Jitske Jasperse, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas,
Instituto de Historia, Madrid

Women, Courtly Display and Gifts in the *Rolandslied* and the *Chanson de Roland*¹

Abstract: Thus far it has gone unnoticed that the twelfth-century Middle High German *Rolandslied* has more to say about women than its famous French counterpart, the *Chanson de Roland*. In the former the female protagonists are not merely wives and widows, but also advisors, mediators, regents, and rulers. Moreover, these women are expressly connected to the display of wealth and to practices of gift-giving: as givers, receivers, and gifts. While acknowledging that this *chanson de geste* is a story about honor, lordship, and the triumph of Christianity, the analysis of women through the lens of gift-giving is a plea to open up the *Rolandslied* to different interpretations. This can contribute to our understanding of social practices and ideas about women, courtly display, and gifts in twelfth-century German society.

Introduction

We all wish for Duke Henry to be rewarded by God. The material is beautiful, the pious meaning is delivered by him. He had the book made known, which was written in France. This was wished for by the noble duchess, daughter of a mighty king. Radiant heavenly legions will escort them, after earthly burden, together with all the chosen children of God to a place where they will find eternal bliss. That they even considered having the story turned into German has heightened the honor of the empire. His exemplary conduct urged him to do so. Where lives a ruler today on whom ever was bestowed the same prosperity? He is faithful and fair.²

The epilogue which the cleric (*Pfaffe*) Konrad added to the epic about Roland, Charlemagne, and their fight against the Saracens is fascinating for those interested in medieval women because it mentions a “noble duchess, daughter of a mighty king,” who was partly responsible for the making of this text.³ She has been identified as Matilda, daughter of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and the *Rolandslied* has been considered as part of her cultural patronage.⁴ The epilogue also reveals the (idealized) process of creation to which giving and receiving were instrumental: Konrad received the book (*daz buoch*) with the French material from Duke Henry, to whom Matilda in all likelihood had presented it first. Since French was her mother tongue and the figure of Roland famous at the Plantagenet court, she is the ideal candidate to have suggested the translation of this text, which she thought would be appealing to her husband.⁵ After Konrad had obtained the French text he gave the ducal couple his German one. The connection between a man, a woman, and the gift of this book is only one example of the importance of giving and

receiving in the *Rolandslied*. Having ended the story of Roland and Charlemagne, Konrad's epilogue might be read as a final reflection on the relation between men, women, and gifts.

Yet given the strong presence of the conflict between Christians and pagans, it comes as no surprise that both the French and German text have foremost been studied from a religious perspective, with authors emphasizing that all characters and events are connected to the triumph of Christianity.⁶ Additionally, scholars have argued that Konrad's text underscores the crusaders' idea of *militia Dei*, a fitting theme for Henry the Lion.⁷ It has, however, gone unnoticed that the German text actually has more to say about women than its French counterpart.⁸ In the *Rolandslied* the female protagonists (the pagan Queen Brechmunda, the devout Alda, and Genelun's unnamed wife) are not merely wives and widows, but also advisors, mediators, regents, and rulers. They do not act—or are acted upon—in isolation, but against the setting of the Christian and pagan courts with their display of wealth, status, and power embodied by precious gifts, exotic animals, golden coins (bezants), beautiful garments, golden statues, and jewels. Throughout the narrative this representation of wealth, power, and identity is connected to gift-giving, which was not limited to the male actors but expressly included women as well, with both sexes participating as givers, receivers, and gifts. The epilogue, with its references to gift (the book) and counter-gift (another book, but perhaps also eternal bliss), suggests that the audience must have recognized this as an important theme, both in the story and in their own lives.

The members of the audience considered the *Rolandslied* as a *historia*, narrating a story about the past that also had meaning for the present with an audience believing in the historicity of the events.⁹ Often authors underscored the truthfulness of their histories, and so did Konrad, whose claim of veracity is stated at the beginning of the text, where he requests the aid of God to avoid lies and to write the truth about the noble Charlemagne who conquered many lands and enhanced the fame of the Christians, and by doing so earned a place in heaven.¹⁰ Konrad repeats, and therefore emphasizes, this claim in his epilogue, which, like his foreword, is not part of *Chanson de Roland*.¹¹ Konrad's presentation of himself and the way he handled the material thus fit with the intended audience's expectation of the story as true. He also engaged with his audience—which he does not specify as either male or female—by including matters related to the audience's own world, such as men's and women's interactions which could be questioned and debated.¹² As we will see, these interactions have a bearing on the overarching issue of the Christian-pagan dichotomy, while at the same time addressing more general concerns about power relations between men and women. Looking at the latter through the lens of the 'gift' illuminates how these relations were negotiated, and lays bare the anxieties related to the gift.¹³ While acknowledging that this *chanson de geste* is a story about honor, lordship, and the triumph of Christianity, my analysis of women and gift-giving is a plea to open up the *Rolandslied* to different interpretations relating to the audience's own experiences and expectations. This can contribute to our understanding of social practices and ideas about women and men in twelfth-century German society.

The Unnamed Woman: Giving a Son and Receiving Farmsteads and Treasures

The first female character we encounter is the intriguing unnamed woman. She is the sister of Charlemagne, the mother of Roland, the wife of Genelun, and the mother the latter's son, Baldwin. Because the unnamed woman links all of the protagonists together, she plays a vital role when compared to the other women, Brechmunda and Alda. Nevertheless, she has been largely ignored in scholarly literature, probably because she does not perform her part actively. This unnamed woman enters the stage in the *Rolandslied* when her husband Genelun addresses Roland with the words "your mother is my wife," after Genelun has been chosen—or rather forced—to act as an ambassador at the court of the pagan king, Marsilie. Genelun expresses his distrust to Roland:

Now it is evident that you [Roland] have always wanted to destroy me. Your mother is my wife. My son Baldwin should be like a brother to you. You have forgotten about loyalty [...].¹⁴

The passage cited not only informs the audience of the hostility between Genelun and Roland, but it is also instructive in revealing the family ties that exist among the story's main characters: Roland, Charlemagne, and Genelun. As Charlemagne's sister and Roland's mother, Genelun's unnamed wife serves as the connection between these men, and has a potential bonding value. To see Genelun's wife merely as the pivot of the remaining characters, as Matthias Meyer does, is, however, an oversimplified view.¹⁵ If this were the case, Konrad would have had no reason to return to the unnamed wife some sixty lines further down, when Genelun addresses Charlemagne in the hope of gaining his support against Roland:

Genelun fell on his knees before the emperor. "Lord," he said, "if only I could benefit from the fact that your sister is my wife. If I lose my life, Roland will seize all my belongings. He will disown your nephew. What can any woman do to prevent this? Little Baldwin will grow up without property. You will never see me again."¹⁶

Clearly, Genelun fears that his wife, Baldwin's mother, will not be able to prevent her older son, Roland, from capturing their estates, thereby leaving Baldwin disinherited. His plea is not inappropriate since ties between persons, for example established through marriage politics, suggest interdependence. Concomitantly this passage demonstrates that such relations were not stable and could be threatened from within. At this stage the importance of Genelun's wife as sister and mother is stressed. Although these roles contribute to her importance, her position is limited: as a woman unable to arm and defend herself she requires the action of men.

