INTRODUCTION: MATERIAL CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE OF POWER

BRUNSWICK, GERMANY, JUNE 24, 1935. In the Church of St. Blaise the graves belonging to Henry the Lion (1131/1135–1195), duke of Saxony and Bavaria, and his wife Matilda (1156–1189) are unearthed at the behest of the Nazi Party. Henry the Lion was the only child of Duke Henry the Proud and Duchess Gertrud; through his mother, Henry the Lion was the grandson of Emperor Lothar and Empress Richenza. The 1935 excavation was part of a campaign to convert the Christian temple into a Nazi shrine commemorating the Lion. His consort Matilda, as the eldest daughter of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, as well as the granddaughter of the Empress Matilda, had an equally impressive pedigree, but she was of no use to Nazi propaganda. The redecoration campaign resulted in a profoundly altered church interior featuring heavy granite, large curtains decorated with an eagle and swastika, and aggressive black-and-white sgraffiti on the walls replacing the medieval decoration.[1] Reviving Duke Henry was a means to connect the Nazis' expansionist politics towards Eastern Europe with the duke's historical conquest of Slavic lands: the duke served as a glorious model of a past that needed to be restored.[2] For Matilda little role is evident in this appropriation—and abuse—of history, as she was merely the "wife of," and English rather than German to boot.[3] Yet the excavations had another impact as well: the material remains of the ducal couple were photographed and published, allowing modern viewers to glimpse the life and afterlife of Henry and Matilda (Figure 1).[4]

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1 Karl Arndt, "Missbrauchte Geschichte: Der Braunschweiger Dom als politisches Denkmal 1935/45," in *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Welfen 1125–1235*, ed. Jochen Luckhardt and Franz Niehoff, 3 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1995), 3:88–95.

2 Karl Arndt (see note 1) points out that the project mainly had a local impact and was only of minor interest to Hitler, who focused on contemporary monumental building projects in Berlin, Munich, and Nuremburg. Nevertheless, St. Blaise was not a unique project; Heinrich Himmler searched for the bones of King Henry I in the Church of St. Servase at Quedlinburg in 1936. See Uta Halle, "936 Begräbnis Heinrich I – 1936 die archäologische Suche nach den Gebeinen in Quedlinburg und die NS-Propaganda," *Mitteilungen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* 16 (2005): 14–20.

3 How the Nazis exactly valued Matilda's presence, as well as that of other medieval elite women, deserves further investigation, but goes beyond the scope of this book. Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg mentioned the medieval queen Matilda (d. 968) when he said that "the first truly great German ruler … is King Henry I [of East Francia] whose wife [Matilda] prided herself on being a direct descendant of Duke Widukind." Cited in Halle, "936 Begräbnis Heinrich I," 17.

4 Jörg Weber, "Bericht über die Freilegung der Gruft Heinrichs des Löwen im Sommer 1935," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 3:cat. H 112; and Weber, "Zwei während der Freilegung der Gruft Heinrichs des Löwen enstandene Fotografien," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 3:cat. H 113.

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Figure 1. Leather shroud with Henry the Lion's remains. Wolfenbüttel, NLA WO 250 N, Nr. 205. Photo: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Wolfenbüttel.

Long after World War II, Duke Henry the Lion managed to captivate the interest of historians, art historians, literary specialists, and numismatists.[5] Although Matilda

5 Joachim Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe: Eine Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), with references to the vast number of publications that appeared concerning Henry the Lion; Johannes Fried and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Heinrich der Löwe. Herrschaft und Repräsentation* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2003); Jochen Luckhardt and Franz Niehoff, eds., *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit. Herrschaft und*

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was a crucial part of the story of Henry's rise to and fall from power, scholars have not accorded her a prominent place in the duke's daily affairs, neither in his rise nor fall. This scholarly oversight is all the more surprising given the survival of no fewer than four twelfth-century visual representations of the royal couple: Matilda and Henry appear together on a coin, in a psalter, and twice in a gospel book. This indicates that Matilda's involvement mattered to Henry the Lion. Indeed, it would only be through Matilda that he and his family were able to stay at Henry II's court between 1182 and 1185 after the duke had been exiled from Germany by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Yet Matilda is rarely considered to have played an active role in Saxon politics, and this is partly due to the scarcity of references to Matilda in charters and chronicles. As we will see, Matilda is not completely absent from the chronicles, which provide basic information on her birth, status, marriage, and motherhood, but fail to offer much more than that. Many medieval elite women of Matilda's time shared the same fate, mainly because most chroniclers were producing their narratives for male rulers and religious institutions led by men, while also pursuing their own clerical agendas.

