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

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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. 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. Further study of the manuscript was as well stimulated by the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Henry the Lion’s death in 1995. 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? 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. 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. 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.
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.12 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.13 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. Consequentially, 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
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-

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 centred 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 turning 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.$^{19}$


$^{15}$ Bedos-Rezak 2011: 139.


$^{17}$ Alexander 1993: 5 (speaks of an overlap and interaction between the secular and religious) and 6 (speaks of an ideology because he argues that medieval imagery can be read in terms of role models, social practices and social morals).


$^{19}$ Freise 2003: 39 (controversy about the date of birth).
ised in stained glass windows, sculpture and metalwork. Until the twentieth 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 4, 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 *fama* 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 *fama* 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 Fried and Oexle portray Henry and Matilda’s portrayal as a representation of *fama* 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 *fama* 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 Fried and Oexle portray Henry and Matilda’s portrayal as a representation of *fama* 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 *fama* 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

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25 Fried 1973: 326. Fried does not suggest that Henry had intentions to separate himself from Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. See Fried 1973: 345.
28 Lehmann 2007: 144.
29 Although performative analyses added much to our understanding of the making and remaking of the worlds by medieval man and woman, according to Koziol the blind spot of this approach is that we observe medieval man as privileged outsiders who unproblematically and thus denying them realites. See Koziol 2003: 85-86.
30 Lehmann 2007: 144.
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 Steinheil, 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 Bouchet tells us in 1525, i.e. that Henry II ordered the construction of the cathedral at ‘la requeste de madame Alienor son epoise’.

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.

32 Ragun 1995: 184 (mentioning earlier cleaning, releading and repairs).
33 According to Barbara Abu-El-Haj, the window, like all finished and decorated basilicas, can be seen as a negativ- e 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...
placed at the head of the list citing those were to be saved during the Last Judgment.\textsuperscript{43} 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).\textsuperscript{44} 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.\textsuperscript{45} 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.\textsuperscript{46} This is underscored by the depiction of the religious community at the foot of the cross.\textsuperscript{47} 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'.

44 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
45 Karkov 2004: 120 (the importance of her two names).
46 In 1031, when the miniature was made, the community of New Minster consisted of seventeen priests, eleven deacons and nine boys on the verge to become priest. See Thompson 2004: 203.
47 It is more likely that the book originally begun with Jerome's prologue to his commentary on Matthew and the dedication text usually are found across from each other [ills. 2.14 and 2.15].

### 3.2

**The dedication poem:**

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 [ill. 3.1 and fig. I].\textsuperscript{48} It is highly probable, however, that what is now the first quire was moved to the front of the manuscript during a later rebinding. 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. I].\textsuperscript{49} 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].\textsuperscript{50}

#### Current order of quires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quire 1, fols. 1r-2v (empty), 2r-3v (canon tables)</th>
<th>Quire 3, fols. 5r-6v (Jerome's letter)</th>
<th>Quire 4, fols. 1r-2r (dedication miniature)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Quire 2, fols. 5r-6v (Jerome's letter)</td>
<td>Quire 3, fols. 5r-6v (Jerome's letter)</td>
<td>Quire 5, fols. 19r (dedication miniature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quire 3, fols. 19r (dedication miniature)</td>
<td>Quire 5, fols. 19r (dedication miniature)</td>
<td>Quire 6, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quire 4, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
<td>Quire 6, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
<td>Quire 7, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quire 5, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
<td>Quire 7, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
<td>Quire 8, fols. 19v-20r (Gospel Matthew)</td>
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</tbody>
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#### Suggested original order of quires

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\textsuperscript{48} As Catherine E. Karkov has pointed out, the community of the New Minster consisted of seventeen priests, eleven deacons and nine boys on the verge to become priest. See Thompson 2004: 203.

\textsuperscript{49} It is more likely that the book originally begun with Jerome's letter to Pope Damasus 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 apostles holding scrolls with credo texts and with virtues and vices from Prudentius's Psychomachia. See Schmidt 1989: 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.

Translation by Schmidt 1989: 155. The numbering is mine.