These passages from the *Rolandslied* present situations that would have been easily recognizable to the audience. Moving from one court to another, as Genelun was expected to do, was indeed a hazardous enterprise. Besides the risk of injury during the journey, there was also no certainty that the family and property left behind would truly remain safe. During a lord's absence, and in the event of his death, the heir's succession was less secure and the struggle over his lands was a genuine threat to the family's safety. What kind of means

a woman would have to prevent such a thing is not easy to determine. Recent studies on German and Iberian queens and aristocratic women from German and French speaking territories, however, demonstrate that (some) women were able to maintain the household and estates during their husbands' absence.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, the *Rolandslied* itself provides a clue to how women's positions as regents could be upheld. When Genelun addresses his 700 richly adorned and well-equipped men (*sīnen mannen*, RL 1670), before departing to the court of the pagan king, Marsilie, he states:

Now I bid you also, pay me a last honor. If I lose my life in the land of the pagans, tell my beloved wife to take care of my soul. Support her in upholding her honor. I entrust her with all my belongings. I leave her many large farmsteads and plenty of treasures.¹⁸

In this passage Genelun asks the men in his service to help support his wife's position. Equally evident is that he expects his wife to rule and, likewise, his vassals to look after his son who is later to rule over his land.¹⁹ The text thus suggests that his wife and vassals were supposed to cooperate. Owning property enabled the wife to act as a donor because to possess wealth meant being obliged to give, both to religious institutions and to family, friends and followers. Although his wife does not speak, she is given a voice through Genelun's references to her person and her rule.

The same cannot be said for her character in the French text, where she is only mentioned as wife and mother but not as a regent or ruler.²⁰ It is the son, Baldwin, who is the heir to his father's lands and fiefs rather than Ganelon's wife. Nor is she expected to look after Baldwin, for Ganelon requests that the emperor takes care of his son:

"I am well aware that I must go to Saragossa. Any man who goes there cannot return. Above all, don't forget I am married to your sister, and that she gave me a son Baldwin, the fairest that ever was," he said, "who will be a man of honor. To him I leave my lands and my fiefs. Take good care of him, I'll not set eyes on him again."²¹

Ganelon's petition that Charlemagne be entrusted with Baldwin's care can likely be interpreted not only as a reference to the education and tutelage of Ganelon's son, but also implies the safekeeping of his lands and fiefs. Nowhere in the French text is Baldwin's mother mentioned as a regent who is responsible for her son's upbringing or eligible for territorial rule. This is also evident when looking at the episode in which Ganelon briefly instructs his knights to return to France in order to greet his wife, his friend and peer, Pinabel, and his son Baldwin. The knights are to assist only his son by being his vassals.²² In the French text, Ganelon's wife is therefore above all the mother of his son and heir, whereas Charlemagne is presented as the *pater familias* and, as one of the protagonists in the *Chanson*, is credited with caring for all of the members of his family in a fair and equal manner. The code of honor so explicitly formulated in the *Chanson* also concerns loyalty to one's kin, and this is exactly what is referred to when Ganelon asks his vassals and companions in arms to serve his son as well.²³

This difference in the role played by the unnamed woman in both texts cannot easily be explained, although it might have to do with medieval laws concerning women's wardship and inheritance. The *Saxon Mirror* (*Sachsenspiegel*, ca. 1220) by Eike von Repgow, which

was possibly based on earlier (oral) law codes, provides several examples of women who according to feudal law (*Lehnrecht*) held fiefs, albeit via the husbands who would have given them the enfeoffed land in order to support themselves.²⁴ According to customary law of the region (*Landrecht*), however, Genelun was supposed to assign wardship to his closest male kin, i.e., Roland, as he was the son of the unnamed wife and Baldwin's brother. In the end, however, his immense hatred for Roland precluded such a move. Similarly, Genelun expected little from Charlemagne, who had taken Roland's side before. In a sense, he was left with no other option but to rely upon his wife and vassals. The Anglo-Norman situation seems to have been somewhat different, at least on parchment. Noël James Menuge concludes from the *Très ancien coutumier* (1200–1245) that Anglo-Norman women were considered unfit to be wards, because they would surely remarry, and as a result, deny the children from their first marriage their rights. It was equally unwise to permit a child's kinsmen to be wards, since "thirsting for his heritage, they destroy him." Only the lord to whom the dead father paid homage was able to act on this child's behalf.²⁵ From this perspective, it would be logical to view Charlemagne as the ward to whom Ganelon's son was entrusted, even if the former is not yet dead. The vassals played no role, possibly because they were considered potential usurpers. That no mention is made of the unnamed wife when Baldwin's possessions are discussed in the *Chanson de Roland* could perhaps be seen as proof that she played no actual role in these agreements and had no choice but to accept what was decided. Sue Sheridan Walker concluded that, following the death of a husband, women usually accepted the fact that their feudal lands and their eldest son were held in wardship by (several) lords.²⁶ One must bear in mind, however, that the actual position of women was not always in concurrence with existing law.²⁷

Returning to the German text we encounter Genelun's final request to his men, and here again he refers to his wife when her orders his men to bring her a ring and to remind her of her religious responsibilities.

"[...] Bring her this ring. If God permits, I will return to her with great joy. And remind her constantly, because of her virtue, to have religious people pray for me, that I may return. Oh, I will never see her again."²⁸

Genelun's request to bring *ditze vingelin* (this ring) to his wife has not been taken into account by scholars. Nevertheless, this tiny object, which is absent from the French text, is fascinating.²⁹ Its meaning can be established in several ways. The audience might have interpreted the ring as the one item that confirms for the unnamed wife that the message was indeed sent by her husband, as she will recognize it as his. In this manner, the ring is a token of Genelun's identity. Perhaps giving it to her also constitutes the transferal of his authority to her. Bestowing authority on someone was frequently signaled by investing that person with insignia. The scepter, like the crown and ring, was invested on the king during the *sacre* and coronation. His wife received the ring of faith as the sign of the Holy Trinity against all heretics and barbarians.³⁰ During the rule of the Hohenstaufen regalities were transferred from the king to his vassal by presenting the latter with the sword, while lands were enfeoffed by investing the banner upon the vassal.³¹

Since the ring was also a symbol of the everlasting bond between a husband and wife, Genelun's act can be seen as repeating the ritual of the ring's conferral during the wedding ceremony. The importance of the ring was emphasized by medieval theologians. According to Bishop Ivo of Chartres (r. 1090–d. 1115/1116), a wedding ring was one of the components of a legitimate marriage.³² Half a century later, Rolandus of Bologna viewed the ring as a symbol of the eternal faithfulness between husband and wife because of its unbroken shape.³³ For the audience, which was accustomed to rituals and the objects associated with them, the ring's multiple meanings probably underscored the significance of this small but personal gift. That Konrad reminds his audience several times that Genelun is convinced he will never return, and that he points out that his son will be an orphan and his wife a widow, only added to the dramatic meaning of the ring.³⁴

At the same time Genelun expresses his hope to "return to her with great joy." These words follow directly after he commands his vassals to bring his wife the ring. The ring may therefore also be viewed as an object that can restore the bond between a husband and wife if Genelun is indeed so fortunate to return. To be sure, he departs safely but only to be put to death in reprisal for his treason; never to see his wife again.³⁵ Whether seen as an object revealing the messenger's identity or as a token of the everlasting bond between a husband and wife, the ring is the most personal possession the unnamed wife has of Genelun after his death. It therefore serves as a perpetual reminder of her husband. Accordingly, Genelun's ring is ultimately an object bestowed in fear in order not to be forgotten by his wife and son. To the wife, the ring would be a precious memento of her loving husband and her child's father, whose fame should be remembered. As means to this end religious people were also to pray for him and perhaps the ring was meant as a gift to the religious community in exchange for prayers and masses. Medieval charters, cartularies, and inventories from the High Middle Ages show that donations *pro memoria* were very common and that luxury items, such as textiles, ivory boxes and metalwork, were often among them.

The twelfth-century audience of the *Rolandslied* may have thought of the ring in a similar manner, but it is also possible that this highly symbolic object was regarded as a negative reminder that Genelun's departure from Charlemagne's court ultimately resulted in Roland's death. My analysis of the giving of the ring shows that gifts and gift-giving could be open to many interpretations. Whatever the audience's response might have been, the fear of being forgotten and the efforts taken to prevent its occurring are found nowhere in the French text.

