and imperial ancestors in that they visualise the moment of future salvation. Clearly, the miniature is not just about salvation. The addition of family members, to be discussed next, in fact demonstrates that caring for the hereafter is merely one aspect of memoria. As Gerhard Otto Oexle has emphasised, memoria is a social phenomenon that was not solely limited to liturgical commemoration, but one that also encompassed both politics (such as claiming fame) and economics. Dynastic remembrance has also been considered as a key motivation for the donation.164 Finally, because the Gospel Book ultimately served the canons of St Blaise, the priests and the ducal couple’s family members, it also functioned as a continual reminder of Henry’s and Matilda’s patronage.

3.4.2 The coronation of Henry and Matilda: a family affair

The content of the image of the ducal couple and the people surrounding them is somewhat analogous to medieval seals of the secular nobility. While there are significant differences between the two mediums (parchment vs. seal matrix or wax imprint; fixed vs. itinerary; religious vs. secular; size; multi-coloured vs. monochrome), they do share two important characteristics. First, both a seal and this miniature make use of legends or tituli, facilitating the identification of the persons depicted (be it owners or donors). Henry and Matilda can both be identified by the inscription above their heads, dubbing them dux henricus and ducissa mathilda (filia regis anglici benicti). Again, it is evident that Matilda shares her husband’s title and, correspondingly, his status; an element that is also found in charters, as discussed in Chapter 2. Yet, the addition of the term, filia, also connects Matilda directly to the man standing behind her, i.e. her father, Henry II of England. Henry’s and Matilda’s relatives can be identified as follows (from left to

---

159 Kötzsche 1984: 59 (not crossed, because this would not agree with the theme); Kötzsche 1984: 32 (crossed, needs to be further investigated); Niglen 1989: 325 (crossed, this emphasises Matilda’s privileged position); Niglen 1989: 70 (not crossed, because this seems unlikely); Jakobs 1990a: 291, 228–229 (crossed, as a reference to the blessing by Jacob of Efraim and Menasse).

160 Sponsus: coronaberis de capite amana de vertice sanir , Jes. 61: 10 (As a bridegroom dresses me with a headdress and the bride ornaments herself. See Kroos 1989a: 232).

161 Paul: Appostrā ņētā nēttō corona justitiae, 2 Tim. 4: 8 (There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing). Zachariah: Poniō fili(Æ) manente super caper easu. Zach. 3: 5 (let them set a fair mitre upon his head).

162 Rader believes that these crosses are derived from Byzantine iconography, since the use of such crosses was not so common in the West. See Rader 2003: 205–216.

right; Empress Richenza, Emperor Lothar (Henry’s grandparents), Duchess Gertrud, Duke Henry (Henry’s parents), King Henry of England, Queen Matilda (Matilda’s father and grandmother), and, as previously mentioned, an unidentified figure. While the position of each person tells us whether they are related to the ducal couple, the inscriptions also divulge their name and status; in other words, their personal identity.

The depiction of the parents and grandparents brings me to the second aspect that secular seals and this miniature have in common. Brigitte Bedos-Rezak mentions that the owner’s personal identity is often complemented by what might be labelled an order (a knight on horseback) or dynasty (heraldry), thus creating a group identity. The coronation miniature employs a similar mechanism. Instead of heraldry, we find a small, but carefully composed, genealogical tree. This family tree emphasises Henry’s descent through his mother and Matilda’s lineage through her father. Moreover, the tree also reveals that the two branches are united through Henry and Matilda. As such, the miniature as well carries a political meaning or message. After all, family lineage was not only integral to shaping a person’s identity, but it was also important when claiming territories, obtaining privileges and forming alliances.

Lineage is an important theme. Referring once again to the Codex Aureus of Speyer (ca. 1051) donated by Emperor Henry III and Empress Agnes, it is fascinating to see that the dedication miniature in this manuscript is accompanied by the depiction of Emperor Henry III’s royal ancestors on the preceding page (fol. 2v). Here we see Emperor Conrad II and Gisela kneeling before Christ in Majesty (ill. 3.15). Because Conrad and Gisela were buried in the cathedral of Speyer, it comes as no surprise that the memory of Agnes, Henry and Matilda must have envisioned the Church of St Blaise as their burial place. Even though their ancestors were not buried at this location, the canons of St Blaise were assigned with the task of keeping the memory of the founders and their family members alive. The miniatures in the Codex Aureus of Speyer are also instructive in that they demonstrate that Henry’s parents (pate cum matre) enhance his position as the rightful heir. As such, they serve to construct his identity as legitimate ruler. It is in this very same manner that the depiction of the parents and grandparents of Henry and Matilda are to be understood. Within this context, the presence of the unidentified figure is just that much more intriguing. Eckhard Freise suggests that the person dressed in green, depicted behind Queen Matilda, could be Henry and Matilda’s eldest daughter. Since the dedicatory text underscores the importance of children, and St Aegidius seems to have been added to emphasise motherhood, we should delve further into this question.

The person in green bears no inscription with a name, making it difficult to assess whether the figure depicted is a man or woman, boy or girl. There are no attributes or elements related to the person’s external appearance that might tell us something about sex or age. All that can be said is that the person with brown hair is standing, that the figure is wearing a green bliaud decorated with gold ornament, and that the left hand is raised in the same manner as the remaining family members’. The length of the hair is impossible to determine. What is clear is that the person is not wearing a crown or veil, telling us that this individual is neither a king nor queen. But perhaps there are other ways allowing an identification of the person in green.

As all of the persons depicted in the miniature are relations of either Henry or Matilda, it would be logical to identify this individual as a relative of the duchess, considering their close proximity to each other. It therefore seems unlikely that this figure could be Getrud, Henry’s daughter from his marriage to Clementia. It is also doubtful that Henry and Clementia’s son who died during infancy is depicted at Matilda’s side. The most obvious person to be placed at Matilda’s side would be her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine. This would agree with the depiction of the couples at Henry’s side. Were this to be the case, however, then her name would probably not have been omitted and she would most certainly have been depicted with a crown denoting her status as queen. There are other possibilities, however. Perhaps the figure was added to bring the overall composition into balance; or perhaps it is a courtier (either man or woman) who, together with Matilda, was meant to represent Henry’s court. This is the interpretation suggested by Gudrun Pamme-Vogelsang with regards to a female figure squeezed into the
corner of a miniature depicting Charles the Bald and Richildis in the Bible of San Paolo fuori le Mura.\textsuperscript{168} In light of the coronation miniature’s all-encompassing theme with its emphasis on family, however, these options seem unlikely. This analysis of the miniature does not offer a solution regarding the person’s identity.

