

Women and Power:  
Thoughts Arising out of the Roundtable  
“Debating Women and Power in the Middle Ages”  
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**T**HANK YOU TO Ellie Woodacre<sup>1</sup> and Amy Livingstone for getting our Roundtable at the International Medieval Congress (IMC) at Leeds 2014 off to a good start, to Theresa Earenfight for afterwards putting together the thoughts arising from that panel and a similar one at Kalazamoo in 2014, and to Kathy Krause and the editors of *Medieval Feminist Forum* for carrying the contributions to publication.

I would like to explore certain ideas about elite medieval women on the European Continent. My particular area of study is ruling women from the second half of the tenth century to the early twelfth century in Germany and northern Italy before, during, and after the Investiture Controversy, when secular and religious powers in Europe were in dispute.<sup>2</sup> The concept of empire in thought and deed dominated northern Italy at various times during this period and in various degrees as the emperor sought to rule from Germany, and the papacy, concerned with purity and reform, sought to wrest control from what it considered an overbearing *imperium*.<sup>3</sup> In this post-roundtable review I want to examine

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1. I would like to thank the University of Sydney, especially the Department of History, the Medieval and Early Modern Centre, and Fisher Library, for support in the development of this article.

2. For an overview of the Investiture Controversy, see Ute-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

3. I will use Europe, Germany, and Italy as convenient expressions for a geography of place. Germany is more correctly called East Francia, and Italy may mean either the kingdom of Italy, which then encompassed the northern areas of the peninsula of the country that we now call Italy, or the whole peninsula, depending on context. Terms

some ideas that seem to predominate when we talk or write about medieval women of any class, with particular reference to Continental ruling women in Germany and northern Italy in the late tenth, eleventh, and early twelfth centuries.

I have five points I would like to make: two deal with a proposed change of focus or a repositioning in the ongoing examination of ruling women; one presents an issue that was particularly relevant to the queens and empresses of Europe; and two apply to medieval studies in general and even history broadly. However, first I need to give some background with particular emphasis on the earlier medieval period within the Germanic and Italian contexts.<sup>4</sup> Please bear with me while I go over some familiar ground in order to lay the groundwork for the later discussion.

## Context

The successor states to the Carolingians in the tenth century on the Continent were East Francia, the kingdom of Italy, and West Francia.<sup>5</sup> I

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such as the Saxons, Swabians, etc. were generally used for the people from Saxony, Swabia, and so on in contemporary documents and thought rather than the names of the “country,” but the country names should serve as a convenient geographical handle in the discussion in this paper. The Ottonian period of rule is considered to start with King Henry I (r. 909–936), continues with emperors Otto I, Otto II, and Otto III, and concludes with Emperor Henry II (r. 1002–1024). Emperor Conrad II (r. 1024–1039) is considered to be the first of the Salian line. The period with which this paper deals includes the following Salian emperors: Henry III, Henry IV, and the early reign of Henry V (r. 1099–1125). For an overview of the people and the geography of Germany and northern Italy, see Herwig Wolfram, *Conrad II 990–1039: Emperor of Three Kingdoms*, trans. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 1–12.

4. Björn K. U. Weiler and Simon MacLean, eds., *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany, 800–1500*, International Medieval Research 16 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter, vol. 1 (London: Hambledon Press, 1994); Josef Fleckenstein, *Early Medieval Germany*, trans. Bernard S. Smith, Europe in the Middle Ages 16 (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1978); Giuseppe Sergi, “The Kingdom of Italy,” in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, c. 900–c. 1024, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 346–71.

5. See the discussion in Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of*

intend to deal here primarily with East Francia and the kingdom of Italy and their relationship with one another. Changes in society between the tenth and eleventh centuries affected men and women profoundly. I have to say at the outset that the statements that I am making here concerning women's potential relative loss of wealth and power in the eleventh century may not apply to every society nor to every woman, especially to women in France. However, I need to present a framework here of broad societal changes so that I can address my first point in the next section, "That Paradigm."

The real history of women's ability to gain and retain wealth is a history of changes in scarcity and plenty. Because of a general dearth of people at the beginning of the eleventh century, women had value both for their labor and as bearers of children. Marriage, supposedly an indissoluble personal union and a social instrument, structured patrimony within families through dowries and marriage settlements and the alliances and exchange of land. Combined with the availability of plentiful land, the reverse dowry—the major marriage payment whereby the future husband gave the future wife property (often lands and movable goods)—provided for the maintenance of the future widow. Often the reverse dowry remained in the possession and control of the woman on her husband's death, enabling her to live independently.<sup>6</sup> In Germany the *Morgengabe*, the morning gift to the bride from her husband after the consummation of their marriage, could be inherited by the bride's surviving heirs. Consequently sometimes the wary widow had to fight for her entitlements.<sup>7</sup> Land was inextricably tied to wealth, and wealth to

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*Europe from 400 to 1000*, The Penguin History of Europe 2 (London: Penguin, 2010), 427–52. See also note 2 above.

6. David Herlihy, "The Medieval Marriage Market," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1976), 2–7, 9.

7. Janet L. Nelson, "The Wary Widow," in *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); repr., Janet Nelson, *Courts, Elites, and Gendered Power in the Early Middle Ages: Charlemagne and Others*, Variorum Collected Studies Series; CS878 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), II. 82–113; Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450–1500* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), 168–86; Regine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde Franc (VIIe–Xe siècle): Essai d'anthropologie sociale*, Histoire ancienne et médiévale (Paris: Publications de la

power. “It was the barefaced competition for property which everywhere gave shape to power.”<sup>8</sup> The situation described above applied broadly in England and on the Continent.