The *Rolandslied* thus offered to the unnamed woman the suggestion of more leeway to act than its French counterpart. Perhaps the writer Konrad regarded this as a logical consequence of Genelun's troubled relation with Roland and Charlemagne. Or maybe he wished to posit the unnamed women in this way in order to add drama to the narrative or generate an extra narrative; stressing her position and her possible future underscores that family relations were far from unproblematic and demonstrates the negotiation of power between men. It is also possible, however, that Konrad considered Genelun's wife a suitable ward because, in reality, women acted as regents for their sons and absent husbands.³⁶

Women were to a great extent able to do so because they had presented their husbands with the greatest gift of all: a child, and preferably a son like Baldwin. Nonetheless it is evident that the unnamed woman was expected to behave according to male normative patterns, which is also exemplified by the gift of the ring. This object was explicitly connected to the counter-gift of commemoration, suggesting that women played a crucial part in this as well. That jewelry is not only a meaningful gift to a woman, but also when given by a woman, will become evident when turning to the pagan Queen Brechmunda.

Queen Brechmunda: Presenting Jewelry and a Body

The first time the audience encounters Brechmunda in the *Rolandslied* is when Genelun is rewarded for instructing Marsilie as to when and by which means Roland's army should be attacked. Out of gratitude for Genelun's support, King Marsilie offers him a kiss on the mouth, probably a reference to the ritual of vassalage, and endows him with precious objects: expensive decorated circlets, bowls, a chalice adorned with gemstones, many costly utensils, precious cloth, byssus and imperial purple, a cover studded with gold, an ermine mantle with sable trimming and glittering gemstones, perfect horses, hounds, camels, mules, and sumpters, all heavily loaded with gifts.³⁷ The king clearly displays his wealth, status, and power; in a way similar to Charlemagne. Next, the king's vassal Valdebrun presents Genelun with a sword, while the other vassal Oliboris gives him a helmet. Their donations are explicitly masculine and are accompanied by a straightforward message, namely that Genelun will bring them Roland.³⁸ Neither of the two men kiss Genelun. After this, Brechmunda comes forward and addresses Genelun:

Brechmunda stood up. She kissed him, gave him a piece of jewelry and spoke: "Bring this to your wife. Charlemagne is a powerful king, but he never owned such a piece. Nor was there ever made a similar piece on earth. I will show you my friendship. Try to bring me Roland. If I could kill him with my own hands, I would give people and land for it."³⁹

In the *Chanson de Roland*, Bramimonde is also introduced after Marsile, Valdabrun, and Climborim have presented their gifts. Here, too, Marsile kisses Ganelon (on the neck), but contrary to what happens in the *Rolandslied*, Valdabrun and Ganelon exchange kisses with Ganelon.⁴⁰ Subsequently, Queen Bramimonde comes forward and says: "I care very much for you sir."⁴¹ She then presents two brooches to Ganelon for his wife, but she does not kiss him. Thus in both texts, Brechmunda/Bramimonde offers a gift to Genelun/Ganelon, but it is only in the *Rolandslied* that she offers him a kiss (it is unclear whether this is on the mouth or cheek). In what way are all of these kisses, and especially that of Brechmunda, to be interpreted?

The kiss was a meaningful gesture to the medieval audience, because this non-verbal act was an important part of medieval public ritual.⁴² But like many gestures, the kiss was ambiguous and therefore difficult to interpret, if only because some people made a distinction among various kinds of kisses.⁴³ Of course, the context in which the kisses were

exchanged contributed to its meaning and provides us with some idea about its degree of appropriateness.⁴⁴ While the episode where Genelun receives Marsilie's kiss on the mouth does not entail the entire ritual of vassalage, this kiss does seem to reflect the ceremony of homage and fealty (*oscolum feodale*). It could also very well have been a kiss of friendship (*amicitia*) as part of a treaty.⁴⁵ The kiss is the first part of the ratification of their agreement that Genelun will betray Roland—this Genelun swears he will do. The second part consists of gift-giving, which might be considered as a definitive action that seals their deal.⁴⁶ The same help is requested, or maybe even reinforced, by Valdebrun and Oliboris and is ensured by Genelun as well. Although the kisses of Valdebrun and Oliboris are absent from the *Rolandslied*, it is evident that the gifts these two men present to Genelun are also meant to conclude the pact. Not only does he accept the gifts as a token that the deal was indeed secured, but he also expresses his alliance by saying “You’ve won me over forever” and “I’ll bring you Roland.”⁴⁷

The kisses suggest equality among the men, because even though the Saracens took the initiative, each performed virtually the same physical act reciprocally.⁴⁸ In the story of Roland, however, such reciprocity does not necessarily mean that these kisses are to be viewed in a positive light. After all, such an act also bears strong connotations with betrayal. Not without reason, Genelun is described as a disloyal duke.⁴⁹ He does not betray the one he kisses, and yet, his kiss still resembles that of Judas. While kisses exchanged between men in a relationship of fealty were normal, one may question how appropriate it was for Brechmunda to give a kiss and present as it occurs in the *Rolandslied*.

While Michael Camille posited that women did not engage in this ritual because it was considered indecent, Jacques Le Goff was not convinced that this had anything to do with the exclusion of women from the kiss. Women were allowed to participate in the ritual of homage that signified the inequality between lord and vassal, but were excluded from the bond of fealty symbolized by the kiss because it marked the phase of equality between the partners. As women were not considered equals due to their sex, they could not take part in the ritual kiss.⁵⁰ Le Goff adds that, in reality, this rule was probably not followed strictly, particularly when women in possession of royal authority were involved. Brechmunda might also have been such an exception. This would fit her character, as she acts as an independent and active participant who is capable of performing political duties in all of the passages in the *Rolandslied*.

The audience's view of Brechmunda's kiss as appropriate or inappropriate partly depended on whether they interpreted the act as following that of her husband's or as an act taken without her husband's consent. Given the overall theme of the story, it is very likely that they viewed the kiss within the Christian-Saracen dichotomy; the kiss as a gesture (and gift) demonstrating that Brechmunda transgressed “the bound of traditional femininity, reflecting failure of their [Christianity's] parent religion to inculcate proper gender roles.”⁵¹ In addition, the audience's reading was also likely to be affected by the fact that Brechmunda's kiss went hand in hand with the gift that she had just presented to Genelun as a token of their friendship and their agreement to destroy Roland. Nor can we ignore that Genelun's betrayal meant that he supported the Saracens. Regardless of the exact (emotional)

response triggered by the gift of the kiss and metalworks, they provide some indication that a queen, like Brechmunda, could be actively involved in the political affairs of their husbands. How we are to interpret the jewelry, which Brechmunda presents to Genelun as gift to his wife in return for Roland, who the queen considers to be booty?

Although the object is unspecified (*ain gesmide*), it is described as of great material value and of high quality. It coincides with the sort of objects her husband donated, yet is distinct from the knightly and war related objects (sword and helmet) presented by Valdebrun and Oliboris. Brechmunda's gift is one that befits her high status, but is also gendered in the sense that it is a gift from woman to a woman, namely Genelun's wife. As gift-giving was often reciprocal, the main reason for such a gesture was that it would not only implicate Genelun in the scheme of killing Roland, but likewise the rest of his family. In return for the personal and material support given to Genelun, he needs to give the Saracens a victory by defeating Roland. The gifts made the alliance stronger and served as tangible reminders of the deal to Genelun and his wife.

This episode of Brechmunda's gift-giving differs slightly from that in the *Chanson de Roland*. Here Bramimonde tells Ganelon that "Because my lord and all his men hold you in high esteem I will send two brooches to your wife. They are wrought with much gold, amethysts, and jacinth. And are worth more than all the riches of Rome. Your Emperor never had such fine ones."⁵² Unlike the more independent and active Brechmunda, the French Bramimonde is foremost a mediator acting on behalf of her husband and trusting his judgment that Ganelon will prove to be a reliable ally, with no explicit mention of her expectation that Ganelon should bring Roland to her.⁵³ His acceptance of the gift is stated explicitly; as the author tells us that he takes the brooches and sticks them in his boot. The affirmation and subsequent concealing of the jewellery is not described in the *Rolandslied*, but the same emphasis is placed on their unique and costly nature. Here as well, Charlemagne has never owned such fine specimens.