Could Freise’s claim that the figure is Henry and Matilda’s daughter therefore be accurate?\textsuperscript{169} Such a conclusion corresponds with Mary’s role as the Mother of God and Aegidius as the mediating saint for couples without an heir. But the problem remains that, even if it is a child, the figure in the miniature still has no name. The absence of noticeable characteristics that one normally associates with a child—e.g. small in size, youthful appearance and perhaps short hair—does not provide sufficient grounds for ruling out this possibility. Sophie Oosterwijk has demonstrated that distinguishing children from adults in medieval art (let alone determining their sex) is sometimes a difficult task.\textsuperscript{170} Just as little can be ascertained by comparing this figure with others found elsewhere in the Gospel Book itself. The Christ Child, for instance, is portrayed small in stature with short curly hair; practically as a baby with an “adult” expression on his face. If we compare Christ’s overall outer appearance with that of the unidentified figure, then a young child seems an unlikely conclusion. The greatest resemblance is in fact found in the youngest of the three magi (fol. 20r), with his hair cut short and the absence of a beard. Based on these similarities, the unidentified figure could be a male adolescent (youth). At the same time, the figure’s attire shows an agreement with the sober dress (only a \textit{bliaud} or tunic, not a mantle) of the girl holding the doves in the miniature of Christ’s presentation in the temple (fol. 111r). Neither of them are wearing a veil, suggesting that, if indeed the nameless person is a young female, she might be unmarried. In the end, a precise determination of the identity (age, sex, family relation) of the unidentified figure in green is complicated by the absence of an inscription and the lack of any gender-specific clothing or attributes.

\textsuperscript{168} Pamme-Vogelsang 1998: 38.
\textsuperscript{169} Jakobs also suggested it was a girl. See Jakobs 1990: 216.
\textsuperscript{170} Oosterwijk 1997: 214-224.
to a miniature of this import was considered meaningful. Here too, Matilda's royal descent gave added status to Henry's already impressive lineage. As in the dedication miniature, the couple's rich attire and the golden crosses in their hands were also meant to communicate their status and wealth. Just as their noble relatives, Henry and Matilda possessed the financial resources to commission and display richly decorated crosses, even if they only existed on parchment.\textsuperscript{174}

\section*{3.5 The importance of marriage and lineage}

Despite the notion that the Gospel Book is above all an expression of medieval liturgical \textit{memoria} – a gift to the St Blaise Chapter in order to secure liturgical commemoration – the dedicatory text, its accompanying miniature and the coronation miniature also convey secular messages. In the case of Henry and Matilda, one of these messages, cited in the poem and visualised in the coronation miniature, is that their royal lineage gives them prestige and legitimises their rule. Matilda's role in this communication is paramount: it was her responsibility, as the duke's wife, to provide the duke with an heir. And this she did. Moreover, it is Matilda's status as princess that contributed to Henry's fame and the dynasty's renown. In order to establish whether the theme of lineage is also evident elsewhere in the Gospel Book, a brief discussion of other images on its pages is necessary.

\subsection*{3.5.1 The narrative miniatures in the Gospel Book}

Renate Kroos and Elisabeth Klemm have examined the twenty miniatures in the Gospel Book extensively and described their findings in the studies

\begin{footnotesize}

\item[174] The crosses resemble those commissioned by Gertrud, see Kitzinger 1995, vol. 2: 513.

\item[175] Kroos 1989: 195.

\item[176] It was very likely added to emphasise the importance of John the Baptist as he was an early patron saint of St Blaise at Brunswick (fol. 73v). Aslisted in the capitulare evangelion his feast was celebrated at 23 August by reading from Mark 6: 17-29 in which the death of John is narrated. See Kroos 1989: 198.

\end{footnotesize}
The miniature cycle accompanying John’s text consists of four two-compartment miniatures. The first is The Healing of the Blind combined with The Resurrection of Lazarus (fol. 169v). This is followed by The Last Supper and Christ Washing Peter’s Feet (fol. 170r). The Flagellation of Christ is accompanied by The Crucifixion (fol. 170v). Then Mary Magdalene tells the apostles about the empty tomb and the Noli me tangere are depicted (fol. 171r). On the next page, the coronation of Henry and Matilda is portrayed (fol. 171v). It is accompanied by the last full-page miniature with Christ in Majesty surrounded by the six days of creation (fol. 172r).

Renate Kroos suggests that the Entombment of Christ and the Three Women at the Tomb were purposely added to Mark’s text, because of its relation to the lion that signifies Christ’s triumph over death. Moreover, Kroos has shown that the miniatures depict events that were celebrated in the liturgy, either because they highlight important moments in the lives of Christ and Mary, or portray saints that were important to Brunswick. The miniatures seem to have been selected in order to highlight important moments that were celebrated during mass. But there seems to be more to the miniatures. Both the Tree of Jesse and the recurring image of Sponsus and Sponsa in nine of the twenty full-page miniatures suggests the importance of marriage: a topic interwoven with ancestry and considered an important element in both the dedicatory text and coronation miniature. By repeating these themes Matilda’s identity as spouse and mother is constructed, thereby underscoring her duty to provide her husband with heirs.

3.5.2
The Tree of Jesse

Several scholars have remarked that the importance of lineage as expressed in the dedicatory text and coronation miniature is likewise visualised on the page that follows the dedication miniature, specifically, the Tree of Jesse (fol. 19v). Christ is depicted in the upper zone of the genealogical tree, holding a scroll with the words: ‘I am a flower of the field’ [ill. 3.18]. Abraham is depicted as the first forefather instead of Jesse, the father of David (Isaiah 11: 1-3), in accordance with Matthew’s genealogy. Illuminations of the Tree of Jesse that contain numerous prophets are abundant; the depiction in Henry and Matilda’s Gospel Book, featuring many kings, is unusual. Even the elaborate Tree of Jesse in the Trier Gospel Book produced at Helmarshausen (dated between 1190 and 1207) [ill. 3.19] contains fewer kings.

In contrast to the earlier iconography of the Tree of Jesse, in which Mary was considered Christ’s sole progenitor, Joseph is added as Christ’s father in the upper right-hand corner. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph was the son of Jacob, a descendant of Jesse. Matthew also states that Joseph was the husband of Mary, from whose womb Jesus was born, who is called Christ. Nonetheless, Joseph’s presence in the Gospel Book’s Tree of Jesse is a unique feature. The male-centred iconography, defined by the prophets, kings and Joseph, is further enhanced by the full-page composition. The medallions are evenly distributed, which has forced Mary out of the centre of the image (the stem). She instead appears in the upper left-hand corner (on a branch). She is even stripped of her text designating her as dei genitrix. In the end, Mary is depicted on Christ’s privileged right side, but the prominence she enjoys in the dedication miniature is somewhat diminished in the Tree of Jesse. Joseph’s importance in the Tree of Jesse, by contrast, is counterbalanced by his absence in the two miniatures concerning Christ’s childhood (Adoration of the Magi and Presentation in the Temple).

180 Ego fio zami (Canticles 2: 1), also mentioned by Rupert of Deutz. See Kroos 1989: 197. The other texts are Sponsus: Quae a fioridi exstultavit /vixit in morte (Sirach 24: 22), as the laurel tree I stretched out my branches. Sponsa: Ego matrea pulchre dilectionis (Sirach 24: 24), I am the mother of fair love; Sponsus: Ego flos campi (Canticles 2: 1), I am a flower of the field.
181 At Abraham’s side his son Isaac and grandsons Jacob are visible. Above their heads from left to right Solomon, David and Roboam are portrayed as kings, wearing crowns and holding sceptres. Then follow the kings Abia, Isai, Joram, Ozias, Joatham, Achaz, Manasses, Amon, Josias, Jeschons, Salathiel, Zorobabel, Abner, Eleazer, Azor, Suba, Achico, Eliau, Iessua, Mathhim, Jechos, Joseph (the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ). Cited after Matthew 1: 1-16.
182 Watson (1924) gathered much examples of the iconography of the Tree of Jesse.
183 Trier, Dom Treasury, Ms. 142/124/67, fol. 1v. This is the only known other Helmarshausen manuscript that contains a Tree of Jesse.
184 In contrast, other Helmarshausen manuscripts do contain a Tree of Jesse.
185 One of the few examples is a leaf from a mid-twelfth-century manuscript from Canterbury with a Tree of Jesse containing Joseph, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.724v. See also Geary 2006: 62.
186 An example of a Tree of Jesse without the Virgin can be found in an eleventh-century Gospel Book. See Kroos 1989: 38.
3.18 Tree of Jesse, Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, ca. 1175, fol. 190. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 175 Novum, 226 fols., 340 x 275 mm.