As the eleventh century progressed, increased population ensured that land became less abundant for both men and women, so means were found to redistribute what remained. In Germany the demise of the lavish endowments of Ottonian monasteries that had occurred in the tenth century shows one way in which possessions were snatched back and how the newly-released wealth supported the increase in comital holdings: “the Saxon princes became somewhat less tolerant of wealthy widows disposing of great inheritances. Instead they forced them to remarry and used their possessions to build up those competitive territorial lordships which the prolonged impotence of the later Salian emperors in Saxony made possible.”<sup>9</sup> So too, as competition intensified, inheritance customs and the purpose of marriage changed; consequently women’s inheritance suffered more than men’s. The fragmentation of tenth-century estates caused by the division of the inheritance among all children gave way to a rise in primogeniture (the right of succession and inheritance of a firstborn, especially a firstborn son). In replacing partible inheritance by women and men with primogeniture, families sought to “preserve, build up and consolidate the patrimony.”<sup>10</sup> The rise of castellans and knights as progenitors of the patrilinear dynasties of the later Middle Ages ousted earlier family structures. We must note, however, Constance Bouchard’s argument that in medieval Francia, families had always privileged male descendants.<sup>11</sup> The shift in ownership within the family patrimony has been summarized as follows:

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Sorbonne, 1995), 268–70.

8. Wendy Davies, “Conclusion: Property and Power in Early Medieval Europe,” in Davies and Fouracre, *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, 271.

9. Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 70–71.

10. Lynette Olson, *The Early Middle Ages: The Birth of Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 172.

11. Constance Brittain Bouchard, *“Those of My Blood”: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 175–80.

Women no longer serve as the nodules through which pass the surest kinship ties. The daughter is treated as a marginal member of her father's lineage, and after her marriage, her children will leave it entirely; their allegiance passes to her husband's line. Women also lose the claim to a full (or at least fair) share with their brothers in the family patrimony.<sup>12</sup>

By the early twelfth century, marriage to ensure dynastic survival had become a distinct concept in addition to the sacramental ideal of marriage. Discussing Philip I of France's second marriage, around 1100, Georges Duby wrote that marriage, "overt, public, ceremonious, surrounded by special words and deeds, is at the center of any system of values, at the junction between the material and the spiritual."<sup>13</sup> In such a reorientation of the nature of marriage as both dynastic and sacramental, the wife's ownership and control of land, and therefore her wealth, gave way to ownership by the husband. Younger sons were now forbidden to marry or were required to marry later, and fewer lands were available for brides. Alternatively in Germany the adoption of stricter Germanic rules of incest was used to exclude them. The stricter rules encouraged a culture of initiation via tests and trials before breeding and an emphasis on marriage as the knight's ultimate goal. The reluctant groom had to be coaxed to marry; the reverse dowry declined and all but disappeared by the end of the twelfth century.<sup>14</sup> The rise of the knight and the obligations of male vassal to male lord further excluded

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12. David Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, Studies in Cultural History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 82.

13. Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 19. See also Ruth Mazo Karras, *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

14. Helen M. Jewell, *Women in Dark Age and Early Medieval Europe c. 500–1200* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 77–78; Kathryn L. Reyerson and Thomas Kuehn, "Women and Law in France and Italy," in *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, ed. Linda E. Mitchell, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 2007 (New York, NY: Garland, 1999), 137. See also John B. Freed, *Noble Bondsmen: Ministerial Marriages in the Archdiocese of Salzburg, 1100–1343* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 149–50.

women and limited their opportunities to retain wealth. The rise of the fief, given primarily for military service and passed undivided to the eldest son, excluded people who could not give military service, that is, women.<sup>15</sup> In 1037 Emperor Conrad II issued the *Constitutio de feudis*, which barred women specifically from the inheritance of fiefs in Italy.<sup>16</sup> However, later emperors attempting to impose a similar regimen in Germany met with indifferent success.<sup>17</sup>

In the same way as an aristocratic woman had greater opportunities to acquire wealth at the beginning of the eleventh century than at its end, so too she could avail herself of comparatively more opportunities to exercise power. In the same way as the queen could wield power at that time, so too educated abbesses, usually from the royal families, and especially in Ottonian Germany, headed great foundations, minted coins, held markets, made their abbeys key stopping points for the itinerant royal retinue, presided over Saxon assemblies, on occasion ruled in the king's absence, and generally exercised significant power and managed great wealth obtained from endowments.<sup>18</sup> Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg was a case in point. Daughter of Empress Adelheid and Emperor Otto I and "famous for the care with which she presided over the Saxon assemblies," she ruled as regent in Germany for her parents and later for her nephew, Otto III, during their absences in Italy.<sup>19</sup> It can be seen that certain noble women were privileged, especially the women of the Saxon aristocracy in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, because

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15. Herlihy, "Medieval Marriage Market," 9; Olson, *Early Middle Ages*, 171–72.

16. Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, "The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500–1100," *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 3/4 (1973), 136; David Herlihy, "Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701–1200," *Traditio* 18 (1962): 89–120, 100, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20780386>; repr. in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Susan M. Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 13–45.

17. Herlihy, "Land, Family and Women," 100.

18. Sean Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid*, Medieval Texts in Translation (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 27; Gerd Althoff, "Saxony and the Elbe Slavs in the Tenth Century," in Reuter, *New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3: c. 900–c. 1024, 271, 275, 290–91.