On a practical level the bestowal of gifts tells us something about the strategies deployed by women and men to construct alliances.⁵⁴ On a moral level the episodes on gift-giving convey how complicated this process could be: when does a gift qualify as bribe, which power relations are expressed, do counter-gifts need to be presented at all times, how does gift-giving affect power relations, do you just present a gift or is your 'self' part of it? While each gift contains a piece of the donor (his/her intention, the thought of him/her), Brechmunda—like Bramimonde—would in the end offer herself completely. Given the queen's skeptical attitude toward her own faith throughout the story, the audience probably anticipated the presentation of her body to Charlemagne and her soul to God to be discussed next.

After Baligant and his men are defeated by Charlemagne and Marsilie is dead, Charlemagne arrives at the city of Saragossa, whereupon the pagan queen in both texts gives up her superior position on the tower and opens the gates for the emperor. In the German story Brechmunda falls on her knees before him and addresses Charlemagne explicitly by confessing that she has been following the wrong gods, but now has the opportunity to change to the true faith, which indicates that she wishes to be baptized.⁵⁵ The importance of

this moment was also emphasized in a pen-and-ink drawing: before the gates the kneeling queen awaits Charlemagne and his men.⁵⁶ Although Brechmunda clearly submits herself to a powerful man, she has not lost her voice. In the French story, however, Bramimonde is silenced immediately because she is carried off to France as a captive (*caitive*).⁵⁷ Granted that this word was not used in the German text, the German “fuorten” can be interpreted “to be carried,” which suggests an action on the part of Charlemagne.⁵⁸ Brechmunda’s / Bramimonde’s body was thus appropriated as booty taken back to France, embodying the Saracen treasures so explicitly mentioned in the text.

The quietening of Bramimonde is further underscored by Charlemagne’s wish that the queen will convert out of devotion (and not out of fear). In addition, the queen’s voicelessness is evident by something that does not happen in the German version, namely giving her the name Juliana.⁵⁹ Only in the *Rolandslied* Brechmunda observes how Charlemagne mourns extensively over his dead men. As a consolation, the queen turns to the emperor and tells him that according to her new Christian faith his men died for the truth, and for this reason, they will live eternally. Referring to Charlemagne’s own words, she states that it is not the righteous, but rather the ungodly that should be lamented because their death is irrevocable.⁶⁰ It is too easy to attribute her prudence only to her conversion because throughout the story she is portrayed as a queen speaking her mind (and being rebuked for doing so).

Despite the fact that Brechmunda—opposed to Bramimonde—retains her active voice, the physical submission of her body and the spiritual surrender through baptism do silence her. In order to survive, the Saracen Brechmunda, subjugated by the Christian army, adapts herself according to Christian standards established by men.⁶¹ To the audience Brechmunda’s submission was no surprise as it signaled the triumph of Christianity, the grand narrative of the story. Her body had to be surrendered and transformed from Saracen to Christian to bring the epic to an end. Brechmunda thus allows us to see how the medieval German audience may have thought about women’s bodies: while they are to be possessed (by fathers, husbands, and the church) and transformed (through age, marital status and conversion), women also tried to maintain the margin to act (by way of speech, motherhood, and conversion). We will see that even the quiet maiden Alda has a voice of her own because she does not accept being given away.

Young Alda: Giving-while-Keeping

Alda (Aude in French), Roland’s fiancée mentioned twice by her brother Olivier, appears in person to claim her husband after Charlemagne has returned to Aachen.⁶² In their studies of the *Chanson de Roland*, Ann Harrison and Mohja Kahf view Aude as “confined, subordinate, and supportive,” not having any direct impact on the story’s main theme of Christian supremacy over the pagans.⁶³ Sharon Kinoshita, however, argues that contrasting this quiet Christian woman with the loud pagan Queen Bramimonde helps to underscore the central idea that pagans are wrong and Christians are right.⁶⁴ Besides being “a completely inert

figure whose only action is to die and whose only speech is to cancel her existence,” or being the pendant of Bramimonde/Brechmunda, considering Alda in relation to the gift suggests that the audience might have appreciated her and the men she engages with differently.⁶⁵

During the imperial diet at Aachen Alda asks Charlemagne where Roland is, and the emperor replies that she will never see him again because he is dead and buried. As a substitute (*irgetze*) the emperor proposes that he will give (*gibe*) Alda to his son Louis so that she will be queen over all of France.⁶⁶ Here we encounter an example of a woman that had value as an object to be “passed around much like a piece of property.”⁶⁷ Based on the ideas of Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist Gayle Rubin has put forward that women in “primitive” societies can be viewed as gifts who are exchanged at marriage.⁶⁸ Examining the words used in the *Rolandslied* and *Chanson de Roland* from this perspective, Alda might be viewed a body that is handed over by the emperor and taken by his son who is the substitute for another body, namely that of Roland. Interestingly, the French text offers a slightly different picture because Charlemagne says “I shall give you a very powerful individual in exchange, I mean Louis, I don’t know what more I can say, he is my son and he will rule my marches.”⁶⁹ Here, not Alda is given to Louis, who is the exchange for Roland, but he to her. Thinking along the lines of women as gifts, this passage nuances the idea that only women were gifts, which is underscored further when Charlemagne says that Alda “cannot have him [Roland] anymore,” turning the dead hero into a gift presented to and held by Alda.⁷⁰ Roland and Louis seem to have been as much part of Charlemagne’s marriage politics as Alda, showing that in a courtly society both sons and daughters were pawns on the political chess board, even though they were expected to fulfil different roles.

In both the German and French text Charlemagne’s proposal fails to sway Alda/Aude, as she will have no other marriage. The *Rolandslied* devotes space to Alda’s prayer to Christ in which she expresses the wish to remain a virgin and longs to die. Although in the *Chanson de Roland* Aude also hopes to die, it is a remark not a prayer and no connection to chastity is made.⁷¹ After this she turns pale, falls into Charlemagne’s arms, dies and is buried at a nunnery.⁷² In both cases Alda/Aude may be seen as a model of the chaste woman, perhaps even stronger so in the somewhat more dramatic *Rolandslied*. By refusing to be presented to Louis, Alda’s life was instead given to God in order to keep her chastity. As such, her death resembles that of many virgin martyrs who likewise rejected the husbands chosen for them by their fathers. This giving-while-keeping was virtually unobtainable, as well as debated, yet by being abstinent women could still aspire to achieve spiritual virginity.⁷³ Alda/Aude thus was able to leverage ‘widowhood’ to stay chaste. This is an example of a woman in a *chanson de geste* who is brave enough to say no to the emperor and does not let men take control over decision making, despite the fact that this means death.⁷⁴ Alda/Aude can only be free by refusing a position as a pawn in Charlemagne’s household. In his analysis of Brother Hermann’s *Life of Countess Yolanda of Vianden* Richard H. Lawson has remarked that the freedom sought after by women such as Yolanda and Alda/Aude can be debated as it remains to be seen how free or independent one really is in religious communities.⁷⁵

While this certainly is true, both Yolanda and Alda strongly wish not to be part of the secular courtly society despite the different circumstances that lead to this shared desire.