From a theological point of view, Christ was the result of the spiritual union between God and Mary. The Tree of Jesse in the Gospel Book instead places the emphasis on Joseph’s role as Christ’s earthly father. Rupert of Deutz, whose writings were probably known at Helmarshausen, stressed that Christ was born into this world without a father, only to be supported by Joseph, who would act as one. In the Tree of Jesse, Christ is portrayed as the fruit of Mary’s and Joseph’s union. This perhaps reflects the thinking of Rupert of Deutz, who stated that by Joseph’s ‘paternal solicitude the child along with his Virgin mother might be comforted’. While Gratian considered coitus to be decisive for a legitimate marriage, many twelfth-century decreetists argued that mutual consent was the crux in legal marriage. This latter contention made it much easier to affirm Mary and Joseph’s union as legitimate.

The canons of St Blaise probably interpreted the Tree of Jesse as a visualisation of Christ’s lineage, which was mentioned both on Christmas Eve and on 8 September, the two occasions when the birth of the Virgin was celebrated. Yet they may have also regarded the miniature in relation to their patrons. It seems unlikely that Henry and Matilda themselves would have proposed this specific iconography for the Tree of Jesse. Perhaps a more likely scenario is one in which Abbot Conrad of Helmarshausen (along with Hermann and other monks) chose to add Joseph, because he considered it suitable for the ducal couple.

The Tree of Jesse’s dynastic aspects made it a suitable iconography to be employed by kings and queens in order to emphasise the importance of their lineage. This is at least what Madeline Caviness has suggested in relation to Eleanor of Aquitaine’s possible role in commissioning the stained-glass windows with the Tree of Jesse at St Denis, York Minster and Canterbury Cathedral. But while Caviness sees the tree as a means to claim matriliney (descent through the female line) and matriarchy (ruling females, especially mothers), one may question whether this model can also be applied to the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda. Joseph’s addition to the Tree of Jesse implies rather that both Mary and Joseph played a crucial role in Christ’s genealogy. This could be regarded as an idealisation of paternity or perhaps as a reflection of primogeniture and patrilineal descent due to the male-orientated lineage that is portrayed in the image. One could also easily argue that it was not so much Christ’s patrilineal descent that mattered, but rather Joseph and Mary’s marital union. They represent the father and mother that were so important to medieval noble families. This is exactly what is communicated in the coronation miniature and the dedicatory text in Henry and Matilda’s Gospel Book. The emphasis on parenthood and lineage makes the visual absence of their offspring all the more striking. Regarding the donation of the book as a means to invoke the birth of a child seems therefore plausible.

Sponsus and Sponsa, bridegroom and bride, have attracted substantial scholarly attention and have mostly been studied from a monastic point of view. Although Sponsus and Sponsa, as they appear in the Gospel Book, also find their source in a monastic environment (Helmarshausen), the idea of Sponsa as the ideal bride of Christ, as promoted in female monasteries, seems unlikely to be the central theme here. The frequent use of Sponsus and Sponsa, commenting on the events depicted in the miniatures, rather suggests that the genius behind the Gospel Book’s iconographic program had both the interests of the canons of St Blaise and its patrons at heart. In the twenty full-page miniatures narrating the life of Christ, Sponsus and Sponsa appear in the upper corners of the miniatures. Old Testament prophets and kings, St Paul, St John and Augustine, inhabit the lower corners. On five occasions, the bridegroom and bride can be identified as Sponsus and Sponsa through titles. Each time they are portrayed from the waist up. They are not enthroned,
as when they are used as an iconographic device in commentaries on the Song of Songs (Canticles). The bearded Sponsus wears a robe and mantle. He also dons a crown. His spouse is dressed similarly, with a golden crown over her long hair. The couple's hands are raised in speaking gestures and they seem to address each other by means of the texts on their scrolls.

The bridegroom and bride thus function as commentators on the events occurring in the upper zone. One would expect the texts on their scrolls to have been taken from the Song of Songs, but this is not always the case. This suggests that it was not the Song of Songs itself that was crucial, but rather the fact that this husband and wife duo were suitable iconographic devices for voicing texts from other sources. Moreover, the visual image of a man and woman speaking in unison would appear to have been considered as attractive. Like the Old Testament kings, prophets and saints, Sponsus and Sponsa added a deeper layer of meaning to the Christological events depicted in the Gospel Book.

Accordingly, it seems obvious to explain the presence of the bride and bridegroom in terms of the theological context in which this book was produced and used. Just as with the ‘Tree of Jesse’, this does not mean that Sponsus and Sponsa were only to be interpreted in relation to Christ. Because their presence is very much felt throughout the book, it is possible that they served as references to the ducal couple on a more basic level. According to the dedicatory text, this couple was united through their good works, but above all, through the conjugal bed, the only place in which a legitimate heir could be conceived.

The presence of the Solomonic bridal couple and the allegorical reading of their text can also be approached from the monastic context in which Henry and Matilda's Gospel Book was produced (the Benedictine monastery at Helmarshausen) and the location where it was to be used (the chapter of St Blaise). Although the monastery's library at Helmarshausen has been lost, Renate Kroos has convincingly argued that the monks residing there must have been familiar with the works of Rupert of Deutz. The popularity of Honorius Augustodunensis – and his connection to Regensburg (Bavaria) – suggests that his work was known as well. Abbot Conrad, who was most likely an advisor in this project, may possibly have combined

---

194 One might suspect that on the occasions where Sponsus and Sponsa were labelled as such, their scrolls would contain texts from the Song of Songs. This is, however, not the case.
197 See Chapter 2.
male heir, and because the heir(s) mentioned in the dedicatory text are not specified by gender and/or name, I believe this argument is worth considering.¹⁹⁸

Contrary to what Krijnie Ciggaar has stated, it was not unconsidered for a couple to include their children in (donor) portraits.¹⁹⁹ The surviving material in which children are portrayed with one or both parents suggests that the presence of an heir was considered important.²⁰⁰ This is evident in the aforementioned window that Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry donated to St Pierre at Poitiers. In addition to Henry and Eleanor, four of their children are depicted. It is difficult to determine which of the royal couple's seven children are included; their dress and hairstyle are identical and there is no clear indication of their sex. The same can almost be said of Henry and Eleanor themselves, who wear the same dress, tunic and crown. Fortunately, Henry can be distinguished by his beard and his leg with a boot. Based on this observation, it seems that the two children standing directly behind their parents can be identified as boys. The four children have their hands raised as if they participate in the act of giving. And indeed they are involved, because they share in the spiritual benefits bestowed upon their parents, stemming from the donation and the accompanying entreaty to pray for the family's wellbeing. The visualisation of the donation was also dynastically motivated. It is precisely through the depiction of Henry and Eleanor's offspring that the dynastic message becomes more poignant, as it intends to communicate the family's continued rule over Aquitaine.