19. Althoff, "Saxony," 271.

of longevity and relatively greater freedom to inherit property, control great wealth, and to wield great power.<sup>20</sup>

Women in the early Middle Ages were able to exploit opportunities that a less centralized and less ordered environment afforded. Some women excelled in the specifically religious sphere. Bishop Adalhelm of Sées attributed his see and his life to the virgin saint Opportuna, who lived in the late eighth century. According to Adalhelm, not only men but also women and young girls provided models of sanctity, although a woman's sanctity was different from a man's.<sup>21</sup> The lives of Merovingian women such as queens Radegund (died 587)<sup>22</sup> and Balhild (died ca. 680)<sup>23</sup> and of Carolingian women such as Liutberg of Wendhausen (died ca. 880)<sup>24</sup> achieved praise in sacred biographies, albeit based on "male, patristic. . . [and] canonical" models.<sup>25</sup> Radegund, initially active as queen of the Franks, chose "ascetic virtuosity," became a deaconess, lived in various monasteries, and may have refused, out of humility, the offer of the position of abbess at the monastery of Poitiers.<sup>26</sup> Similarly

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20. Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, 49–73.

21. Adalhelm of Sées, *Vita et miracula S. Opportunae, liber miraculorum*, ed. G. Henschenius, *AASS*, Aprilis, iii (Antwerp, 1675), Prologue, p. 62. See also Julia M. H. Smith, "The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe c. 780–920," *Past & Present*, no. 146 (1995): 3–37, 3, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651150>.

22. There are two Latin lives of Radegund: Venantius Fortunatus, *De Vita Sanctae Radegundis, Liber I*, *MGH SRM* 2:364–77, and Baudonivia, *De Vita Sanctae Radegundis, Liber II*, *MGH SRM* 2:377–95. Both are translated in "Radegund, Queen of the Franks and Abbess of Poitiers (ca. 525–587)," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, ed. and trans. Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 60–105, 70–86; repr. in *Medieval Saints: A Reader*, ed. by Mary-Ann Stouck (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1999), 205–17.

23. McNamara and Halborg, "Balhild, Queen of Neustria," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, 268–78.

24. *Ex Vita Sanctae Liutbirgae a. 870*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 4:158–164 (1841); "The Life of St. Liutberga, 9th Century," trans. Jo Ann McNamara, Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/liutberga.asp>, accessed 6 January 2016.

25. Smith, "Female Sanctity," 17. See also Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 35–36, and Smith, "Female Sanctity," 8, 13, 14, 17–18, 33.

26. For the succinct phrase "ascetic virtuosity," which summarized Radegund's choice, see Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and

Queen Balthild of Neustria, having exercised real power, abandoned court politics under pressure to enter the monastery of Chelles (which she had endowed), living there humbly for fifteen years until her death in about 680.<sup>27</sup> The aristocratic woman Liutberg remained a virgin, secluded herself in a monastic cell, and attained the status of a “pious *virago*,” even eventually assuming a functional asexuality. Liutberg’s life story conforms to the monastic virginal model.<sup>28</sup>

Another Continental woman of that earlier period, Dhuoda, wrote a manual in the ninth century for her son about how to live a pious life. She in fact gave instructions with a strikingly feminine view to her young son about how to live a holy life in the world.<sup>29</sup> Married at Aachen to

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Balthild in Merovingian History,” in *Medieval Women: Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M. T. Hill*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), 31–77; repr. in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. Lester K. Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 223. For the possibility that Radegund refused the role of abbess, see John Kitchen, *Saints’ Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 226n5. See also Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500–1100* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 42–46; Smith, “Female Sanctity,” 30; Eva M. Synek, “‘Ex utroque sexu fidelium tres ordines’—The Status of Women in Early Medieval Canon Law,” in *Gendering the Middle Ages*, ed. Pauline Stafford and Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 71; Jo Ann McNamara, “A Legacy of Miracles: Hagiography and Nunneries in Merovingian Gaul,” in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne Wemple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 39–40, 45–47.

27. Nelson, “Queens as Jezebels,” 230–36, 241–53, esp. 249–50; Smith, “Female Sanctity,” 17, 9, 21, 29. For Balthild’s original anonymous *Life* see McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, 268–78.

28. For the phrase “pious *virago*,” see Smith, “Female Sanctity,” 19. For other aspects of Liutberg’s life, see *ibid.* 6, 20n58, 22, 24, 35.

29. For Dhuoda’s *Liber Manualis* (Handbook), see Marcelle Thiébaux, ed. and trans., Dhuoda, *Handbook for her Warrior Son: Liber Manualis*, Cambridge Medieval Classics 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and *Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman’s Counsel for her Son*, trans. with introduction and afterword by Carol Neel, Regents Studies in Medieval Culture (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). See also Thomas F. X. Noble, “Secular Sanctity: Forging an Ethos for the Carolingian Nobility,” in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. Patrick Wormald and Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

Bernhard of Septimania, Dhuoda had been caught up in the civil war raging among the sons of Louis the Pious on the latter's death. Dhuoda's manual gave advice to her elder son, whom his father had sent as hostage to his own godfather Charles the Bald, a son of Louis. Situated as she was in her absent husband's castle at Uzès, located in southern France just north of Arles, it fell to Dhuoda to define for her son those desirable qualities and appropriate actions which he needed to master in order to negotiate tricky court politics and to become a wise and holy nobleman.<sup>30</sup>