The way Alda is represented in relation to men just before she dies reveals the thorny issues concerning (re)marriage, lineage and closeness to the emperor, themes that would have concerned medieval men and women. In both the German and French episodes concerning Alda/Aude, it is evident that her character, as Olivier's sister and Roland's fiancée, is the common link between the two men. Although largely a passive figure, Alda's role demonstrates the importance of women in establishing bonds between families.⁷⁶ Since women possessed a bonding value they were expected to remarry, especially when this meant they could rule as queen over all of France as is mentioned in the *Rolandslied* only.⁷⁷

It is possible that the twelfth-century audience, whether Anglo-Norman or German, was ambiguous about Alda's/Aude's rejection of Charlemagne's proposal. On the one hand, it emphasizes the young woman's love for the dead hero, which is further underscored by her death resulting from her immense grief. One could imagine that Alda's behavior was considered sympathetically as a romantic love, as the idealization of marriage, or as side-stepping male control. On the other hand, the majority of the men and women in the audience were married for political reasons. In their eyes a betrothal was a contractual agreement between two families. To reject such an offer by the emperor could very well have been considered as passing up an opportunity to marry an influential man, a topic that was debated in Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷⁸ This is especially true when we consider that Alda had no children and no brother to protect her and cooperate with her, and thus less status. This does not mean that women never refused such a marriage proposal; in fact, some may have refused to (re-)marry at all.⁷⁹ Yet it is highly likely that the family of a young woman such as Alda preferred seeing her at the side of a man of influence. It is feasible that the audience of the *Rolandslied* viewed Alda as a stubborn young woman, acting irrationally by refusing to marry, especially with her brother being dead as well. Viewed from this perspective Alda's body needed to be taken care of by a man: first by Charlemagne who had her and his own interests at heart, and then by the husband the king had selected for her. Although Alda's death prevented this, her body was looked after by nuns or monks who prayed for her.

Conclusion

My study of the *Rolandslied* has focused explicitly on the representation of the female protagonists and their interactions with their male counterparts by concentrating on gifts. The courtly display associated with gifts, and the complexities concerning gift-giving and gift exchange have given way to an analysis of women that goes beyond the Christian-pagan conflict and the notion that the only good woman is a silent one. When compared to the women in the *Chanson de Roland*, the unnamed wife, Brechmunda, and Alda were given more space to act in the *Rolandslied*. The gift of farmsteads, lands, and the ring signals the unnamed wife's regency, and her responsibility as loyal helpmate and preserver of memory.

The possible obstacles she could encounter—and which are hinted at when Genelun refers to his possessions—were recognizable to the audience because they were part of their lived experiences. The same argument can be made for the portrayal of family ties, conflicts of interest, and battles—whether near or far. While the unnamed woman does not actively engage with men, Brechmunda and Alda do so, both as gift-givers and as (potential) gifts. The two women tried to negotiate their place, arguing against the quieting or disenfranchising of women (even if not completely successful). We do not necessarily have to attribute these alterations in the depiction of female behavior to the ducal couple of whom Konrad spoke so highly in his epilogue, in order to appreciate that the text concerned itself with the realities with which medieval elite men and women had to deal. Female regency, women as political mediators, women refusing to re-marry, strategical political alliances, and noblemen who did not live up to medieval society's courtly expectations were familiar to the audience and there can be little doubt that they were debated and solutions were sought after. The perquisite of Konrad's text lies in the relative prominence of women, the display of wealth and the importance of the gift, which have provided an alternative angle for understanding this *chanson de geste* as a *historia* that also deals with day-to-day anxieties of elite man and women in the twelfth-century.

Calle Albasanz 26–28
28037 Madrid, Spain
jitske.jasperse@cchs.csic.es

Endnoten

- 1 I have greatly benefited from the stimulating comments Guy Geltner and Therese Martin provided on earlier versions of this article. I also would like to thank Huib Iserief, Alissa Theiß, and an anonymous reader from *Mediaevistik* for their support. The final version was written during my postdoctoral fellowship at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid (Juan de la Cierva-Formación, FJCI-2014–22406) within the framework of a National Excellence in Research Grant, 'The Medieval Treasury across Frontiers and Generations: The Kingdom of León-Castilla in the Context of Muslim-Christian Interchange, c. 1050–1200' (PI, Therese Martin, Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitivity, HAR2015-68614-P).
- 2 The English translations are my own, but I have consulted *Priest Konrad's Song of Roland*, trans. and intro. by J. W. Thomas (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994). *Nu wünschen wir alle geliche / dem herzogen Hainrîche / daz im got lône. / diu matteria, diu ist scoene. / die suëze wir von im haben. / daz buoch hiez er vor tragen, / gescriben ze den Karlingen. / des gerte diu edele herzoginne, / aines richen küniges barn. / mit den liechten himil wîzen scaren / nâch werltlichen arbeiten / werdent si gelaitet, / unter allen erwelten gotes kinden / dâ si die êwigen mandunge uinden. / daz si sîn ie gedâchten, / daz man ez für brâchte / in tiutische zungin gekêret, / da ist daz rîche wol mit gêret. / sîne tugente twungen in dar zuo. / wâ lebet dehain fûrste nû, / dem ie sô wol gescaeh? / der hêrre, der ist getriuwe unt gewaere. Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. and trans. by Dieter Kartschoke (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007 [1993]), 9019–9039, henceforth

- referred to as RL. For the citations from the *Chanson de Roland* (ChdR) I have used Gerard J. Brault, *La Chanson de Roland: Oxford Text and English Translation. Student Edition* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997 [1984]).
- 3 Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Palatinus Germanicus 112, 123 fols., 207 x 147 (174 x 120) mm. The *Rolandslied* has been preserved in two manuscripts (P and A) and five fragments (S, T, W, E, and M). P, A, and S appear to have been derived from the same source X, see Eberhard Nellmann, "Pfaffe Konrad," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 14 vols., ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1985), vol. 5, 117–118. For a more recent analysis on localization of the manuscripts and fragments (including M, which Nellmann did not know), see Barbara Gutfleisch-Ziche, "Zur Überlieferung des deutschen 'Rolandsliedes'. Datierung und Lokalisierung der Handschriften nach ihren paläographischen und schreibsprachlichen Eigenschaften," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 125, no. 2 (1996): 142–186. According to most scholars, the text was commissioned around 1172, although a date after 1182 has also been suggested. See Dieter Kartschoke, *Die Datierung des deutschen Rolandsliedes* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965), 39–40; Patrick Geary, "Songs of Roland in Twelfth-Century Germany," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 105, no. 2 (1976): 112–115, at 112; Nellmann, "Pfaffe Konrad," 119; Marianne Derron, "Heinrich der Löwe als reuiger Büsser und Realpolitiker. Die Bedeutung der Psalmen im *Rolandslied* und eine neue These zu dessen Entstehung," *Germanistik in der Schweiz. Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen akademischen Gesellschaft für Germanistik* 7 (2010): 1–26, at 24–25.
 - 4 Rita Lejeune and Jacques Stiennon, *La légende de Roland dans l'art du Moyen Âge*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Arcade, 1966), 36; Geary, "Songs of Roland" (see note 3), 112; Karl Ernst Geith, "Karlsdichtung im Umkreis des Welfischen Hofes," in *Die Welfen und ihr Braunschweiger Hof im hohen Mittelalter*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 337–346, at 338.
 - 5 Matilda's exact involvement in the transformation of the text remains unclear, but we can consider her a maker, a term signaling that we do not know her exact contribution to the (art) work, while at the same time acknowledging that she was involved. See Therese Martin, "The Margin to Act: A Framework of Investigation for Women's (and Men's) Medieval Art-Making," *'Me fecit'. Making Medieval Art (History)*, ed. T. Martin, special issue, *Journal of Medieval History* 42, no. 1 (2016): 1–25, at 5–6. Women participated in the making and promulgation of medieval German literature long before the twelfth century. For their role as benefactors, see John M. Jeep, "The Roles of Women in Old High German Literature," *Mediaevistik* 14 (2001): 95–123, esp. 98–99 and 103. For their role as writers, see the recent publication by Albrecht Classen, *Reading Medieval European Women Writers: Strong Literary Witnesses from the Past* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016). Joachim Bumke's work on literary patronage is still a treasure trove for those interested in women's contributions to medieval literature, see especially "Die Rolle der Frau im höfischen Literaturbetrieb," in *Mäzene im Mittelalter. Die Gönner und Auftraggeber der Höfischen Literatur in Deutschland, 1150–1300* (Munich: Beck, 1979), 231–247 (which was reprinted in 1982 in Joachim Bumke, ed., *Literarisches Mäzenatentum. Ausgewählte Forschungen zur Rolle des Gönners und Auftraggebers in der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 371–404).
 - 6 This has been strongly argued by Stephen G. Nichols in his analysis of the *Chanson de Roland*, see Stephen G. Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, Publishers, 2011), 167–229; and Walter Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: The German Tradition, 800–1300, in its European Context*, trans. Joanna M. Catling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75–80. This book originally appeared as *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts, eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992).