The importance attached to heirs is clearly expressed in the Codex Falkensteinensis (begun in 1166), as discussed by John B. Freed in his article family consciousness (ill. 3.20). Count Sigiboto IV of Falkenstein commissioned this codex, which contains among other things, a record to secure the safeguarding of his properties (and those of his sons) during his participation in Frederick Barbarossa's fourth Italian campaign. This text is accompanied by a pen-and-ink drawing on which Sigiboto, his wife, Hildegard of Mödling, and their two sons, Kuno and Sigiboto V are depicted. They are seated on what seems to be a bench, in front of a background filled with stars. Despite the picture's brown and purple colour, one can still see that the married couple is dressed quite extravagantly, with long dresses, mantles and decorated stockings. Sigiboto wears a princely coronet, while his wife's hair is covered with a bonnet or small veil. The boys are dressed in a similar fashion, providing the overall impression of a well-to-do family. Only Sigiboto can be identified by the inscription (dominus siboto comes) above his head. The identities of the remaining figures can be determined from the scroll that all four figures are holding up together. The text states: 'Sons, bid your father farewell and speak respectfully to your mother. Dear one who reads this, we beseech you, remember us. All may do this, but especially you, dearest son.'²⁰¹ The text confirms that the woman is Sigiboto's wife, although she is not mentioned by name. Her position is that of a mother. She does not rule actively – a point of fact that is confirmed by the legal text written beneath the miniature. The boy next to Sigiboto is in all likelihood the firstborn son, Kuno, who was to receive the greater part of his father's lordships. The other boy can only be Sigiboto V, who was destined to inherit his mother's rights to Mödling.²⁰²

---

¹⁹⁸ Henry's only son from his marriage with Clementia died during infancy as the result from a fall from a table. See Cichorius, aerects: Michaelis Luxemburgensis: 396. His firstborn son from his marriage with Matilda was Henry (later Count Palatine) who was probably born end 1173. See Ehlers 2008: 194. Freise suggests 1174/1175 as the date of birth. See Freise 2002: 40.

¹⁹⁹ Ciggaar 1986: 35 n. 20.

²⁰⁰ Examples of parents with their children: Great Cameo of 200199 and their two sons, Kuno and Sigiboto V are depicted. They are seated on what seems to be a bench, in front of a background filled with stars. Despite the picture's brown and purple colour, one can still see that the married couple is dressed quite extravagantly, with long dresses, mantles and decorated stockings. Sigiboto wears a princely coronet, while his wife's hair is covered with a bonnet or small veil. The boys are dressed in a similar fashion, providing the overall impression of a well-to-do family. Only Sigiboto can be identified by the inscription (dominus siboto comes) above his head. The identities of the remaining figures can be determined from the scroll that all four figures are holding up together. The text states: 'Sons, bid your father farewell and speak respectfully to your mother. Dear one who reads this, we beseech you, remember us. All may do this, but especially you, dearest son.'²⁰¹ The text confirms that the woman is Sigiboto's wife, although she is not mentioned by name. Her position is that of a mother. She does not rule actively – a point of fact that is confirmed by the legal text written beneath the miniature. The boy next to Sigiboto is in all likelihood the firstborn son, Kuno, who was to receive the greater part of his father's lordships. The other boy can only be Sigiboto V, who was destined to inherit his mother's rights to Mödling.²⁰²

---


²⁰² Freed 2002: 244.
of children in the coronation miniature may reflect the actual predicament in which Henry and Matilda found themselves. An heir was yet to come, be it the child that was to be born in 1172 or the son that was born much later around 1175. The desire for an heir could therefore only have been expressed in words (i.e. the dedicatory text), but not in images.

3.7 Conclusion: The Gospel Book and the construction of Matilda’s identity

Taking performativity, which I understand to be a repetition of acts constructing identities, as an approach for studying the Gospel Book commissioned by Henry and Matilda has revealed several things. First, the act of donating the Gospel Book – symbolically staged in the dedication miniature – can be considered a performance. Handing over the book to the canons of St Blaise was a theatrical action, appropriate for demonstrating and strengthening the ties between the benefactors and the chapter with its canons. I have considered both parties as audiences, observing the miniatures on display during the celebration of mass on special feast days, Sundays and weekdays.

The donation was not merely a ritual confirming the political bond between the ducal couple and the chapter, but it was above all an act coercing a favourable response from the church’s canons. In return for the donation, they were expected to perform masses for the souls of Henry, Matilda and their family.

Carefully examining the iconography, I have hypothesised – following Eckhard Freise and Johannes Fried’s lead – that Henry and Matilda commissioned and donated the Gospel Book not merely as a gift in the context of fama and memoria, but as a votive offering as well. They either did so out of gratitude for the child that Matilda already held in her womb (Richenza, born in 1172), or because they were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the son that was about to be born around 1175 (Henry). The presence of Aegidus (St Giles), the emphasis on Sponsus and Sponsa, the attention paid...
Weiler and MacLean 2006: 12.

The images therefore reveal that Henry and Matilda wanted to communicate several things to the audience of the Gospel Book, which comprised both the canons of St Blaise and Henry’s and Matilda’s personal entourage. These messages probably differed very little from what the other makers of the Gospel Book (Abbot Conrad and monk Herimann) had in mind when determining what should be communicated with regards to their patrons’ identity and behaviour. The itinerant nature of lordship meant that there was frequent contact between the rulers who commissioned such artworks (or to whom they were presented) and the monasteries that produced them. They shared with the monks a common view of the political and religious order.

The importance of heirs and the emphasis on motherhood, brings me to performativity as constituting Matilda’s and Henry’s identities. An analysis of the content of the dedicatory poem, the dedication miniature and the coronation miniature from the perspective of Matilda, has revealed that she played several roles, or in any event, that these were attributed to her. Unsurprisingly, she is portrayed as the daughter of the English king, in both word and image, richly attired and wearing an impressive crown, demonstrating that clothes and insignia are markers of identity. In her role as princess, Matilda contributed to her husband’s fame. In both the dedication and coronation miniatures, she was addressed by the title of duchess (ducissa), because she was the wife of Duke Henry. This reference is likewise found in the charters that were discussed in Chapter 2. Of interest is the dedicatory text, in which Matilda is designated as consorte thori, emphasising that she shared the conjugal bed with Henry and, subsequently, was expected to provide him with heirs. Although the lines of the text that refer to the progeny can be interpreted in various ways, it is plausible that they reflect a desire for children. This seems to be corroborated by the coronation miniature. Matilda was therefore expected to perform her role as mother in the near future. Together with her husband, she was also credited with building of the city walls and the erection and decoration of churches, suggesting that one of her responsibilities was also the care for the hereafter.

Approaching Matilda’s presence in the Gospel Book through performativity allowed me to take visual and verbal details into account that might otherwise have been easily overlooked. One example is the observation that Matilda kneels to a lesser degree than Henry in the coronation miniature; she is therefore taller, a point that underscores her importance. Even though the Gospel Book – as an historical account – fails to present the certainties that are so often sought after, it does underscore the enormous importance attached to Matilda’s presence in word and image. Like Eleanor’s ‘portrait’ in the window of Poitiers, the miniatures in the Gospel Book clearly illustrate that the wife’s presence together with her husband was considered essential – in this case critical to the construction of Henry’s identity as a powerful duke.