As the century progressed, the occasions for women to exercise power diminished. Concomitant with the rise of nobles and the development of more circumscribed governmental structures, the power of the king was called into question and, consequently, so was that of his queen, especially in Italy and Germany. Although the king/emperor still maintained a court and his household, he and his retinue became less central to power as nascent bureaucracies formed. As the machinery of government became more impersonal, aristocratic men were able to exercise public power as administrators of the new institutions, but this opportunity was not formally open to noblewomen, who were relegated to private power in a shrinking sphere as the household became increasingly marginalized while other power structures gained prominence. England was an exception in that public institutions never completely died out under the king.<sup>31</sup> On the Continent, especially in France, public institutions eventually reemerged. Altogether, everywhere the growth of a more organized society consigned family, household, and women to the periphery.<sup>32</sup>

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30. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 36–54; Valerie L. Garver, *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 156–57, 272; Katherina M. Wilson, ed., *Medieval Women Writers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xi; J. Marchand, “The Frankish Mother: Dhuoda,” in Wilson, *Medieval Women Writers*, 1; Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 414.

31. For a detailed examination of England in the tenth century, see Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 453–71.

32. McNamara and Wemple, “Power of Women the Family (1973),” 126–41. McNamara re-examined and reaffirmed her views later in Jo Ann McNamara, “Women and Power Through the Family Revisited,” in *Gendering the Master*

As well as changes in the secular sphere, changes in the ecclesiastical domain affected women to their detriment in different ways. With the enforcement of celibacy of the clergy, the opportunity for clerical wives to exercise power as part of the “parish” disappeared.<sup>33</sup> Not only women’s power but also women’s status itself was reduced.<sup>34</sup> So too the rise of the importance of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, disadvantaged the abbesses, canonesses, and nuns who, while they had always been dependent on priests, now found themselves privileging those ordained men for bearing the sacrament to them. “As society became better organized and ecclesiastically more right-minded, the necessity for male dominance began to assert itself.”<sup>35</sup>

A woman of interest from the end of the eleventh century is Gerendis, who was not able to appropriate the role of queen or empress, or of a religious, however broadly defined they might be at the time she lived. Nevertheless she made the best of the circumstances in which she found herself, as we can see by her actions. She played a leading role in the revolt at Le Mans, first heard of as a commune in 1070. There

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*Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 17–30; Elizabeth Haluska-Rausch, “Transformations in the Powers of Wives and Widows near Montpellier, 985–1213,” in *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe: 950–1350*, ed. Robert F. Berkhofer III, Alan Cooper, and Adam J. Kosto (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 153–68. For the discussion re Britain, see K. R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300–800*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999), 94–96, 136, 169, 255–57; Reyerson et al., “Women and Law,” 131–41; Olson, *Early Middle Ages*, 197, 199.

33. Jo Ann McNamara, “Canossa and the Ungendering of the Public Man,” in *Render Unto Caesar: The Religious Sphere in World Politics*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramel and Donald W. Treadgold (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1995), 131–50; repr. in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches*, ed. Constance H. Berman (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 92–110, 102; Dyan Elliott, “The Priest’s Wife: Female Erasure and the Gregorian Reform,” chap. 4 in *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); repr. in Berman, *Medieval Religion*, 111–40. 123–26.

34. Patricia Skinner, *Women in Medieval Italian Society, 500–1200*, Women and Men in History (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 152–53.

35. R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, The Pelican History of the Church, vol. 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 310.

documentation in two charters shows Gercendis acting as a count in her own and her family's interest. As the daughter of Count Herbert (called "Wake the Dog"), she came from illustrious comital ancestors, the Counts of Maine. She had originally been married to a duke; she afterwards married a marquis; she became the ward and then the mistress of another nobleman, Geoffrey of Mayenne. During the uprising she remained in Le Mans and had the power to consider whether she might hand the city over to Geoffrey. Her son eventually became a count, but was deposed by William the Conqueror.<sup>36</sup> In those challenging times, Gercendis found her path to power via the comital rather than the imperial or the royal route.

### 1. That Paradigm

In summary, we have been presented with a paradigm about how women in the early Middle Ages in a more disordered time COULD do better than women in the second half of the eleventh century and later, when the Church was becoming more centralized, power more structured and hereditary, and "male dominance began to assert itself."<sup>37</sup> By the phrase "COULD do better," I mean that opportunities might be available to

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36. G. Busson and Ambroise Ledru, eds, *Actus pontificum Cenomannis in urbe degentium*, Archives historiques du Maine 2 (Le Mans: Société historique de la province du Maine, 1901), 376–81; R. E. Barton, trans., *The Deeds of Bishop Arnald of Le Mans and the Le Mans Commune, 1065–1081*, Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1081gestaarnaldi.asp> (1998). See also Olson, *Early Middle Ages*, 186–88.

37. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 310. For further discussion of the rise in male dominance, see also David Herlihy, "The Medieval Marriage Market," 9, 19; Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, 73; R. I. Moore, "Review Article: Duby's Eleventh Century," *History* 69, issue 225 (1984): 38–40, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-229X.1984.tb01414.x; Pauline Stafford, "La Mutation Familiale: A Suitable Case for Caution," in *The Community, the Family, and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe; Selected proceedings of the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 4–7 July 1994, 10–13 July 1995*, ed. Joyce Hill and Mary Swan, International Medieval Research 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 103–25; Janet L. Nelson and Alice Rio, "Women and Laws in Early Medieval Europe," in Judith M. Bennet and Ruth Mazo Karras eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 103–17.

accomplish more, because control was more diffuse and unstructured and pockets of female power could emerge.