- [1985]). Kathleen Harris, "Das Problem der Spiegelbildlichkeit im Rolandslied," *Neophilologus* 48 (1964): 305–311; Danielle Buschinger, "L'image de musulman dans le Rolandslied," *Images et signes de l'Orient dans l'Occident médiéval* (Marseille: CUER MA, 1982), 59–73; Ricarda Bauschke, "Der Umgang mit dem Islam als Verfahren christlicher Sinnstiftung in Chanson de Roland / Rolandslied und Aliscans / Willehalm in Das Potenzial des Epos," in *Die altfranzösische Chanson de geste im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Susanne Friede and Dorothea Kullmann (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag: 2012), 191–216; Stephanie Seidl, "Narrative Ungleichheiten. Heiden und Christen, Helden und Heilige in der Chanson de Roland und im Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 39 (2009): 46–64.
- 7 Nellmann, "Pfaffe Konrad" (see note 3), 124–126; Ernst Ulrich, "Kollektive Aggression in der Chanson de Roland und im Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad. Die Idee des Gottesfriedens als Legitimationsmodell für Reconquista und welfische Expansionspolitik," *Euphorion. Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 82 (1988): 211–225.
 - 8 The more prominent representation of women in the *Rolandslied* also stands out when compared to other Songs of Roland in the French corpus. See for this corpus Joseph J. Duggan, gen. ed., *La Chanson de Roland: The French corpus*, 3 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). The presence of female protagonists in Hartmann van Aue's *Erec* and in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* is also more pronounced than in their Old French sources, see Albrecht Classen, *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literatures: New Approaches to German and European Women Writers and to Violence Against Women in Premodern Times* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 31. Chapter two gives a detailed analysis of the women in these German texts.
 - 9 According to Joseph A. Duggan "the poets' pretense is that they are narrating historical events." "Medieval Epic and History in the Romance Literatures," in *Ancient World: Comparative Histories: Epic and History (1)*, 280–291, at 288; Fritz Peter Knapp, "Historicity and Fictionality in Medieval Narrative," in *True Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts*, ed. Anders Culhed and Lena Rydholm (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 179–187 at 184; and D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. 1–17. Although Green is mainly occupied with a definition of fictionality, he also presents ancient and medieval ideas on history dealing with facts and the dangers of fiction.
 - 10 *daz ich die lüge verimide, die wârheit scribe* ("that I avoid lies, write the truth,"), RL 7–8. In *Priest Konrad's Song* it is translated as "that I may be free from error and write only the truth" (see note 2), 17. For the topic of author's names and trustworthiness of sources, see Kevin Brownlee, Tony Hunt, Ian Johnson, Nigel F. Palmer and James Simpson, "Vernacular literary consciousness c. 1100–c. 1500: French, German and English evidence," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2 *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 422–471.
 - 11 *Ob iu daz liet geval, / sô gedenket ir mîn all. / ich haize der phaffe Chunrât. / alsô ez an dem buoche gescribin stât / in franzischer zungen, / sô han ich ez in die latine bedwungen, / danne in di tiutische gekêret. / ich nehân der nicht an gemêret, / ich nehân dir nicht überhaben.* (If you like this poem, all of you remember me. I am the cleric Conrad. Just as it was written in the book in French I cast it into Latin and then turned it into German. I have not added to it, nor have I omitted anything.), RL 9080–9085. Translation partly from Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory* (see note 6), 77.
 - 12 Roberta L. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 39; Sarah Kay, *The Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See also Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory (trans. Elizabeth Benzinger)," *New*

- Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1970): 7–37, at 31–32. The interaction between men and women, both in the texts and in the audience, is also an important issue in Classen, *The Power of a Woman's Voice* (see note 8), 9, 26.
- 13 The literature on gifts and gift-giving is vast, see for an overview of the impact of anthropological and social theories on the historical analysis of medieval gift-giving to monasteries and churches, Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach," in *Medieval Transformations: Text, Power and Gifts in Context*, ed. Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 123–156. For more object oriented research and 'courtly' gifts, see William C. McDonald, "'Too Softly a Gift of Treasure': A Rereading of the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*," *Euphorion. Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 78 (1984): 1–16; Brigitte Buettner, "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 4 (2001): 598–625; Mariah Proctor-Tiffany "Transported as a Rare Object of Distinction: The Gift-Giving of Clémence of Hungary, Queen of France," *Journal of Medieval History* 41, no. 2 (2015): 208–228; Sybille Schröder, *Macht und Gabe. Materielle Kultur am Hof Heinrichs II. von England* (Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, 2004). For a discussion of the interpretation of gift-giving and gift exchange, see Janet Nelson, "Introduction," in *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–17; Philippe Buc, "Conversion of Objects," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 28 (1997): 99–143; Karl Leyser, "Frederick Barbarossa, Henry II and the Hand of St James," *The English Historical Review* 90, no. 356 (1975): 481–506. For a recent and thought provoking analysis of gift-giving, see Olli Pyyhtinen, *The Gift and its Paradoxes: Beyond Mauss*. Series: Classical and Contemporary Social Theory (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). His study engages with the philosophical idea of the gift, which among others involves the aspect of sacrifice (instead of exchange), the given thing (object) constituted by and constitutive of relations, the parasite who engages in unequal exchange, and the 'gendered' gift.
 - 14 *nû ist ez aller êrist her ûz erbluot, / daz dû mir ie riete an den lib. / dîn muoter ist mîn wîb. / mîn sun Baldewîn / scholde dîn bruoder sîn. / vergezzen hâst dû der triuwen.* RL 1391–1396.
 - 15 Matthias Meyer, "Monologische und dialogische Männlichkeit in Rolandsliedversionen," in *Aventiuren des Geschlechts. Modelle von Männlichkeit in der Literatur des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Martin Baisch, Hendrikje Haufe, Michael Mecklenburg et al. (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2003), 25–44, at 39.
 - 16 *Genelûn viel deme kaiser ze vûezen : / 'hêrre', sprach er, 'mâchte ich noch geniezen, / dîn swester ist mîn wîb. / unde verluse ich den lib, / sô nîmt Ruolant / al mîne erbe zuo sîner hant. / er verstoezet dîner swester sun. / waz mâchte ein wîb wider ime getuon? / sô muoz der lûzzele Baldewîn / iemer mêre weise sîn, / dû ne gesehes mich niemer mêre.' RL 1442–1452.*
 - 17 For Germany, see Bettina Elpers, *Regieren, Erziehen, Bewahren. Mütterliche Regentschaften im Hochmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003); Amalie Föbel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich. Herrschaftsausübung, Herrschaftsrechte, Handlungsspielräume* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000). For France see Theodore Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Kimberly A. LoPrete, "The Domain of Lordly Women in France, ca. 1050–1250," *Journal of the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship* 44 (2008): 13–35. For Iberia, see Theresa M. Vann ed., *Queens, Regents and Potentates*. Series: *Women of Power I* (Dallas: Academia, 1995); Theresa Earenfight, "Preface: Partners in politics," in *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, ed. Theresa Earenfight (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), xiii–xxviii, at xv–xvi; Therese Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