54 Hoffmann 1992: 45.
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 (\textit{consorte thori}). In my discussion of the charter evidence in Chapter 2, I have already pointed out that the phrase, \textit{consorte thori}, is not to be taken for granted.\textsuperscript{56} The word \textit{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.\textsuperscript{57}

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 Charlemagne, Henry’s relation to Charlemagne stated as such may seem a \textit{topos}. That said, Henry did actually stem from a family of emperors.\textsuperscript{58} His grandparents were Emperor Lothar III and Empress Richenza. According to the text, England entrusted Matilda to Henry precisely because of his imperial ties. Up to this point, Matilda is represented as Henry’s wife and a descendent 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 \textit{consorte thori}, was assigned the task of producing offspring. The precise meaning of the phrase \textit{Matbildam, sobolem quae gigneret illam} remains unclear and has led to considerable discussion. The term, \textit{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).\textsuperscript{59} 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.\textsuperscript{60} 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 (\textit{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 allodial lands (\textit{Eigenbesitz}, or \textit{patrimonium}), i.e. the Saxon territories that he had inherited from his Welf, Billung, Süpplingburg, Northeim and Brunonian ancestors. The term \textit{patria}, as it is applied here, may have referred only to the territories still in his possession.\textsuperscript{61} 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 (\textit{urbs}), which was also located in Henry’s patrimony. Therefore, the word \textit{patria} was probably chosen to emphasise the Saxon foundation of Henry’s power.\textsuperscript{62}
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.63 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.64 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 1181.65 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.66 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 *auro 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.67 In the dedication miniature, the gold cover of the book that Henry holds is unlikely to have been fabricated ([il. 3.2]).68 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.’

Matilda as one of the makers of the book

Lines sixteen to twenty intended to preserve the names of the book’s makers for all posterity, i.e. for us. Although most scholars regard Hermann as the book’s maker (*hic labor est Herimanni*), 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 Hermann 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.

64 These city walls enclosed Altstadt, Hagen and the residential area.
68 Other examples of donors presenting books with gold covers are the frontispiece depicting King Edgar of England (959-970) offering his charter to Christ (ca. 966), London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A vii; fol. 2r.; Codex Aureus of Speyer (1040-46), Real Bibliotheca del Escorial, cod. Ytirines 17, fol. 3r.; Uta Codex (ca. 1020), München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 13901, fol. 2r.; Bernward Evangeliar (ca. 1015), Hildesheim, Dom tesury, Hs. 18, fol. 1v; Provost Henry of Schäftlarn dedicates Robert of Reims’ *Historia Hierosolymitana* to Frederick Barbarossa (1168-1189), Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 2001, fol. 1r.
Abbot Conrad of Helmarshausen is credited with advising the book's maker Hermann at Henry the Lion's request. The abbot has been identified as Conrad II, who does not seem to appear in the Helmarshausen documents after 1180. This may indicate that the Gospel Book was produced prior to 1180. Henry the Lion's advocacy over Helmarshausen Abbey lasted until 1180, at which time Frederick Barbarossa forced Henry to give it up. One can imagine that the patronage relations between the duke and the monastery might have faded as well. On the other hand, Conrad died on 4 April 1189, so it is possible that he was still involved after 1180. Due to the loss of the Helmarshausen library, not much is known about Abbot Conrad's theological ideas. Nor is it possible to establish what debates were held in the Chapter of St Blaise, which may have influenced the Gospel Book's iconography. Notwithstanding, Renate Kroos has convincingly argued that the texts added to the miniatures in the Gospel Book convey the strong presence of the ideas of Honorius Augustodunensis (active between 1100-1150), Rupert of Deutz († 1129) and other important early exegetes.