Not even powerful early medieval kings such as Rothari and Charlemagne could bring social reality fully into line with prescriptive norms. In practice, women characteristically lived their lives in the interstices of ideology and convention. As we shall see, that gap was often considerable, a cause of vulnerability for some but of opportunity for others.<sup>38</sup>

The paradigm that is often presented occurs as a result of the changes between the tenth and eleventh centuries. The social context had changed, it is claimed, from one of diffused sources of authority and social mobility to one in which authority was more obviously and coherently articulated, and people were mostly controlled by a public system. Although the general shift to a public system was clear, the use of private laws did not totally disappear. New laws regulating the relationships between lords and subjects, for example, were private while, though fewer, some old private laws remained to demonstrate the endurance of the model from Carolingian times when authority was strongly but simply articulated by impersonal rules and the personal charisma of the monarch.<sup>39</sup> Such claims are generalizations and need to be evaluated in their temporal and geographical context. Nevertheless on the whole society was becoming more organized.

Recent scholarship has queried this paradigm. For example, Duby's assertion about a change in inheritance, family structure and women's status in France about the year 1100 has been challenged.<sup>40</sup> The first

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38. J. M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History 500–1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 122.

39. See Pietro Silverio Leicht, *Il diritto privato preirneriano*, Biblioteca della Rivista di storia del diritto italiano; 9 (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1933); Leicht, *Storia del diritto italiano: Il diritto privato*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Milan: Giuffrè, 1960); Ewart Lewis, ed., *Medieval Political Ideas*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954; repr. 2013); Susan Reynolds, "Law and Communities in Western Christendom, c. 900–1140," *American Journal of Legal History* 25, no. 3 (1981): 205–24, doi: 10.2307/845249.

40. See, for example, George G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 51–64, especially 55, 60. See also Amy Livingstone, *Out of*

question is then, does the model or paradigm need to be more finely nuanced? That is, can this model or paradigm be applied in general to all women or does it apply to Continental women operating in Germany and northern Italy? I want to examine this question for those two locations in particular using selected case studies, and then to touch briefly on the four other points I mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

I have looked in detail at a queen in the early Middle Ages and a countess concerned with church reform a hundred years later. Those two women were Empress Adelheid and Countess Matilda of Tuscany.<sup>41</sup> They bookend the changes of the eleventh century and provide a fine contrast with each other. Whereas Empress Adelheid functioned in northern Italy and Germany in the late tenth century in the period when women had more “elbow room,” Countess Matilda, active in the late eleventh century and early twelfth century in northern Italy, was confronted with a period of change during which the mantle of authority was shifting from the exercise of personal charisma to conformity within a new authoritarian society.<sup>42</sup> Did Matilda actually help develop

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*Love for my Kin: Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000–1200* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 222; J. A. Bowman, “Countesses in Court: Elite Women, Creativity, and Power in Northern Iberia, 900–1200,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2014): 54–70.

41. For Adelheid, see Gilsdorf, “Odilo of Cluny, *The Epitaph of Adelheid*,” in *Queenship and Sanctity*, 128–43, and D. A. Warner, *Epitaph of the August Lady, Adelheid*, in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 255–71; Patrick Corbet, Monique Goulet, and Dominique Iogna-Prat, eds, *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et représentations d’une sainteté impériale*, CTHS histoire 3 (Paris: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2002). For Matilda, see Donizone, *Vita di Matilde di Canossa*, ed. Paolo Golinelli and Vito Fumagalli, *Di fronte e attraverso* 823 (Milan: Jaca Book, 2008); David J. Hay, *The Military Leadership of Matilda of Canossa 1046–1115*, *Gender in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Vito Fumagalli, “Adelaide e Mathilde: due protagoniste del potere medievale,” *La Contessa Adelaide e la società dell secolo XI: Atti del convegno di Susa (14–16 novembre 1991)*, *Segusium* 32 (Susa: Soc. di Ricerche e Studi Valsusini, 1993), 243–57; Valerie Eads, “The Last Italian Expedition of Henry IV: Re-reading the *Vita Mathildis* of Donizone of Canossa,” *Journal of Medieval Military History* 8, no. 2 Nov (2010): 23–68.

42. Professor R. I. Moore used the term “women’s elbow room” in reference to the relatively better opportunities for women to access wealth and power in the

the more organized, structured, and authoritarian society that emerged during the eleventh century?

Let us examine Empress Adelheid and Countess Matilda in more detail. Empress Adelheid and her daughter-in-law, Empress Theophanu, reached the pinnacle of political and religious power. They are examples of Ottonian women who took advantage of disordered times and found ways to forge significant pathways.<sup>43</sup> Adelheid was born with the advantage of noble parents in about 931. On her father's death in 937, her mother married Hugh, king of Italy, and Adelheid was betrothed to her stepbrother. On Hugh's death in 947, Adelheid became queen of Italy. Her young husband died soon after in 950. Berengar II of Ivrea, seeking to consolidate the kingship of Italy, held her captive. She took the initiative, escaped, avoided her captors, and sent word to the leading man in Saxony, Otto I. They married at Pavia, the acknowledged royal seat of the kingdom of Italy. With Otto I Adelheid bore a daughter, Mathilda, who became Abbess of Quedlinburg, and a male heir, Otto II. Adelheid was a major intervener in the diplomata of emperors Otto I, Otto II, and Otto III in turn. She owned more land than her son, the emperor Otto II. She founded and endowed great monasteries. Her

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Ottonian period than later on. R. I. Moore, email to Dr Lynette Olson, 2 July 2009. For more about the shifts between the tenth and eleventh centuries and the emergence of the Canossans during that period, see Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 513–14; Chris Wickham, "Property Ownership and Signorial Power in Twelfth-Century Tuscany," in Davies and Fouracre, *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, 221–44.