Given Matilda's royal status we would, however, expect her to appear in charters issued by her husband, who was of lower status. In fact, only three such documents are known. A charter dated February 1, 1168, known through a seventeenth-century copy, tells that Henry and Matilda were engaged in Minden Cathedral on that day.[6] Matilda appears in the charter's *recognitio*—indicating place and time—as *Machtildem filiam regis Anglie*. The *filiam regis Anglie* expression is far from unusual, since it can be found in almost all of the other written sources, but its presence in Henry's charters evinces that it was important to the duke as well. The second charter dates from 1170 and is known to us from a sixteenth-century cartulary. The document's closing protocol states: "All these things were done with the consent of the glorious Lady Matilda, duchess of Bavaria and Saxony, and also with the devout permission of Lady Gertrud, daughter of Henry and Clementia; prosperous until eternity."[7] Matilda is designated as *domine Matildis, Bawaria et Saxonie ducisse*. Lady—or female lord—refers to Matilda's marital status, through which she had obtained the title of duchess, sharing in her husband's authority as duke of Bavaria and Saxony. Since Matilda is merely mentioned as *domina*, rather than *uxor*

Repräsentation der Welfen 1125–1235, 3 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1995); and Karl Jordan, *Heinrich der Löwe: Eine Biographie* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1979).

6 "Acta sunt hec Minde anno dominice incarnationis MCLXVIII, indictione I, quando Heinricus dux Bawarie et Saxonie Machtildem filiam regis Anglie ibidem subarravit, kalendis februarii. Data Minde per manum Hartwici Utledensis Bremensis canonici." MGH DD HL, 111–13, no. 77. See also chap. 1, p. 24.

7 "Acta autem sunt hec anno dominice incarnationis MCLXX indictione III; data in Heretesberch II idus novembris. Dominus Baldewinus notarius domini ducis assignavit. Omnia hec acta sunt ex assensu gloriosissime domine Matildis, Bawarie et Saxonie ducisse, nec non ex pio assensu domine Gerthrudis, filie ducis, feliciter in perpetuum." MGH DD HL, 123–24, no. 83. Two conclusions may be drawn from the mention that Gertrud had granted her permission: first, that Gertrud was still Henry's only heir and was therefore entitled to inherit; and second, that because of her right to inheritance, she was in a position to wield influence.

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or *coniunx*, this may indicate that Henry and Matilda had as yet not shared a bed, which would be understandable considering that Matilda was still only fourteen at the time. When turning to the third and final charter, which has survived in its original form, this situation has changed. This document mentions Henry's donation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (1172). Matilda, who did not join Henry on his journey due to her pregnancy, is not presented as a co-donor, nor does she give her consent or act as a witness, but instead she is cited as one of the beneficiaries.[8] Both Matilda's descent and her authority as duchess are specifically stated. The addition of *uxoris mee* is meaningful, as it not only declares that the relation between Matilda and Henry is legitimate, but also implies that she is responsible for Henry's offspring, for whose spiritual wellbeing the donation was also made. Of the 123 charters connected with Duke Henry, only these three mention Matilda, but they give an important insight into the development of her position from young bride to young mother.[9] We should be wary of interpreting Matilda's absence from Henry's ducal documents as clear evidence of her absence in his lordship, especially given that she, as we shall see, appears in visual sources. Rather, it fits the charter evidence for the Saxon lands where women's names were rarely included, even though these women do appear in chronicles and lists of properties owned by monasteries and churches as well as on coins.[10]

Apart from the challenging written source material, another explanation for the lack of a more detailed analysis of Matilda's actions must be sought in the scholarly assumption that Matilda mainly embodied status and monetary value. This perception springs from the many chroniclers who mentioned Henry's marriage to the *filia regis Anglorum* (daughter of the king of the English) and spoke of the great treasures she brought with her.[11] Their entries have been read as a confirmation of the wealth of

8 "Notum sit omnibus tam presentibus quam futuris sancte matris ecclesie filiis, quod ego Henricus per dei gratiam Bawarie et Saxonie dux misericordie instinctu tactus pro remissione omnium peccatorum meorum et inclite uxoris mee ducisse Matildis, magnifici Anglorum regis filie, et eorum, quos deus misericordie sue dono michi dedit, heredum nec non et totius generis mei tres lampades perpetuo ad honorem dei ardentes in dominice resurectionis ecclesia locari constitui et ordinavi." MGH DD HL, 143–45, no. 94. See also chap. 3, p. 78.