208
Conclusion
As the daughter of King Henry II and the wife of Henry the Lion, Matilda has never disappeared from the scholarly radar. Nonetheless, no serious study has yet been conducted by art historians or historians. Matilda's images in the Gospel Book, as well as in the psalter and on bracteates have served as the starting point for my study into her duties and responsibilities at her husband's court. An art historical analysis of this visual material, combined with approaches from literature, history and numismatics, has revealed that much more can be known about her than has been previously acknowledged. This interdisciplinary approach sets my study apart from others that have dealt with the topic of noblewomen, in which the tendency is to focus exclusively on one or two aspects of their role in medieval society, such as cultural patronage or authority. Moreover, I have made use of literary texts as sources that inform us about noblewomen's lives. Whereas literary historians have studied such texts in order to understand women's positions both in fictional and actual terms, historians and art historians are inclined to overlook them as valuable sources. The current study contributes to a better understanding of Matilda's position as Henry's wife and has therefore nuanced the predominant idea that Henry the Lion alone 'was' the Brunswick court. I have argued that Matilda's duties were manifold, including being a mother, exercising authority, acting as an mediator and proceeding as a cultural matron. Additionally, my research demonstrates that an interdisciplinary approach is a valuable contribution to what is called gender studies, specifically because Matilda is studied in relation to her husband, Henry.

My research confirms that Matilda was expected to fulfil the most fundamental female duty: to provide her husband with heirs. That her responsibility in this regard was stated explicitly becomes particularly evident when closely examining the three charters that mention Matilda in relation to the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book, as we have seen in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the importance attached to offspring, and above all male heirs, was emphasised in chronicles, miracle stories and literary texts. These sources provide evidence that votive gifts were commonly given in order to secure dynastic succession. As such, they provide insight into the problems with which Henry the Lion was faced following the death of his infant son during his marriage to his first wife, Clementia. Although Henry's eldest daughter from this marriage was entitled to inherit her
father’s property, all attention was focused on Matilda, who was expected to produce sons. By actually doing so, she confirmed her identity as mother. In addition, I have argued that the topic of motherhood in the Gospel Book is clearly expressed by various iconographic elements. The aforementioned dedicatory text designates Matilda as the consors thori, literally interpreted as Henry’s ‘partner in bed’. Since this bed was the only place in which legitimate heirs could be produced, the sharing of the conjugal bed refers to procreation. This observation, considered together with the emphasis on lineage conveyed in the miniature with the Tree of Jesse, the repeated portrayal of Sponsus and Sponsa, and the absence of any depiction of children, led me to hypothesise that the Gospel Book was produced between 1172 and 1175. It may be seen as a votive gift that was donated to secure the birth of an heir, by preference a son. Through the comprehensive study of the Gospel Book in all of its aspects, art historical research can contribute to a greater understanding of the themes that the medieval nobility considered crucial.

As important as it may be, motherhood was not the only duty Matilda was expected to perform. In Chapter 2, I have argued that the duchess’s presence on the bracteates issued by her husband, Henry, are to be understood as a visualisation of co-rule. Matilda is depicted together with Henry; both are holding a sceptre. The iconographic analysis of images that feature noble men and women holding sceptres has revealed that this attribute appears much less frequently with women than it does with men. This in itself makes Matilda’s ‘portrait’ remarkable. Yet the fact that the sceptre is only found in representations of the queens and noblewomen who exercised authority or succeeded in actualising their power, such as Judith of Thuringia and Bertha of Lorraine, further enhances its significance. Matilda’s portrayal with a sceptre indicates that visual rhetoric can be helpful in understanding women’s influence, authority and power. The extent to which both men and women were able to exercise authority and wield power has often been established on the basis of charter evidence and landholding. Artworks are less frequently connected to these themes. This is surprising, as the public character of these artistic works were certain to have provided excellent opportunities for noblemen and -women to communicate notions of authority and power. Additionally, it is my contention that depictions on coins also shed light on the manner in which a noblewoman’s identity and

that of her family members were performed. Coins and seals made this possible because they employed both word and image. Future research combining an iconographic analysis with the use and dispersion of coins could therefore offer new insights into coins as a communicative medium.

Discussing Matilda as a co-ruler has also contributed to the understanding of the principle of consors regni within the nobility, because a distinction can be made between the consors regni idea, the phrase and women who act in their capacity as co-rulers. The clause’s absence from charters does not necessarily imply that consors regni no longer prevailed in idea and reality. Furthermore, an exploration of the charter material has shown that one can trace the changes in status and responsibility that women underwent during their lives by examining the manner in which they are designated (e.g. as a daughter and heir, fiancée, wife, duchess and lady). While the charter material for this particular research is scant, it remains an issue that deserves more extensive study.

Because the visual and textual sources that shed light on Matilda do not reveal everything we would like to know about the duties of medieval noblewomen, the Rolandslied was used as a source for study. This text was suitable for two reasons. For one, it is the only one for which we can establish that Matilda was actively involved as a matron or maker. She therefore acted in the context of cultural patronage – i.e. the commission and/or donation of literature, art and architecture – an endeavour in which women played a significant role. With regard to literature, it has even been posited that women served as pioneers when it came to the commissioning of vernacular texts. Indeed, it seems that the decision to translate the French Chanson de Roland into German was made at Matilda’s instigation. Perhaps Matilda even instructed Konrad to emphasise the importance of women in the text. While this remains hypothetical, the more prominent presence of women in the Rolandslied provides us with the opportunity to study it from a female perspective. Until now the German text was not studied within this context. The actions of Aude, Ganelon’s nameless wife and the pagan, Queen Bramimonde, demonstrate that women were able to perform many roles: fiancée, wife, mother, advisor, mediator, as well as co-ruler and regent mother.

It is difficult to assess whether the intended audience appreciated their behaviour. Yet the ways in which these fictional women were understood is certain to have varied, depending on the horizon of the listener’s
expectation. Although we might expect this horizon to be unambiguous for the courtly audience, we must not forget that people also had their own ideas based on their personal experiences, beliefs, ambitions and gender. Viewing these fictional female figures in the *Rolandslied* as merely marginal figures in the story therefore oversimplifies matters. On the contrary, they provide us with an opportunity to understand the duties and responsibilities that were expected of women like Matilda and her fellow noblewomen. There is no doubt that this entailed more than the fundamental task of childbirth.

The issue of the intended audience has also been raised in my discussions of the bracteates and the Gospel Book. Although it is difficult to establish exactly who made up these audiences, let alone gain insight into their responses, it is possible to create a picture of the possible audiences by examining the people who attended the Brunswick court, the organisation of the Collegiate Church of St Blaise, and the function of the bracteates in the town of Brunswick. In so doing, we can come to a better understanding of the communicated messages and the relevance of the construction of identity.

More than has hitherto been acknowledged, Matilda’s contribution to the construction of Henry’s identity was significant. The duchess turned out to be a ‘maker’ of identity, even more than art. Her presence in word and image, emphasising her royal birth and prestige, profoundly contributed to the way Henry’s identity was shaped. One could say that the duke’s family consciousness, though already present, is certain to have been stimulated by his marriage to the noble princess. Her royal lineage evoked the display of his imperial ancestry.