43. For more detail on Adelheid's life, see Paolo Golinelli, *Adelaide: regina santa d'Europa*, Donna d'Oriente e d'Occidente 11 (Milan: Jaca Book, 2001); S. Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid und das ottonische Kaisertum," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 33 (1999): 1–19; Penelope Nash, "Empress Adelheid's Vulnerabilities as Mother and Ruler," in *Royal Mothers and Their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, ed. Elena Woodacre and Carey Fleiner, Queenship and Power (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 127–47; Penelope Nash, "Contemporary Perceptions of Tenth-Century European Elites by Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, Thietmar of Merseburg, Odilo of Cluny, the Quedlinburg Annales, and Other Contemporary Chroniclers," *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 10 (2014): 87–92, 94–95.

contemporaries praised her as *imperatrix augusta*,<sup>44</sup> *augusta praeclara*,<sup>45</sup> “celebrated august empress of the Romans,”<sup>46</sup> and addressed her as “exalted lady, cherisher of kings and kingdoms, the most noble Adelheid always august and unconquerable. . . . through her unique intelligence and bountiful wisdom she subjected the whole imperium to herself.”<sup>47</sup> She was one of the first saints to be canonized by a pope.

Adelheid acted as regent of the empire four times during her life. She successfully undertook this responsibility because she had the credentials and ability and was able to make use of the unusual circumstances that applied to her Italian connections. Although Italy had been conquered by various Carolingian rulers, and especially thoroughly by Charlemagne in the late eighth century, and had consequently been influenced by Carolingian practices, prior Lombard influences that favored the right of royal women to transmit kingship to their next husband still lingered.<sup>48</sup>

Countess Matilda of Tuscany (also known as Matilda of Canossa) was a proficient negotiator, warrior, and ruler of extensive lands in Tuscany, the Apennines, and northern Italy, albeit her property did not approach

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44. Anonymous, *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, *MGH SSrG* 72 (Hanover: Hahnsche, 2004), s.aa. 964, 991, 999, 1000, pp. 471, 480, 508, 510.

45. *Ibid.*, s.a. 992, p. 482.

46. “inclita Romanorum imperatrix augusta.” *ibid.*, s.a. 999, p. 508.

47. “Dominę precelsę regum regnorumque altrici nobilissimę Adalheidę augustę semper invictissimę. . . . cuius solum ingenium tam larga est sapientia auctum, ut sibi totum subiugaret imperium.” Froumond, *Die Tegernseer Briefsammlung*, ed. Karl Strecker, *MGH Epp. sel.* 3:1–96 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925, repr. 1964), *Ep.* 1, pp. 2–3. *Inclita* and *invictissima* are terms used in Late Antiquity and are redolent of imperial authority at that time. I am grateful to Dr. Lynette Olson and to Professor Dexter Hoyos for enlightenment about the influence of the late-empire Latin style therein. For Adelheid’s miracles, see Giuliano Sala and Giorgio Vedovelli, *Vita e miracoli di Adelaide di Borgogna: Epitaphium Adalheidae imp. Liber miraculorum*, Le Fonti 1 (Torri del Benaco: Centro Studi per il Territorio Benacense, 1990).

48. See Theudelinda and her daughter, who were active in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Georg Waitz, *MGH SSrG* 48 (Hanover, 1878), 140, 41, 59; Walter Pohl, “Gender and Ethnicity,” in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38; Skinner, *Women in Medieval Italian Society*, 55–59.

the vastness of Empress Adelheid's landed possessions.<sup>49</sup> Her supporters praised her as a “new Deborah,”<sup>50</sup> *domina*,<sup>51</sup> *nota Ducatrix*,<sup>52</sup> *virago*,<sup>53</sup> “[r]enowned Matilda,”<sup>54</sup> “Matilda, that most dear and faithful daughter of St. Peter”<sup>55</sup> and attributed to her many other worthy epithets. She championed seven popes unstintingly in support of church reform in the struggle against King and then Emperor Henry IV, and with her army eventually drove him out of Italy.

In contrast to Countess Matilda, we can look at an empress such as Agnes, married to the Emperor Henry III in Germany in the mid-eleventh century and active in approximately the same time period as Countess Matilda. Empress Agnes, like Empress Adelheid a century before, was asked to take on the regency for her son (and Adelheid was also asked to do so for her grandson, twice). Adelheid succeeded very well in the earlier period. In contrast, Agnes had the regency and, indeed, her son himself (the future Emperor Henry IV), taken from her. Countess Matilda of Tuscany, active at approximately the same time as

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49. For more detail on Countess Matilda's life, see Paolo Golinelli, *Matilde e i Canossa*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Mursia, 2004); Golinelli, *L'ancella di san Pietro: Matilde di Canossa e la Chiesa*, Biblioteca di cultura medievale (Milan: Jaca Book, 2015); Golinelli, ed., *I poteri dei Canossa: Da Reggio Emilia all'Europa; Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Reggio Emilia-Carpinetti, 29-31 ottobre 1992)*, Il Mondo Medievale (Bologna: Pàtron, 1994). See also Tiziana Lazzari, *Le donne nell'alto Medioevo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2010). For the history of the family Canossa, see Vito Fumagalli, *Le origini di una grande dinastia feudale: Adalberto-Atto di Canossa*, Bibliothek des deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom 35 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971).

50. “Debora nova.” Golinelli and Fumagalli, *Vita di Matilde di Canossa*, 2.8.742–44, p. 180.