9 For an analysis of the charter material, see MGH DD HL, XV–LIX.

10 According to Karl Jordan hardly any charters were issued in Saxony before Henry the Lion, MGH DD HL, XVI. Before her death Duchess Gertrud (d. 1143), Henry the Lion's mother, appears in three charters, each time together with her son. Clementia of Zahringen, Henry's first wife, appears in one of his charters (MGH DD HL, 22, no. 13) and is represented together with Henry on his coinage. See also chap. 2, p. 44–45. Sophie, the wife of Henry's competitor Albrecht the Bear, who was margrave of Saxony (r. 1138–1142) and margrave of Brandenburg (1150, 1157–1170), features four times in documents issued by her husband. See *Codex Diplomatics Anhaltinus. Auf Befehl seiner Hoheit des Herzogs Leopold Friedrich von Anhalt*, 6 vols., ed. Otto von Heinemann (Dessau: Barth, 1867), 1: nos. 456, 464, 483, and 486. She also appears on coins together with her husband.

11 For this reference in chronicles: Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Bernard Schmeidler, MGH SS rer. Germ. 32 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1937), 209; Robert of Torigny, *Chronica*, ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols. (London,

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the English king, Henry II, and of his appreciation of rich vestments.[12] It is suggestive of the ostentation that accompanied Matilda on her travel: in addition to moveable items that served as marriage goods, Matilda brought with her £5,102 of silver.[13] By regarding Matilda herself as an element of the treasures, almost an object that was given to Henry the Lion, modern scholars have denied her an active voice in the years that followed her marriage. To counter and nuance that narrative, this book argues that the impressive range of belongings that I connect to Duchess Matilda—textiles, illuminated manuscripts, coins, chronicles, charters, and literary texts—allows us to perceive elite women's performance of power, even when they are largely absent from the official documentary record. It is especially through the visual record of material culture that we can hear female voices, allowing us to forge an alternative way toward rethinking assumptions about power for sparsely documented elite women.[14]

The eldest daughter of the king and queen of England, Matilda was among the most elite of women and, as I will make clear, she was far from a passive pawn. That she exerted power from 1170 to 1189 as daughter, consort, regent, patron, and mother is corroborated by the traces of the many artefacts connected to her. At this point it is worthwhile to return to the grave of Henry and Matilda. From an art historical perspective what surfaced is quite disappointing: no jewellery, no clothing, and no precious grave goods, even though "pearls of rosaries, bronze pins, and the remains of sarcophagus hinges" were found.[15] In addition a tablet-woven band—perhaps covering a lock—and a bright spot of silver tarnish were discovered on the leather shroud covering one

1889), 4:234; *Annalen van Egmond*, Containing the Annales Egmundenses, Annales Xantenses, het Egmondse leven van Thomas Becket, ed. and trans. Marijke Gumbert-Hepp and J. P. Gumbert, and the Chronicon Egmundanum, ed. J. W. J. Burgers (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 250–51; Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores, or Chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (London, 1867), 1:288; Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. William Stubbs, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores, or Chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*, 4 vols. (London, 1868), 2:269–70; Gerhard of Steterburg, *Annales Stederburgenses*, MGH SS 16, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1859), 221; and Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. J. M. Lappenberg, MGH SS rer. Germ. 14, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1868), 11–12.

12 Joachim Ehlers, "Anglonormannisches am Hof Heinrichs des Löwen? Voraussetzungen und Möglichkeiten," in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1998), 205–17; and Sybille, Schröder, *Macht und Gabe. Materielle Kultur am Hof Heinrich II. von England* (Hussum: Matthiesen, 2004).

13 See chap. 1, p. 17.

14 Therese Martin, "The Margin to Act: A Framework of Investigation for Women's (and Men's) Medieval Art–Making," in *"Me fecit." Making Medieval Art (History)*, ed. Therese Martin, special issue, *Journal of Medieval History* 42 (2016): 1–25 at 7–8.