In the interest of identity, the investigation of whether images of Matilda’s can be attributed with the same agency in later medieval art would be a worthwhile undertaking. Can the images of Henry and Matilda from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries tell us something about the effect Matilda’s presence had on her husband’s identity and that of their two families? The 1223 charter issued by her son Count Palatine Henry and the tomb monument in the Church of St Blaise in Brunswick (ca. 1240?), suggest that in the first half of the thirteenth century, Matilda was still considered essential to the family consciousness. In the fifteenth century, Henry and Matilda appear on a painted memorial panel, in a small tapestry cycle, a wall mural
Appendix:
Twelfth-century coins depicting husbands and wives
Prince Pribislav Henry of Brandenburg (r. 1127–† 1150)
& Petrissa — No children
(Pribislav made Albrecht the Bear his heir)

1
Silver, 0.4 g, + HEIN...+ PETRISSA
Issued before 1150, at the end of Pribislav Henry's life.
Both portrayed half-length, Pribislav Henry with sword and cross-topped banner and Petrissa with sceptre (?).
Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Inv. Nr. N 90/2848

Frederick Barbarossa
(r. 1152–† 1190) & Adelaide of Burgundy
(* 1128–† 1187)
— Married 1147, annulled in 1153, no children

2a
Silver, 42 mm, 0.77 g, + FRIDERICVS REX
Issued at Erfurt? / Tilleda?, 1152/53.
Both seated on folding chairs and facing each other. Frederick in imperial dress, wearing crown, holding lance and baculum.
Adelaide wearing a crown, holding in an open book in her right hand and a lily-sceptre in the left.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1870 Dannenberg, obj. nr. 18205024

3a
Silver, 27 mm, 0.69 g, FRIDERIC
Issued at Gelnhausen, ca. 1170/80. Found at Lichtenberg.
Frederick (left) wearing a crown, holding a globe (?) in his right hand and a sceptre in his left. Beatrice (right) with crown and pointing her hand towards Frederick, perhaps also holding the sceptre. Both portrayed standing, half-length.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. Nr. 1920/1109, object nr. 18217710

2b
Silver, 44 mm, 0.77 g, + FRIDERICVS REX
Issued at Erfurt? / Tilleda?, 1152/53.
Both seated on folding chairs and facing each other. Frederick in imperial dress, wearing crown, holding lance and baculum. Adelaide wearing a crown, holding in an open book in her right hand and a lily-sceptre in the left.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1870 Dannenberg, obj. nr. 18205014

3b
Silver, 26 mm, 0.78 g, FRIDERICVS I-M
Issued at Frankfurt am Main? / Gelnhausen?, ca. 1170.
Frederick (right) wearing a crown and holding a globe and a sceptre with cross rod. Beatrice (left) wearing a crown and holding a lily sceptre in her left hand.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1879 Grote, obj. nr. 18201203

2c
Silver, 40 mm, 0.75 g, + FRIDERICVS REX
Frederick in the middle as half-length, wearing a crown and holding a sceptre in his right hand and globe with a cross in his left. Left in a secular man with a sword. Right Adelaide (seated?) wearing a crown. Over their heads are three arches and architecture.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1870 Dannenberg, obj. nr. 18217705

Frederick Barbarossa
(r. 1152–† 1190) & Beatrice of Burgundy
(* 1145–† 1184)
— Married 1156, eleven children

3b
Silver, 26 mm, 0.78 g, FRIDERICVS I-M
Issued at Gelnhausen, ca. 1170/80. Found at Lichtenberg.
Frederick (left) wearing a crown, holding a globe (?) in his right hand and a sceptre in his left. Beatrice (right) with crown and pointing her hand towards Frederick, perhaps also holding the sceptre. Both portrayed standing, half-length behind a balustrade that bears the legend.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. Nr. 1920/1109, object nr. 18217704

Online cat. Münzkabinett; Die Zeit der Staufer 1977, vol. 2: ill. 98.22 (other specimen of same type).

3a
Silver, 27 mm, 0.69 g, FRIDERIC
Issued at Gelnhausen, ca. 1170/80. Found at Anusin (Poland).
Both seated on arches, heads in three-quarter profile. Frederick in imperial dress, wearing crown, holding lance or baculum in his left hand and a lily-sceptre in the right hand. Adelaide wearing a veil, holding a crown in a covered right hand and a lily-sceptre in her left hand with which she also elegantly holds her dress.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1920/1109, object nr. 18217717

Margrave Albrecht the Bear of Brandenburg (r. 1123-† 1170) & Sophie of Formbach-Winzenburg (1105-† 1160) — Married 1124, thirteen children

4a
Silver, 33 mm, 0.83 g, ADELBERT MARCHI-O
Issued in region Anhalt, 1160-61. Found at Freckleben (Anhalt).
Both portrayed in full-length. Albrecht, dressed in armor, is holding a shield. Together with Sophie he holds the banner.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1860/464; obj. nr. 18201080.
Online cat. Münzkabinett; Suhle 1963: 16 and ill. 17.

4b
Silver, 33 mm, 0.92 g, ADELBERT MARCHI-O
Issued in region Anhalt, 1160-61.
Both portrayed in full-length. Albrecht, dressed in armor, is holding a shield. Together with Sophie he holds the banner.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1842 Rühle; obj. nr. 18217719.

Count Walter II of Arnstein (r. 1135-† 1166) & Ermengard von Hecklingen († before 1194) — Walter III was their only child

5
Silver, 32 mm, 0.89 g, no legend.
Issued in the region Anhalt, 1150-1166, found at Freckleben (Anhalt).
Both portrayed as busts under the arches (windows) of a two-towered building that is topped by an eagle.
Münzkabinett SMB, acc. 1860/464; obj. nr. 18201085.
Online cat. Münzkabinett; see for similar specimens Die Zeit der Staufer 1977, vol. 1: 145 no. 189.71 and vol. 2: ill. 110.3.

Duke and King Vladislav II of Bohemia (r. 1140-† 1174) & Judith of Thuringia († after 1174) — Married 1153, two sons and a daughter

6
Silver, 33 g, unreadable Hebrew legend.
Issued in Bautzen or Görlitz.
Vladislav (right) wearing a crown. A lily-sceptre between Vladislav and Judith.

Duke Henry the Lion of Saxony and Bavaria (r. 1145-† 1195) & Clementia of Zähringen († 1167) — Married 1147, annulled in 1162, one daughter and son (died during infancy)

7
Silver, 31 mm, 0.81 g.
Issued at Brunswick, ca. 1150.
Two heads flanking a tower. Probably Henry at the left and Clementia at the right. Under two arches a lion facing right is depicted.
Duke Henry the Lion of Saxony and Bavaria (r. 1145–†1195) & Matilda (*1156–†1189) — Engaged 1168, One daughter, four sons

Duke Sobeslav II of Bohemia (r. 1173–1178, †1180) & Elisabeth of Poland (*1152–†1209) — Married 1173/1174, no heirs

Duke Frederick of Bohemia (r. 1173–1178, †1189) & Elisabeth of Hungary (*1144/45–†1189) — Married in 1157, six children

Count Ulrich of Wettin (r. 1187–†1206) & first wife (married in 1184) or second wife Hedwig of Ballenstedt — Married after 1204, one son who died aged twelve
**King Premysl Ottokar I of Bohemia (r. 1192-1193, 1197-† 1230) & Second Wife Constance of Hungary († 1240) — Married 1198/99, Nine Children**

**12a**
Silver, 18 mm, 1.17 g. Obverse: a roaring lion with raised tail. Reverse: CV . . . . On the reverse behind a small wall with arches the king and queen are depicted next to each other in half-length. King raises right hand.