The monk Hermann was able to bring his work to completion with the help of St Peter, the oldest patron saint of the monastery at Helmarshausen.72 Was the monk, Hermann, the Gospel Book's scribe, illuminator or both? Because we have no detailed information on the scriptorium of the Helmarshausen monastery, this question is unresolvable. An established atelier appears to have once existed, but monks from elsewhere may also have been employed. In all likelihood, the monk, Roger of Helmarshausen, was transferred from Cologne to Helmarshausen 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 Hermann, is difficult to establish, as skilled craftsmen were capable of meticulously copying an existing style. Moreover, there is no certainty that Hermann 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 Hermann 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 Hermann, 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.73 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.74 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 (ill. 3.7).75 After having accepted Freise, Hoffmann 1992: 45. 71 Freise 2003: 24-31. The relics were translated from Trier to Helmarshausen in order to design a reliquary for the relics of Modoaldus, which had been translated from Trier to Helmarshausen in 1107. This is for example what happened in the thirteenth-century mosaics in the narthex of the San Marco in Venice. They were copied after the sixth-century Cotton Genesis in a style that was purposely similar to the early medieval style in order to present an early history of Venice that is really was absent. See Kitzinger 1975: 107.

Freise 2003: 34. 76 Freise 2003: 35. 77 See Chapter 1 on the Rolandslied. Martin 2012, vol. 1: 1-135; McCash 1996: 1-49 esp. 2-9. 78 Martin 2012: 8. Louvre, MR 240, Inventar dated before 1147, inscription at the base: Anno vis aequalis et Anno regi Ludovico, Militesque avo, Bona regi, Saint-Thibaut Supra. Here lies the remains of parts of the inscription can be found on http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/arth/arth212/ Hieroglyph_objects Duty_journey.html. 79 Vasque aliu, quod noster justus erexit et rutilat valor, cum in princeps eis Apulensis regiae reserlori, deos parte regem regis semper revelati dominii regi Ludovico debiit, pro magnis aequis dominionis meae, nos vero in favorem Martinici dominii nostris ab Alexandrino dominio abscissae posti domino continuas. Cujus donationes aservavit in eadem vase, pter-nis auroque ornata, versiculis quibusdam intitulatarum: Hoc vas aequalis et Anno regi Ludovico, Militesque avo, Bona regi, Saint-Thibaut Supra. (Still another vase, looking like a part bottle of hemp or crystal, which the queen of Aquitaine had presented to our lord King Louis as a wedding bride on their first voyage, and the King to use as a tribute of his great love, we offered most affectionately to the Divine Table for libation. We have recorded the sequence of these gifts on the vase itself, after it had been adorned with gems and gold, in some little verses: As a bride, Eleanor gave this vase to King Louis. Militesque avo eis, Saint-Thibaut Supra. (ill. 3.7). After having accepted...
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, Mitabolus 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.

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
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 consorta thori, 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
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.89

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.90 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 her 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 (Mathilda 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.
Precious textiles were present at Brunswick and its vicinity. See Von Wilckens 1995, vol. 2: 292-300.

The terminology for the clothing is based on Scott 2009: 53-56.

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 [ill. 3.2]. 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 insigné 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...
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, St Blaise and St Aegidius functioned in the miniature of the *Liber vitae* at Winchester.

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he was considered as one of the most important.\(^{103}\) 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.\(^{104}\) 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.\(^{105}\)

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.\(^{106}\) 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.\(^{107}\) 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 Władysław and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, received their long awaited son, Bolesław 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?). The

\(^{103}\) Döll 1967: 48. Schneckmüller 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 Schneckmüller 2003a: 61.


\(^{105}\) MGH UU HdL: 11-14, no. 7.

\(^{106}\) Falck and Wehrmann 1980: 51; Kroos 1989: 182; Pflotzer 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). 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 beatæ Egidii* (*Miracles of St Giles*), begun by Petrus Guilhelmus 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.

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3.3.3 Presenting the book to Mary and Christ

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 us 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 ducal 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 can 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