15 Cited in Ulrike Strauss, "Neues zu Grabungen in der Gruft Heinrichs des Löwen im Dom zu Braunschweig," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 74 (1993): 147–64 at 149.

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of the bodies.[16] In 1935 the skeleton placed in the leather shroud was identified as being that of Matilda; accordingly the tablet weave was thought to be hers, whence the name by which it is known, the *Mathildenbändchen* (Figure 2). Forty years later, the excavation report together with its interpretations were critically analyzed; the consensus is now that it was Henry the Lion who was buried in the leather sack and thus the textile is thought to belong with his remains.[17] A modern in-depth study of the weaving's material and technical qualities combined with an analysis of comparable tablet weaves might help to establish the band's function and meaning, and perhaps even its origin of manufacture.[18] Unfortunately, such an enterprise may never be undertaken because the band's current whereabouts are unknown. The textile archaeologist Karl Schlabow, who was the director of the Industriemuseum Neumünster where the tablet-woven band was studied and reproduced after it was excavated, estimated that this 6 mm wide band was woven using nineteen tablets, each with four holes, resulting in a warp of seventy-six threads. The band was made of a brightly coloured purple silk with patterns in gold brocading, a technique of adding "a floating, supplemental weft thread to the ground weave."[19] This textile trace, like the many objects discussed in the present study, goes beyond a simple narrative focusing on the duke as it offers an example of the value of material culture for elite people to shape medieval life—and afterlife—regardless of their sex. It is through these objects rather than charter evidence that history, from visual to social to cultural, can be told because they are vivid reminders of the importance of communicating wealth, prestige, and power. Which brings me to the most compelling reason for writing about Matilda and her sisters; that is, to investigate the connections between women and power through the lens of material culture, still an under-developed approach in medieval studies with its continued focus on the written record. Before addressing how I deal with power and performance, however, the term "material culture" deserves some explanation.

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16 Tilmann Schmidt, "Die Grablege Heinrichs des Löwen im Dom zu Braunschweig," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 55 (1974): 9–71 at 12.

17 Schmidt, "Die Grablege Heinrichs," 9–71.

18 The tablet-woven band found on Henry the Lion's body does not necessarily indicate that it belonged to him. Of course, the same caution is in place when the band was thought to be Matilda's. For the challenges involved in the interpretation of grave goods, see Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London: Routledge, 2001), 36–37.

19 Karl Schlabow, "Brettchenweberei," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. Heinrich Beck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978), 3:445–50 at 449 (without reference). For the copy (which I have not studied), see Wolfgang Metzger, "Schaufassung für das bei der Grabung 1935 gefundene Schmuckband von Karl B[orromäus] Berthold," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 3:cat. H 119. The definition of brocading is from Nancy Spies, *Ecclesiastical Pomp and Aristocratic Circumstance: A Thousand Years of Brocaded Tabletwoven Bands* (Jarrettsville: Arelate Studio, 2000), 71. The warp consists of lengthwise organized threads, with a single thread running through each of the holes in the tablets (a square tablet has four holes and therefore a maximum of four threads). By turning the tablets a shed is created through which the weft is passed.

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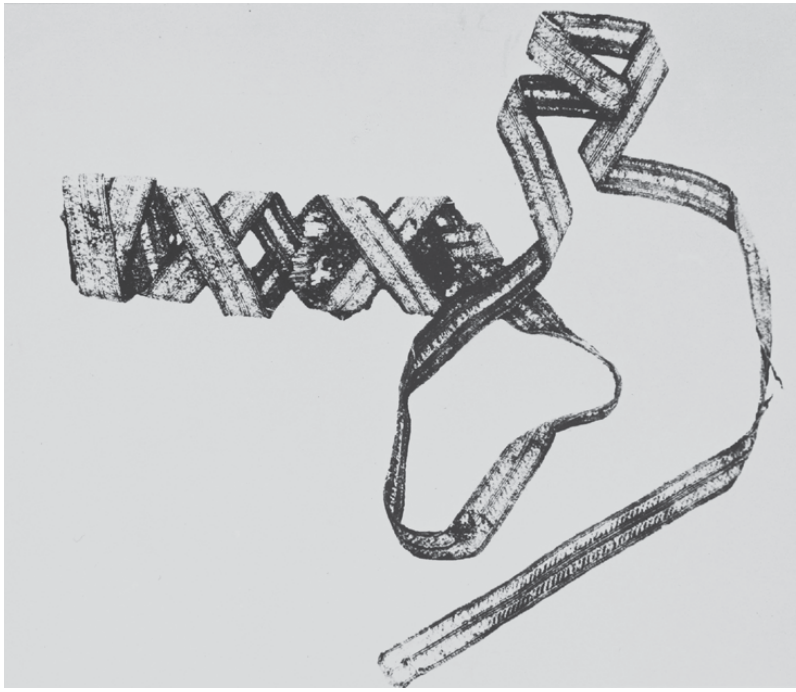