51. *Ibid.*, 2.7.692, p. 176.

52. *Ibid.*, 2.7.729, p. 178.

53. Hugh of Flavigny, *Chronicon Hugonis monachi Viridunensis et Divionensis Abbatis Flaviniacensis*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 8:280–502 (Hanover, 1848), II, s.a. 1084, p. 462; Johannes Mantuanus, *Iohannis Mantuani in Cantica canticorum et de Sancta Maria tractatus ad comitissam Matildam*, ed. Bernhard Bischoff and Burkhard Taeger, *Spicilegium Friburgense* 19 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1973), 38, 52.

54. “[i]nclita Mathildis,” Golinelli and Fumagalli, *Vita di Matilde di Canossa*, 2.19.1272, p. 220.

55. “carissima et fidelissima beati Petri filia,” Gregory VII, *The Epistolae Vagantes of Pope Gregory VII*, ed. H. E. J. Cowdrey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 19, pp. 51, 53.

Agnes, appears to have been much more successful in the eyes of many of her contemporaries.

The question I want to ask is: was Countess Matilda exceptional in Italy or was Matilda acting against the paradigm? To consider that question we must remember that her mother, Countess Beatrice, was powerful in her own right and that Countess Adelaide of Turin ruled over large areas of land.<sup>56</sup> That is, WERE women in Germany and Italy, who could not help but be strongly influenced by the hovering presence of the empire, more formally constrained after, say, the middle of the eleventh century (and this has been the accepted paradigm), but with some exceptions, for example Countess Matilda, OR were women not more constrained after the middle of the eleventh century, and Matilda and other women were just carrying on in the same old way (*contra* the paradigm)? Furthermore, were women who operated in Germany and northern Italy in general functioning under more flexible rules than those in other areas of the Continent and in England?

## 2. Refocus

My second point arises out of the first one. As a consequence of the above discussion, let us continue to expand our scope now to examine ruling women, not just empresses or queens. This is happening and I welcome it. The “Kings and Queens 3” conference at Winchester in July 2014, which took place directly after the International Medieval Congress at Leeds, did just that by taking “Entourage” as its theme. This collection for *Medieval Feminist Forum* adds to the expansion. For example, Amy Livingstone uses the twelfth-century Countess Ermen-gard of Brittany (ca. 1070–1147) as a springboard to discuss larger questions, and Constance Berman examines thirteenth-century “Lady/Lords” and their varied careers. In our assembly of ruling women, we must not forget the abbesses, canonesses, and other religious women, who ruled with great independence especially in Ottonian Germany. Two Gerbergas, one an aunt of King Henry I (d. 936) and another his

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56. In recent conversations with me, Alison Creber, whose subject is Countess Adelaide of Turin, strongly disagrees that the paradigm applies.

granddaughter, were abbesses of Gandersheim. On the instruction of her abbess Gerberga II (d. 1002), the canoness Hrotsvitha wrote the *Gesta Ottonis* (Deeds of Otto) in order to support the Ottonian dynasty.<sup>57</sup> Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg (d. 999) has already been mentioned. Her niece Adelheid (d. 1043, not to be confused with Empress Adelheid) became abbess first of Quedlinburg and then added three other convents to her responsibilities.<sup>58</sup> Abbess Adelheid's sister Sophie (d. 1039) followed her as abbess of Gandersheim. Those three women presided over assemblies with their imperial relations. Abbesses Adelheid and Sophie were important consultants in the selection of the last Ottonian emperor, Henry II. Religious women from later periods, especially those active in Germany, continued to wield direct political power. The religious and saintly aspects of their lives have often been examined, but not always the complementary ruling aspects of their lives.

### 3. Biography and Life Cycle

My third point concerns how we frame our studies of women. Let's go beyond the biography and the life cycle. There has been very valuable work undertaken in the last thirty years or so to understand the lives of medieval women, especially ruling women. Women are often examined from the point of view of their life cycle—virgin, bride, wife, mother, dowager. Empress Adelheid and Countess Matilda were not so categorized. Rather Empress Adelheid's life-cycle function or position was often linked to a ruling function. She was "the most famous lady and

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57. The two most recent editions are Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, *Opera omnia*, ed. W. Berschin, *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001), 271–305; and Hrotsvitha, *Gesta Ottonis Imperatoris: Lotte, drammi e trionfi nel destino di un imperatore*, ed. Maria Pasqualina Pillolla, *Per verba 20* (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2003). See also Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wales, eds, *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

58. Karl F. Morrison, *History as a Visual Art in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 174.

mother of kingdoms”<sup>59</sup> and the “mother of all kingdoms.”<sup>60</sup> Countess Matilda’s two marriages and the birth of her daughter were ignored by her biographer, Donizo, who emphasised instead her virtue, her military qualities, and her wisdom. I wonder if we are sometimes overly caught up in the life-cycle viewpoint. After all, we don’t talk very much or not in the same way about ruling men as virgin, new-husband/groom (is there an equivalent word for male bride?), father, widower. Can we break out of the virgin, bride, wife, mother, dowager life cycle? Can we re-examine the categories under which we sometimes examine women?