117 Klimek 1898: 84.
118 He only received an altar in 1222, donated by Henry and Matilda’s son Henry, Ott 1967: 122.
119 Booskamin 1997: 150, fig. 8, 151, no. 10.
121 Ciggaar 1998: 336; Steinberg-von Pape 1997: 130, no. 8; 131, no. 10.
123 Uta Codex, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 13601, fol. 2r with the tituli sancta Maria (monogram), stella maris (star of the world), electa ut sol (bright as the sun), pulchra et luna (fair as the moon), domina mundi (mistress of the world), genitrix Dei (God-bearer), stella maris (Star of the Sea) and finally Virgo Virginum (Virgin of Virgins). The titles were taken from a variety of sources, but no single text provided a source for the miniatures. See also Cohen 2000: 46.
124 Klemm 1989b: 84.
125 Ciggaar 1998: 336. She mentions that the title *Theotokos* in the West has not been systematically investigated.
128 There is the famous cover of the so-called Leicht Gospels (ca. 810) with the Virgin enthroned and holding Child, flanked by St John on the left and Zacharias on the right, see http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O115354/front-cov -er-of-the-leicht-gospel-cover-unrenewed/. The Metropolit -an Museum of Art houses an icon (1851-0758) on which the enthroned Virgin holding the Child is depicted, http:// www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collec -tions/170004247. Ottonian examples are the Golden Virgin of Essen and the Matthew cross originally commissioned by Adelophus Luitere and completed by Abbot Sophia; The Gospel Book of Bernward of Hildesheim (ca. 1015), Hildesheim, Dom treasury, Ms. H. 18, fol. 184 (Bernward bringig the book to the altar) and fol. 17r (The Virgin crowned by her angels and the child on her lap), see Steigerwald 1988: 25-27; The Ota Codex, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 13601, fol. 2r. *Virgi -nis divinae virginis patrie fays / Suscipe vota tuae protes atrvis adestis utrque Virgin Mother of God. happy because of the divine Child / Receive the votive offerings of your little ready service. See Cohen 2000: 10-11 and 42-51.
129 Ciggaar 1998: 336. She mentions that the title *Theotokos* in the West has not been systematically investigated.
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]. 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]. 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’.132 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 *iunctam 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

130 Steigerwald 1986: 23.
132 Madrid, Escorial, Cod. Vitirrea 17, also known as Codex Aureus of Speyer.
133 Fried 1993: 46 and 48. Opposing to Fried’s idea is Ludger Körntgen who regards junctam prolis amore as a reference to the love Henry and Agnes hold for Conrad and Gisela, who are depicted on the facing page. See Körntgen 2001: 252. Moreover, he does not believe in the idea of the wish for an heir, because neither text nor iconography offer clues. See Körntgen 2001: 251. It is however questionable whether medieval iconography ever offers straight forward 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. 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.

What Salian manuscripts and the Gospel Book also have in common is the application of ornament. Stephen Wagner explains that the imitation of Byzantine silk in these sumptuous Salian manuscripts was the perfect way for rulers to express their imperial status and to establish themselves with an existing tradition. The same appreciation for the past and the introduction of elements that reflect this tradition are evident in the pages of the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda. Certainly, the Byzantine elements in the Gospel Book may very well have been inspired by Salian manuscripts, which would have served as suitable models. In Mutherich’s estimation, there is little doubt that Henry and the manuscript’s other makers were familiar with such books. The duke was perhaps especially interested in these manuscripts, since he was genealogically related to this imperial house: Empress Gisela, who was depicted in two liturgical books, was Henry’s ancestress through his maternal family.

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.


138 Wagner 2010: 49-82.


140 Gisela first married Brun of Brunswick whom she gave a son Liudolf, who inherited Brunswick. He married Gertrud, and their son Eckbert I married Irmgard of Turin. Their daughter Gertrud of Brunswick inherited the Brunonian lands. Gertrud’s second husband was Henry the Fat and their daughter Richenza would marry Lothar III. Their daughter Gertrud married Henry the Proud and their son was Henry the Lion.

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 Aegidius/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 Haussherr 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.
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 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.146 One must therefore question whether Henry and Matilda’s family lineage can be used as a valid argument for dating the Gospel Book.

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.148

The coronation miniature: ducissa mathilda filia regis anglici henrici

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].149 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.’150 This text is related to both the saints and the living mortals depicted, as it was read during the feasts of the martyrs.151 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.152
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.\textsuperscript{153} 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.\textsuperscript{154} Becket was added because he was a popular English saint and had special meaning to the Plantagenet dynasty.\textsuperscript{155} 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.\textsuperscript{156}

For this reason, a dating of the Gospel Book around 1171/73 seems plausible.