Menadier 1891-1898, vol. 1: 124, ill. e, f; Fiala 1898: 37, no. 378.

**12b**
Silver, 19 mm, 1.33 g. Obverse + . . . . . . ON . . . . enthroned and crowned king holding a lily-sceptre in his right. Reverse . . . NO EϽ . . . behind a small wall with narrow tower the queen is depicted portrayed at half-length. Her right arm is stretched forward (holding a book?).

Fiala 1888-90: 58, no. 570. See also two other specimens are known in Fiala nos. 571 and 572.

---

**Emperor Henry VI († 1165, r. 1190-† 1197) & Constance of Sicily († 1198) — Married 1186, Constance was regent for her son Frederick II in 1198**

**13a**
Silver, 30 mm, 0.81g, HEINRICVS IMP. Issued at Frankfurt am Main?/ Gelnhausen?, 1190-1197, found Odenwald. Both enthroned. Henry (left) is wearing a crown and holding a cross-scepter in his right hand and a orb with a cross in his left hand. Constance also wears a crown and holds a short lily-sceptre or flower in her right hand. Between their legs a small tower is depicted.


**13b**
Silver, 17 mm, 0.86 g, HE INPERATOR (obverse) + C INPER-ATRIX (reverse) Issued at Brindisi (Apulia), 1194-1196 (since 1194 Henry was king of Sicily). The obverse is decorated with a cross and two stars and the reverse is decorated with AR under an Omega arch.

Abbreviations
ChdR
*Chanson de Roland*

LexMA
Lexikon des Mittelalters

MGH
*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*

MGH UU HdL
Die Urkunden Heinrichs des Löwen
Herzog von Sachsen und Bayern

MGH SS
Scriptores (in Folio)

MGH SS rer. Germ.
Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi

Ms A
*Rolandslied*, Strasbour, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Arg.

Ms O
*Chanson de Roland*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 23

Ms P
*Rolandslied*, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Palatinus Germanicus 112

Ms S
*Rolandslied*, Schwerin, Landesbibliothek

RL
*Rolandslied*
Bibliography
Primary sources


Ferrante, Joan M. 'To the Glory of her Sex.' Women’s Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts. Bloomington, 1997.


Kinoshita, Sharon. 'Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right'. Alterity, Gender, and Nation in the Chanson de Roland,' Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 31, no. 1 (2001): 79-111.


------. The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women, Athens, 1996.


The Creation of a Visual Imagery of Queen - Queens in Stone and Silver.

Nolan, Kathleen.

------. 'D 96 Anonyme Kaiserchronik für und Bildorganisation im Evangeliar

Nilgen, Ursula. 'Theologisches Konzept und Bildorganisation im Evangeliar


------. 'Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen als geschichtliches Denkmal.'


------. 'Zur Kritik neuer Forschungen über das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen.'


------. 'Die Memoria Heinrichs des Löwen.'


------. 'Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen.'


Noth, Stephan. 'Das Kronungsbild im Evangelisches Bilderverzeichnis im Mittelalter.'


------. 'Fama und Memoria Heinrich des Löwen.'


Quinn, Dennis P. 'Paradise, medieval concept.' In: International Encyclopaedia for the Middle Ages-Online. A Supplement to LesMA-Online. Turnhout, 2009 (Brepols Medieval Encyclopaedias, Lexikon des Mittelalters online).


...


Scharf, Elisabeth and Opitz, Claudia. Frauen und Kunst im Mittelalter, Braunschweig, 1983.


Schiff, Corine. 'Men on the Right – Women on the Left. (A)symmetrical Spaces and Gendered Places.' In: Women's Space, Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church (eds. Virginia Chieffo Raguen and Sarah Stanbury). Albany, 2005.


Illustration credits


1.3 Ring donated by Eleanor of Aquitaine to Richard 'Animal'. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/illmanus/cottonmanuroll/d/oncotnerdooosnio0046vo00.html


2.2 Bracteate Duke Henry the Lion and Matilda, ca. 1172. Braunschweig, Städtisches Museum.

2.3 Brunswick at the time of Henry the Lion. Ehlers 2008: 127.


2.5 Bracteate Margrave Albert of Brandenburg (nicknamed the Bear) and Sophie of Formbach-Winzenburg, ca. 1160-66. Münzkabinett Staatlichen Museen Berlin, http://www.smb.museum/ikmk/object.php?id=18204079

3.7 Vase of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the mount was made before 1147. http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/arthur/ch22/liturgical_objects/st_denis_treasury.html


3.16 Altar of the Virgin, ca. 1188. St Blaise, Brunswick, Author.

Samenvatting
Summary
Zusammenfassung
Samenvatting

In dit proefschrift betoog ik dat de visuele en geschreven bronnen die betrekking hebben op Mathilde (*1156–†1189) inzicht geven in haar taken en verantwoordelijkheden aan het hof van haar echtgenoot Hendrik de Leeuw. Het *Roelandslied*, een munt waarop Hendrik en Mathilde zijn afgebeeld en het Evangeliarium dat zij bestelden staan centraal. Zij worden beslist doorgaans in combinatie met diverse geschreven bronnen en in de context van middeleeuwse ideeën over vrouwen en de mogelijkheden die vrouwen hadden om deel te nemen aan de samenleving. Zo kunnen Mathildes activiteiten beter begrepen worden. Tegelijkertijd nuanceert een hernieuwde bestudering eerdere interpretaties die betrekking hebben op de datering van de objecten en hun betekenis. In deze studie staan vier thema's centraal:


Om een beter inzicht te krijgen in Mathildes taken en verantwoordelijkheden aan het hof en tevens een meer algemeen beeld van twaalfdeeeuwse edelvrouwen te krijgen, staat in hoofdstuk 1 het *Roelandslied* centraal. Deze tekst over de heldhaftige ridder Roeland werd rond 1173 door Mathilde en Hendrik besteld. Hoewel dit niet de enige tekst is die in één adem met Mathilde genoemd wordt, is het wel de enige die overtuigend aan haar gekoppeld kan worden. Door de epiloog nauwkeurig te bestuderen, wordt duidelijk dat de tekst te makkelijk aan Hendriks patronaat verbonden wordt. Dit is mede te danken aan het feit dat middeleeuwse kronieken en oorkonden echtgenoten vaak als opdrachtgevers van kunst en architectuur noemen, terwijl we uit andere bronnen soms weten dat het in werkelijkheid hun echtgenotes waren. Het is dan ook vreemd dat zulk opdrachtgeverschap steeds als ‘patronaat’ bestempeld wordt en niet als ‘matronaat’. Het *Roelandslied* laat niet alleen zien dat Mathilde als opdrachtgeefster beschouwd kan worden, maar maakt ook duidelijk dat het een bron is die inzicht geeft in de verantwoordelijkheden van middeleeuwse edelvrouwen. Zij treden op als verloofden, echtgenotes, moeders, heersers, regentessen en bemiddelaars. Hun taken en verantwoordelijkheden worden duidelijk als we door de lijst, het bedrog en het bloedverlies heenkijken. Tot op heden is dit te weinig erkend door literatuurhistorici die de tekst bestudeerden.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt betoogd dat de bracteaa (een zilveren munt
die aan één zijde geslagen is) waarop Hendrik en Mathilde zijn afgebeeld getuigt van het feit dat Mathilde een rol speelde als Hendriks echtgenote (consors). Het idee van partnerschap werd middels dit munttype gecommuniceerd. Dit idee is enerzijds aannemelijk gemaakt door de bestudering van de iconografie van de munt. Het is het enige type waarop Mathilde is afgebeeld. De scepter die zij vasthoudt duidt op heerschappij en autoriteit. Anderzijds pleiten er ook omstandigheden voor om de munt als uiting van gezamenlijke heerschappij te zien. Hendrik trok namelijk in januari 1172 naar het Heilige Land en keerde pas een jaar later terug. Deze periode bood Mathilde de kans om als plaatsvervanger op te treden, juist omdat zij zijn echtgenote was. Ik bepleit dan ook dat het munttype waarop Hendrik en Mathilde samen zijn afgebeeld een uiting is van gezamenlijke heerschappij. Dit wordt ondersteund door het herlezen van een passage uit Arnold van Lübecks Slavenkroniek (ca. 1210). Arnold was goed bekend met het reilen en zeilen aan het hof van Hendrik en diens familie.