- 18 Nû bitte ich iuch ouh mære, / volstaetiget iuwer ère. / ob ich dâ ze den heiden belibe, / minem lieben wibe / bevelhet mine sêle. / râtet ire ir ère. / alles guotes wil ich ir wole getrûwen. / jâ lâze ich ire wole erbûwen / manige breite huobe, / scazzes gnuoge. RL 1710–1719.
- 19 RL 1694–1709 where Genelun requests his vassals to protect his son.
- 20 *Ensurbet si ai jo vostre soer, / Sin ai un filz, ja plus bels n'en estoet*, (Above all, don't forget I am married to your sister, and that she gave me a son, the fairest that ever was), ChdR 312–313; *De meie part ma muiller saluëz* (Greet my wife for me), ChdR 361.
- 21 “*En Sarrauce sai ben qu'aler m'estoet, / Hom ki la vait repaier ne s'en poet. / Ensurbet si ai jo vostre soer, / Sin ai un filz, ja plus bels n'en estoet, / Ço est Baldewin, çò dit, “ki est prozdoem. / A lui lais jo mes honurs e mes fieus. / Guadez le ben, ja nel verrai des oilz.”* ChdR 310–316. Ganelon's farewell words in the *Chanson* also emphasize the importance of Baldwin, who is addressed specifically (I'll not set eyes on him again). However, in the *Rolandslied* Ganelon's first farewell seems to be addressed to Charlemagne's court in general (you will never see me again) and his second parting words lament his wife and son (I will never see them again).
- 22 ChdR 360–365.
- 23 John F. Benton, “The Court of Champagne as Literary Center,” in *Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France: John F. Benton*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 3–44. A reprint from *Speculum* 36 (1961): 551–591, at 161.
- 24 Mariella Rummel, *Die rechtliche Stellung der Frau im Sachsenspiegel-Landrecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1987), 128.
- 25 Noël James Menuge, “A Few Home Truths. The Medieval Mother as Guardian in Romance and Law,” in *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. Noël James Menuge (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), 77–103, at 82.
- 26 Sue Sheridan Walker, “Widow and Ward: The Feudal Law of Child Custody in Medieval England,” *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 3/4 (1976): 104–116. Judith A. Green points out that Charter of Liberties (*Leges Henrici Primi*, compiled ca. 1116–1118 at the instigation of King Henry I) granted the guardianship of under-age children to widows or next-of-kin, although after 1130 there seems to have been a strict application of the notion of wardship by the lord. See Judith A. Green, “Aristocratic Women in Early Twelfth-Century England,” in *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Charles Warren Hollister (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 59–82, at 62 and 66.
- 27 Susan Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 176.
- 28 “[...] bringet ire ditze vingerlîn. / ruochte es mîn trechtîn, / ich gesaehe si vile gerne. / unde manet si vile verre / durch ire tugentliche site, / daz si guote liute umbe mich bite / nâch dirre zwîvellichen widerkêre. / jâ ne gesehe ich si leider niemer mere.” RL 1720–1727. Kartschoke has translated ‘guote liute’ with ‘Klosterleute’ and Thomas chose “pious men,” *Priest Konrad's Song* (see note 2), 33. Instead I prefer the more neutral “pious people.”
- 29 For the meaning of rings in the Middle Ages and Renaissance based on an analysis of surviving specimens, see Sandra Hindman, *Take This Ring: Medieval and Renaissance Rings from the Griffin Collection* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).
- 30 Carra Ferguson O'Meara, *Monarchy and Consent: The Coronation Book of Charles V of France. British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B. VIII* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2001), 12 (coronation of king) and 158 (coronation of queen).
- 31 Jürgen Petersohn, “Über monarchische Insignien und ihre Funktion im mittelalterlichen Reich,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 266 (1998): 47–96, at 74–75.
- 32 James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 189. The other elements indicating a legitimate marriage were: a public exchange of vows, marriage gifts, and blessing by the priest.

- 33 Rudolf Weigand, "Liebe und Ehe bei den Dekretisten des 12. Jahrhunderts," in *Love and Marriage in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Willy van Hoecke and Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981), 41–58, at 50.
- 34 Genelun mentions his death in two earlier passages: RL 1392 and 1450.
- 35 She is mentioned when Genelun's clan tries to persuade Charlemagne to show mercy on Genelun out of honor for his sister, RL 8765–8766.
- 36 For female regency in Germany, see Elpers, *Regieren, Erziehen* (see note 17), 79–97, 199–200, 204, and 254–273; Jitske Jasperse, "A Coin Bearing Testimony to Duchess Matilda as *Consors Regni*," *Haskins Society Journal* 26 (2014): 169–190.
- 37 RL 2479 (*er kust in an den munt*) and RL 2490–2516 (gifts).
- 38 RL 2517–2542 (Valdebrun), RL 2543–2560 (Oliboris).
- 39 This translation deviates from that of Thomas in *Priest Konrad's Song* (see note 2) in several respects. Most importantly Thomas considers Brechmunda to be a man and the kiss to be given on the lips. *Vf stuont dô Brechmunde, / diu kust in [Genelun] dâ ze stunde. / si gab ime ain gesmide. / si sprach: 'nu bringez dînem wibe. / Karl ist ein kûnc rîche, / er ne gwan nie nehain samliche, / noch ne wart ûf der erde nie geworcht mêre. / ich hân dîn gerne minne. / kor mir Ruolanten gewinne. / scolt ich in toeten mit miner hant, / ich gaebe liut unt lant.'* RL 2569–2580.
- 40 *Quan l'ot Marsilie, si l'ad baiset el col* (Hearing this, Marsile kissed him on the neck), ChdR 601; *Puis se [Valdabrun and Ganelon] baisèrent es vis e es mentuns* (Then they kissed each other on the face and chin), ChdR, 626; and *Puis se [Climborim and Ganelon] baisèrent es buches e es vis* (Then they kissed each other on the mouth and face), ChdR 633.
- 41 "*Jo vos aim mult, sire*," ChdR 635.
- 42 Rebecca L. Slitt, "Acting Out Friendship. Signs and Gestures in Aristocratic Male Friendship in the Twelfth Century," *Haskins Society Journal* 21 (2010), 147–164.
- 43 Kissing is difficult to study due to the absence of formal recording or public observation. Moreover, the sources which mention kisses do not seem to reflect reality. See Willem Frijhoff, "The Kiss Sacred and Profane: Reflections on a Cross-cultural Confrontation," in *A Cultural History of Gesture, from Antiquity to the Present-day*, ed. Jan Bremer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 210–211; Michael Camille, "Gothic Signs and the Surplus: The Kiss on the Cathedral," *Yale French Studies. Special Issue: Contexts. Style and Value in Medieval Art and Literature* (1991): 151–170; J. A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 50.
- 44 Frijhoff, "The Kiss Sacred" (see note 43), 212 with an overview of the variables involved in kissing, such as the social sphere (public or private), age, gender and social status.
- 45 Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980 [1977]), 240 ff. For the general outlines of such a ceremony, see Burrow, *Gestures and Looks* (see note 43), 12. For the idea of friendship as part of a treaty, see Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers. Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [1990]), 71.
- 46 The investiture of the fief, symbolized by offering a material counter-gift, seals the vassalage. See Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture* (see note 45), 253.
- 47 *dû hâst mich iemer gwunnen*, RL 2538; and *ich gemache dir Ruolanten*, RL 2562.
- 48 Burrow, *Gestures and Looks* (see note 43), 32.
- 49 *ungetriuwe herzoge*, RL 2535.