\textsuperscript{153} Krass 1989: 167.
\textsuperscript{154} Krass 1989: 23.
\textsuperscript{155} Bowie 2011: 177-188.
\textsuperscript{156} Dugan 2004: 228-229. John declares “it is better to stand by the will of God and revere as a martyr the man whom He has already honoured as a martyr.”

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?\textsuperscript{157} 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.\textsuperscript{158} 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

\textsuperscript{157} Nilgen 1990: 325 (standing); Neth 1989: 76 (standing); 158 This was also suggested by Jakobs 1990: 229.
\textsuperscript{158} Kließche 1984: 59 (kneeling).
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. 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. 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. In the lower corners, Paul and Zachariah also refer to the coronation, with the former stating that the crowning hands of God. Some scholars believe that God’s hands are crossed, suggesting that Matilda receives her crown from His right hand. 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. 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. In the lower corners, Paul and Zachariah also refer to the coronation, with the former stating that the crowning hands of God. Some scholars believe that God’s hands are crossed, suggesting that Matilda receives her crown from His right hand.

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As a sign of respect, Henry and Matilda raise their hands, each holding a golden cross. 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. 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. 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.

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 benricus and ducissa matilda (filia regis anglici benrici). 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 right):
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 their images and names are mentioned in the codex. The memory of Agnes, Henry and his parents was to be kept alive by all who used the book. 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 (patre 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

imperator richenza, imperator lotharius, duchissa gertrudis, dux hercitiae, duchissa matildis filia regis angolici henrici, regina matildis.


Of course, the act of the coronation affirmed that Henry and Matilda were good Christians, beloved by Christ, who were willing to follow him in order to receive the crowns of eternal life. This is the message that was professed in the enfacing full-page miniature with Christ in Majesty surrounded by the six days of Creation (fol. 172r) [ill. 3.4]. This image is perhaps unexpected: a Last Judgement seems more suitable, considering that the overall message is one of salvation. Nonetheless, a Christ in Majesty at the end of the miniature cycle accompanying the Gospel of St John makes sense. It closes with the joyful message that Christ has risen, which was considered as proof that the true believers would also rise from their graves on Judgement Day. Henry and Matilda were sure to be among the true believers, as they were saved from the moment they took up the cross and chose to follow Christ. As a sign of their salvation, they received the crowns of eternal life. That Christ in Majesty was accompanied by the creation of the world – i.e. in the days of the Garden of Eden, with Adam, Eve, their children and animals – is perhaps best understood when acknowledging that the heavenly Jerusalem, as described in Revelations, was considered a spiritual paradise.

According to Renate Kroos, the iconography of the creation of the world also corresponds with the gospel of John, who stated that everything is created by the word of God. He was also the evangelist who prophesised the end of days. Indeed, the book Christ is holding states ‘I the Lord make all these things’ (ego Dominus faciens omnia haec, Isaiah 45: 7), referring to the creation. In this context, Christ is the Creator.

Yet the coronation miniature reveals more. Henry’s and Matilda’s titles and their physical positions in relation to each other once again confirm the notion that what we see in front of us is a noble husband and his royal wife (ducissa matilda filia regis henrici anglici). It was not necessary for the couple to be depicted together: there exist countless images of noblemen and noblewomen who are depicted alone. As has been demonstrated for Eleanor of Aquitaine and Emma, this indicates that the addition of a woman...
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.174

3.5

The importance of marriage and lineage

Despite the notion that the Gospel Book is above all an expression of medieval liturgical 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.

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 that accompany the facsimile. Their analyses have been used to provide a brief overview of the manuscript’s narrative miniatures.

Five miniatures precede the text of Matthew. The first is the aforementioned dedication miniature (fol. 19r). This is followed by a full-page miniature with the Tree of Jesse (fol. 19v). Next there is a two-compartment miniature with the Three Wise Men before the Christ Child and the Magi before Herod (fol. 20r). This is supplemented by a two-compartment miniature with the Baptism of Christ and the Temptation of Christ (fol. 20v), followed by the Transfiguration of Christ, depicted together with Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem (fol. 21r). The Entry serves as a suitable ending to the story that begins with the birth of Christ, who is a descendant of David and Solomon, adored by kings and who ultimately triumphs over Satan. He is transfigured as a foreshadowing of his resurrection and a reflection of his heavenly duty to lead true Christians into eternal life.175 In other words, the first miniatures in the cycle attest how the Word was made flesh (Christ) in order to save mankind.