Here I would like to add *verbatim* Theresa Earenfight’s comments on the first draft of this section of my paper with which I am in agreement:

One of the points that came up in the roundtable at the Exceptionalism conference was that timelines are written by men. But both Joan Kelly and Julia Smith (I mention her comments in my essay) argue that we need to take charge of what we identify as points of change. It seems to me that this is what Penny’s driving at, but I think it also can go farther. For example, if we claim another timeline, it might be one that rejects politics and war (the latter is such a tedious way to mark historical moments) [and] follows history based on changes to marriage and inheritance laws, economic practices, literacy, expansion of Europe, and medical history.<sup>61</sup>

#### 4. Female and Male Power

My fourth point picks up on work by Amy Livingstone and Lois Huneycutt and others, who have asked the question: Is there just power—not male or female power? Yes. To some extent there is just power. However, I cannot help thinking about the problems Empresses Adelheid and Theophanu, in the late tenth century, and Empresses Kunigunde and Agnes, in the eleventh century, had with their dower

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59. “clarissimam dominam ac matrem regnorum.” Gerbert, *Epistolae (Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims)*, ed. F. Weigle, *MGH Briefe 2* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1966), Letter 128, near the end of July 988, p. 156.

60. “omnium . . . mater regnorum.” Ibid., Letter 74, p. 105.

61. Email from Professor Kathy Krause, 27 December 2015.

lands; lands that were given to them in very strong and firm language in the charters and the diplomata entirely for their use.<sup>62</sup> Then the emperors—their husbands, sons, or grandsons—seized the various properties, which were then allocated as though they were imperial lands.<sup>63</sup> This was particularly prevalent in Italy and Germany. In Ottonian and Salian Germany, the reverse dowry reverted to the wife’s husband or his heirs. Confusion over the reverse dowry and the *Morgengabe* (mentioned above) meant that those lands might be considered dower not *Morgengabe*, and consequently could be confiscated. Empress Adelheid’s landed property was subject to attack for those reasons. Not only was this an attack on her possessions, but it was also a direct threat to her power.<sup>64</sup> Consequently let us examine the theme of “male” and “female” power further. Does power differ between them? Do we sometimes create our own ideas about power by unintentionally applying different criteria and thereby examining men and women differently? Do we ask different questions and do we have different discussions in modern society when we interview women and when we interview men about how they define and exercise power and how they show leadership?

## 5. Language and Other Barriers

My fifth point concerns the language silos that still occur. Let’s break down the language barriers between countries. I want to highlight a matter raised by Professor Chris Wickham at a roundtable on Italian

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62. Penelope Nash, “Shifting Terrain—Italy and Germany Dancing in their own Tapestry,” *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 6 (2010): 62–67.

63. Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, 103; Maurizio Lupoi, *The Origins of the European Legal Order*, trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 98–101; Giulia Petracco Sicardi, “La formula salica di investitura nell’età matildica e i suoi antecedenti storici,” in *Convegno di studi matildici, Studi matildici: Atti e memorie del III Convegno di studi matildici, Reggio E., 7–8–9 ottobre 1977*, Biblioteca, Deputazione di storia patria per le antiche provincie modenesi, n.s., 44 (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1978), 259–60; Mathilde Uhlirz, “Die rechtliche Stellung der Kaiserinwitwe Adelheid im deutschen und im italischen Reich,” *Zeitschrift des Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung* 74 (1957): 94–96.

64. Nash, “Shifting Terrain,” 67–69.

history and historiography at the International Medieval Congress at Leeds in 2012. His concern was that many articles and books are highly oriented towards single language bibliographies, scarcely acknowledging the research undertaken in other languages. As a result, much work can be missed or conversely duplicated. Congresses and conferences, for example the IMC at Leeds and the Kings and Queens conferences, and other sessions that have been held at Kalamazoo and elsewhere are contributing to breaking down these barriers. However, I was particularly struck again by this issue when I attended the commemoration of the twelfth centenary of Charlemagne's death at Aachen in 2014, shortly after our Roundtable of 2014. The tribute produced some splendid books—a small erudite, well-illustrated pamphlet available in a number of languages and a hefty three-volume set of scholarly articles. Of the latter, one volume depicts and discusses in detail the art considered to be sponsored or influenced by the Charlemagne School of the late ninth/early tenth centuries.<sup>65</sup> Two volumes, subtitled *Place of Might*, contain the Catalogue and Essays.<sup>66</sup> The explanations, descriptions, and essays are in German in these volumes. Quite a wide variety of scholars from a number of countries have contributed, but the majority are German. The people I met there were surprised that a person from an English speaking country would go to the exhibition in Germany. My otherwise knowledgeable guide wondered why the French would be interested in Charlemagne. None of this is totally surprising, and integration and sharing of knowledge works all ways. Nevertheless this visit highlighted that communication among the world's babel of nations can be improved.

## Summary

So in summary:

1. Could women in the Early Middle Ages, in a “more disordered time” do better than their counterparts in the later Middle Ages, in

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65. Peter van den Brink and Sarvenaz Ayooghi, eds, *Karl der Grosse = Charlemagne: Karls Kunst* (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2014).

66. Frank Pohle, ed., *Karl der Grosse = Charlemagne: Orte der Macht; Essays* (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2014); Frank Pohle, *Karl der Grosse = Charlemagne: Orte der Macht; Katalog* (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2014).

a “more bureaucratic and ordered time” (the paradigm) OR is the paradigm wrong, and women’s exercise of power carried on much as before? Let’s nuance the paradigm to further our understanding of women’s opportunities in certain locations or periods or under certain conditions.

2. Let’s continue to expand the examination of the activities and opportunities of empresses and queens to other ruling women.
3. Let’s consider other prisms through which to examine women besides the life cycle.
4. Let’s examine the idea of “male” and “female” power further. Does power differ between men and women? Are we inventing our own ideas of power by inadvertently examining men and women differently?

Let’s break down the language barriers between countries, and consequently other barriers.

I’d be interested to know your thoughts.

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