- 50 Camille, "Gothic Signs and the Surplus" (see note 43), 161; Le Goff, *Time, Work* (see note 45), 261. He gives Dona Urraca (r. 1109–1126) as example. Therese Martin gives a detailed account of her rule and the way art and architecture functioned as dynastic propaganda, "The Art of a Reigning Queen as Dynastic Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain," *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1134–1171.
- 51 Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1999), 4. For women in *chansons de geste*, see also Kimberlee A. Campbell, "The *Chanson de Geste*, Woman to Woman," in *Echoes of the Epic: Studies in Honor of Gerard J. Brault*, ed. David P. Schenck and Mary Jane Schenk (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1998), 49–62 at 60; Kimberlee A. Campbell, "Fighting Back: A Survey of Patterns of Female Aggressiveness in the Old French *Chanson de Geste*," in *Charlemagne in the North: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Société Rencevals. Edinburgh 4th to 11th August 1991*, ed. Philipp E. Bennett, Anne Elizabeth Cobby, and Graham A. Runnalls (Edinburgh: Société Rencevals British Branch, 1993), 241–251. We find the claim that Christian women do not behave properly in Islamic literature, for example with Usama b. Munqidh (d. 1188) and Imād al-Dīn al-İşfahānī, Saladin's biographer (d. 1210), who considered Frankish women to have loose morals regarding sex and active participation in combat, see Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 374–394.
- 52 "Je vos aim mult, sire" dist ele al cunte / "Car mult vos prisent mi sire et tuit si hume. / A vostre femme enveierai dous nusches; / Bien i ad or, matices e jacunes, / Eles valent mielz que tut l'aveir de Rume. / Vostre emperere si bones n'en out unches." / Il les ad prises, en sa hoese les butet. ChdR 635–641.
- 53 Marsile asks Ganelon how he can kill Roland. Valdabrun requests Ganelon to help them in the matter of Knight Roland and Climborim wants Ganelon to show them how they may shame Roland. Bramimonde requests none of these things.
- 54 Sarah Kay, "La représentation de la féminité dans les chansons de geste," in *Charlemagne in the North: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Société Rencevals. Edinburgh 4th to 11th August 1991*, ed. Philipp E. Bennett, Anne Elizabeth Cobby and Graham A. Runnalls (Edinburgh: Société Rencevals British Branch, 1993), 223–240, at 225.
- 55 *dem kaiser viel si ze füezen: / 'ich wil', sprach si, 'richten unt büezen. / swâ ich mich versûmet hân, / ich hân ez unwizzent getân. / die tiuvel hât mich lange betrogen. / dû bist mir zetrôste komen, / ich erkenne wol dîne wârheit. / hilf dû mir zuo der christenheit. / ich geloube an mînen trechtîn. / swie dû gebiutest, sô wil ich sîn.* RL 8621–8630. (She fell on her knees before the emperor: "I want," she said, "do right and atone. Wherever I have sinned, I did so out of ignorance. The devil has long deceived me. You have come to my rescue. I take on your true faith. Help me become a Christian, I want to believe in my God. I will follow your command.").
- 56 Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Palatinus Germanicus 112, fol. 117r.
- 57 *Baptizet sunt asez plus de .C. milie / Veir chrestien, ne mais sul la reïne: / En France dulce iert menee caitive, / Ço voelt li reis par amur cunvertisset.* (Well over a hundred thousand are baptized, true Christians, with the sole exception of the Queen: She will be led captive to fair France, the King wishes her to become a convert out of devotion.), ChdR 3671–3674.
- 58 Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Hirzel 1872–1878), vol. 3 (VF-Z), column 557 (vüeren).
- 59 "En ma maisun ad une caitive franche. / Tant ad oït e sermunds e essamples, / Creire voelt Deu, chrestientet demandet. / Baptizez l, pur quei Deus en ait l'anme." / Cil li respondent: "Or seit faite par marrenes, / Asez cruiz e lines dames." / As bainz ad Ais mult sunt granz les c... / La baptizent la rine d'Espaigne, / Truvee li unt le num de Juliane. / Chrestiene est par veire conoissance. ("There is a noble prisoner in my house. She has heard so many sermons and exempla that she wishes to believe in God, she asked to become a convert to Christianity. Baptize her so

- that God may have her soul.” They reply: “Now let her be baptized and have godmothers, suitably noble and high-born ladies.” At the baths at Aix, the . . . are very large, there they baptize the Queen of Spain, they found for her the name of Juliana. She is a Christian out of sheer conviction.), ChdR 3978–3987. This episode concerning Bramimonde appears after the trial of Ganelon and concludes the epic, while in the *Rolandslied* the trial and death of Genelun end the story.
- 60 RL 8641–8661 and *Priest Konrad’s Song* (see note 2), 103. This passage is not found in the *Chanson de Roland*.
- 61 Bramimonde’s/ Brechmunda’s conversion is similar to that of other Muslim women in medieval literature and marks a change from active to more passive, Kahf, *Western Representations* (see note 51), 5, 30–31.
- 62 Alda is mentioned by Olivier when he asks Roland to blow his horn out of love for Alda in order to get help from Charlemagne (*nu tuoz durch miner swester Alda willen*, RL 3868). Olivier mentions her again when he reproaches Roland for not blowing his horn earlier. He says to Roland: *mîn swester Alde en scol an dînem arme niemer erwarme*, RL 6012–6014. A similar passage is in the ChdR 1719–1721. See also Ann Tukey Harrison, “Aude and Bramimunde: Their Importance in the Chanson de Roland,” *The French Review* 54, no. 5 (1981): 672–679, at 673.
- 63 Harrison, “Aude and Bramimunde” (see note 61), 674; Kahf, *Western Representations* (see note 51), 24.
- 64 Sharon Kinoshita, “‘Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right’: Alterity, Gender, and Nation in the *Chanson de Roland*,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 79–111.
- 65 The quote concerns Bramimonde in the *Chanson de Roland* and is from Kahf, *Western Representations* (see note 51), 23.
- 66 ‘[...] clage dû nicht sêre, / ich irgetze dich sîn gerne, / ich gibe dich ze wibe / dem guoten Ludewige. / ich mache dich ze kûniginne / über al Karlinge.’ (“Don’t cry so much, I will gladly offer a substitute to you, and give you to the good Louis as his wife. I’ll make you a queen over all of France.”), RL 8701–8706.
- 67 Jeep, “The Roles of Women” (see note 5), 114.
- 68 Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210, at 173.
- 69 “[...] / Jo t’en durai mult esforcet eschange, / Ço est Loewis, mîelz ne sai a parler; / Il est mez filz e si tendrat mes marches.” ChdR 3711–3713. Note that I have slightly altered Brault’s translation, who translated “eschange” with “to take his place.”
- 70 *dûne macht sîn nicht haben* (you may not have him), RL 8699. For a recent analysis of women who were trafficked in marital exchange in Germanic literature (with a brief discussion of the critique Rubin’s analysis has received), see Carol Parrish Jamison, “Traffic of Women in Germanic Literature: The Role of the Peace Pledge in Marital Exchange,” *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 20 (2004), 13–36. See also chapter 6 on gender and gifts in Pyyhtinen, *The Gift and its Paradoxes* (see note 13).
- 71 “*Ne place Deu ne ses seinz ne ses angles / Après Rollant que jo vive remaigne!*” (“May it not please God, his angels and his saints that I remain alive after Roland!”), ChdR 3718–3719.
- 72 RL 8710–8729; ChdR 3723–3733.
- 73 The giving-while-keeping is close to Pyyhtinen’s discussion on giving-for-keeping (giving something or someone to others in order to prove that this object belonged to the ‘original’ owner), *The Gift and its Paradoxes* (see note 13), 118. It is a variation on Annette Weiner’s keeping-while-giving in which alienable possessions are given for a time while keeping them through generations, Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*

- (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 26. See also Buettner, “Past Presents: New Year’s Gifts at the Valois Courts” (see note 13), 598–625. For the conflict between the promoted religious ideal of celibacy and the secular ideal of marriage and procreation, see Karina Marie Ash, *Conflicting Femininities in Medieval German Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
- 74 According to Monique Wittig in her novel *Les Guérillères* (1969) death is the only thing that truly belongs to a woman, Rubin, “The traffic in Women” (see note 68), 200.
- 75 *Brother Hermann’s Life of the Countess Yolanda of Vianden*, trans. and intro. by Richard H. Lawson, (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995), xi.
- 76 Harrison, “Aude and Bramimunde” (see note 62), 673.
- 77 For the bonding value of women, see Pyyhtinen, *The Gift and its Paradoxes* (see note 13), 120.
- 78 Ash, *Conflicting Femininities* (see note 73). In *Brother Hermann’s Life of the Countess Yolanda* (see note 75) Yolanda’s wish not to marry and enter a nunnery is fiercely contested by her mother who has arranged a beneficial marriage for her daughter.
- 79 See Theodore Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne, 1100–1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 147–148; Anneke Mulder-Bakker, “The Age of Discretion: Women at Forty and Beyond,” in *Middle-Aged Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Sue Niebrzydowski (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 15–24.