The first miniature prefacing the text of Mark comprises two compartments with Salome’s Dance and the Beheading of John the Baptist.176 After this follows a two-compartment miniature with The Calling of the Apostles and John the Baptist Preaching (fol. 74r). Next, the two-compartment miniature with The Three Women at the Tomb (Easter Sunday) and The Entombment of Christ are depicted (fol. 74v). The full-page miniature with The Ascension of Christ signals his triumph and therefore the salvation of mankind (fol. 75r). As a whole, the small cycle portrays the belief in the godly nature of the human Christ, as preached by John the Baptist and witnessed by the apostles.

Luke’s text contains three two-compartment miniatures. The first is The Annunciation to Mary combined with The Visitation, in which Elisabeth and Mary meet each other (fol. 110v). Then follows The Annunciation to the Shepherds accompanied by The Presentation in the Temple (fol. 111r). The Anointing of Christ’s Feet by Mary Magdalene is combined with Christ in the House of the Sisters Mary and Martha (fol. 111v). The cycle ends with two full-page miniatures. The first depicts the parable of the Good Samaritan (fol. 112r) and the second portrays the scene of Pentecost (fol. 112v). The emphasis in this cycle seems to be on Christ’s human nature.


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. 73r). As listed in the capital

177 Kroos 1989: 199.
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 the 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.

Several scholars have remarked that the importance of lineage as expressed in the dedicatory text and the 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’ [fol. 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 1200?) [fol. 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 the 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).

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,\(^{187}\) stressed that Christ was born into this world without a father, only to be supported by Joseph, who would act as one.\(^{188}\) 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.\(^{189}\) Seeing both Mary and Joseph as Christ’s parents also corresponds with theological debates on marriage of the twelfth century, in which a shift occurred from ‘coitus to consent’. 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.\(^{189}\)

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.\(^{189}\) 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 Herrmann 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.\(^{192}\) But while Caviness sees the tree as a means to claim matriliny (descent through the female line) and matriarchy (ruling females, especially mothers), one may question whether this model can also be

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\(^{188}\) Geary 2006: 64.

\(^{189}\) Geary 2006: 64.

\(^{190}\) Breding 1987: 260-276 esp. 274.

\(^{191}\) Kroos 1989: 198.

\(^{192}\) Caviness 1990: 129-130. The *Tree of Jesse at St Denis* (1144) contains Jesse, three kings, Mary and Christ; the *Tree of Jesse in York* (ca. 1170) only survives in one panel (a king); the *Tree of Jesse in Canterbury* (ca. 1195) contains two original panels (Jesus and Mary) on six later additions (Jesus, Daniel, Rehoboam, Joseph, Ezechias?, Christ).

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3.5.3

**Sponsus and Sponsa**

Sponsus and Sponsa, bridegroom and bride, have attracted substantial scholarly attention and have mostly been studied from a monastic point of view.\(^{189}\) 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 (including the coronation of Henry and Matilda), Sponsus and Sponsa appear nine times 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 tituli. 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 most 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

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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.


196 The first scenario reminds us of the golden statue of the boy donated by King Władysław and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, in their plea for the birth of a son.

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 uncommon 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 on 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 Cron. sancti Michaelis Luneburgensis: 396. His firstborn son from his marriage with Matilda was Henry (later Count Palatine) who was probably born and 1173. See Ehlers 2008: 194. Freed suggests 1174/1175 as the date of birth. See Freise 2003: 40.

¹⁹⁹ Ciggaar 1986: 35 n. 20.


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.

### 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...
to lineage (both in the *Tree of Jesse* and the coronation miniature) and the absence of children in any of the miniatures, are all points that have ultimately induced me to date the manuscript somewhere between 1172 and 1175.

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.