In het laatste hoofdstuk staat het idee centraal dat de schenkings- en kroningsminiaturen in het Evangeliarium van Hendrik en Mathilde en het bijbehorende schenkingsgedicht beschouwd moeten worden in relatie tot ‘performativiteit’. Dit begrip is gekozen omdat uitdrukt dat er een handeling plaats vindt, dat hiervoor een publiek is en dat er een speciale tijd en plek zijn waarbinnen de handeling plaats heeft. Bovendien suggereert de term ‘performativiteit’ een bewust bewerkstelligen van iets. In dit geval gaat het erom dat de constructie van Hendrik en Mathildes identiteit in woord en beeld die als handeling wordt opgevat. Mathildes aanwezigheid in het Evangeliarium was een bewuste keuze en daarom van groot belang. Ze kan dan ook gezien worden als één van de ‘makers’ van het boek. In het algemeen maakt haar aanwezigheid in het Evangeliarium inzichtelijk dat van Mathilde – net als de vrouwen in het Rolandslied – verwacht werd dat ze verschillende rollen moest vervullen. Ze werd gezien als dochter van de Engelse koning, als echtgenote van Hertog Hendrik en in die hoedanigheid was ze ook de moeder van zijn kinderen. Bovendien werd ze beschouwd als steun en toeverlaat van de stad Braunschweig en de kerken aldaar. Meer specifiek betekent Mathildes portrettering dat ze bijdraagt aan de positie van haar echtgenoot. Haar koninklijke afkomst benadrukt de faam van Hendrik. Tenslotte is de betekenis van haar aanwezigheid onderzocht in relatie tot de H. Egidius, de titel ‘bedgenote’ (consorte thor) en de afwezigheid van de (met naam)

Summary

In this book I argue that the varied visual and textual source material related to Matilda (* 1156-† 1189) provides an insight into her duties and responsibilities at her husband’s court. In order to address this question I have taken the visual evidence as my starting point. These sources are studied in combination with a variety of written sources. Together they are examined within the context of medieval ideas about women and their participation in this society. This will provide a better understanding of Matilda’s actions. Additionally, the renewed study of the art works will also nuance some former interpretations concerning their dating and meaning. Within this study there are four important themes: 1. women in textual and visual sources; 2. authority and power; 3. women as makers of art; and 4. performativity.

In order to examine Matilda’s responsibilities and duties at the court and to get an insight into those of noblewomen in general the first chapter is concerned with the Rolandslied. This chanson de geste was commissioned by Matilda and Henry around 1173 and while it is not the only text associated with Matilda, it is the only one that can be connected to her convincingly. A close reading of its epilogue convinced me that the text has been too easily attributed to Henry’s patronage. That Henry has been considered...
the text’s patron is due to the fact that medieval chronicles and charters often credit men as the patrons of art and architecture, when in fact women were the driving forces. The Rolandslied not only testifies to female patronage, which I have labelled matronage, but will prove an important source as well when we want to explore the responsibilities medieval noblewomen held. Of course, this epic story about Charlemagne and his fighting heroes is a story for and about men defending the emperor and Christianity. Yet if we set aside the brutal fights and the way the Christians and Saracens try to mislead each other, it becomes evident that women play a role in the story as well. Thus far this has not been acknowledged by literary historians studying the German Rolandslied.

In Chapter 2 I contend that the bracteate depicting Henry and Matilda is not merely a confirmation of Henry the Lion’s authority, but that it communicated the notion of Matilda as a consort as well. This idea is supported by the coin’s iconography. This is the only coin type on which Matilda is depicted. That she holds a lily-crowned sceptre testifies to authority and rule. Moreover, there are circumstances that I believe requested this coin type to be issued. Henry’s long-term absence in the years 1172-1173, when he went to the Holy Land, offered Matilda the opportunity to wield authority as his consort. I suggest that the idea of consors regni, or co-rule, was put into practice. This is supported by a rereading of a passage from Arnold of Lübeck’s Chronicle (ca. 1210). Arnold was closely related to the Welf court.

The last chapter takes as its point of departure the idea that the dedication and coronation miniatures in the Gospel Book of Henry and Mathilde together with its dedicatory text can be considered in relation to performativity. I have chosen this concept since it refers to acts and the presence of an audience at a specific time and place. Moreover, performativity suggests a conscious construction of identity. The construction of Matilda and Henry’s identities in word and image in the Gospel Book can be seen as the result of performativity. Since Matilda was intentionally added to the Gospel Book in text and image, her contribution was considered important. Therefore she is considered a ‘maker’. On a general level her presence in the Gospel Book is instructive, because it underscores the notion that Matilda – like the women in the Rolandslied – was expected to perform several roles. She was considered daughter of the English king, Duke Henry’s consort and as such the mother of Henry’s children. Additionally she was a benefactor of the town of Brunswick and its churches. Moreover, the way she is portrayed also contributes to her husband’s position: his fame is enhanced by marrying a princess. Lastly, I have studied Matilda’s presence in relation to St Aegidius (or Giles), the expression consorte thori and the visual absence of (named) children. This has led me to suggest that the Gospel Book might be considered a votive offering in order to render thanks to the birth of a child, or to secure the birth of a male heir.

This study, the first dedicated completely to Matilda, demonstrates that the art works and written sources testify that Matilda’s held a variety of duties and responsibilities. Most of these can be considered typically female, such as motherhood. Yet this not to say that Matilda held no authority and was merely acting according to her husband’s will. It is my contention that the visual and written sources reveal that Matilda was not marginalised, but that she acted as mother, matron and mediator. Demonstrating that women – together with men – were at the heart of society.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG


Um einen deutlicheren Eindruck von Mathildes Aufgaben und Zuständigkeiten am Hof und darüber hinaus ein Bild der Edelfrau im 12. Jahrhundert zu erhalten, steht in Kapitel 1 das Rolandslied zentral. Dieser Text über den heldenhaften Ritter Roland wurde um 1173 von Mathilde und