Figure 2. *Mathildenbändchen*. Wolfenbüttel, NLA WO 250 N, Nr. 205.
Photo: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Wolfenbüttel.

There is no simple definition of what material culture entails, nor do scholars always attempt to define it. Often, the emphasis has been on everyday objects—varying from tools to pottery, and from textiles to furniture.[20] However, as Roberta Gilchrist has pointed out, these artefacts are not so ordinary because they either have survived or were documented. In addition, many of these items belonged to higher social levels of society, the silk tablet-woven band found in Henry the Lion's grave being a case in point.[21] Indeed, items made for and used by elites, as well as artefacts related to the practice

20 Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, "Introduction: Writing Material Culture History," in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–13 at 2; Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, eds., *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); and Valerie L. Garver, "Material Culture and Social History in Early Medieval Western Europe," *History Compass* 12 (2014): 784–93 at 786–87.

21 Roberta Gilchrist, book review of "Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson," in *The English Historical Review* 127, no. 526 (2012): 703–4.

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of religion, have been incorporated into more recent studies of medieval material culture.[22] Here special attention is paid to how things empower people, arguing that objects have agency themselves and thus going beyond the question of what individuals do with objects. For example, artefacts can help us to recall a person or an event, triggering our senses and emotions. The term material culture also suggests that the widest variety of objects can be studied, and it rejects a hierarchy of media, something that long has dominated art history with its emphasis on the "high arts" of painting and sculpture. In the present case, not only luxury manuscripts but also coins and seals, which I study from formal and semiotic perspectives in order to shed light on personal and collective identities, provide evidence of the communicative powers of objects and the networks of relationships connecting people and things.[23] Thinking of artefacts and their "affective, social, cultural and economic relationships" with people has resulted in some innovative ways of rethinking medieval artworks, both whole and fragmentary.[24] For example, the materiality of objects has been studied in terms of their social value by taking into account what they are made of, their size, and their biography (the social life of things).[25] Another way of approaching materiality takes into account the theological, philosophical, and somatic ideas concerning matter and reality.[26] This, in turn, has resulted in studies that investigate haptic, sensory, and performative aspects of artworks.[27]

I address material culture as items that are closely linked to the elite society in which they were produced and activated.[28] The works are analyzed in relation to their multiple users, acknowledging that objects themselves have agency. Things not only have

22 For example Marguerite Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-century France: The Testament of Blanche of Navarre (1331–1398)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Therese Martin, "Fuentes de potestad para reinas e infantas: el infantazgo en los siglos centrales de la Edad Media," *El ejercicio del poder de las reinas ibéricas*, ed. A. Echevarría and N. Jaspert, special issue, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 46 (2016): 97–136; and Beth Williamson, "Material Culture and Medieval Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John H. Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 61–72.

23 Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept," *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 1489–1533.

24 Gerritsen and Riello, "Introduction," 2.

25 Gilchrist, "Everyday Objects"; Karen Overbey, "Materiality and Place in a Medieval Scottish Pendant Reliquary," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 65/66 (2014/2015): 242–58; Nancy Wicker, "Gold in Motion: Women and Jewelry from Early Medieval Scandinavia," in *Moving Women, Moving Objects 300–1500*, ed. Tracy Chapman Hamilton and Mariah Proctor (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 13–32; and Arjun Appudurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

26 Williamson, "Material Culture and Medieval Christianity," 61–72; and Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and The Life Course* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012).

27 For example, Elina Gertsman, *Worlds Within: Opening the Medieval Shrine Madonna* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); and Fiona Griffiths and Kathryn Starkey, eds., *Sensory Reflections: Traces of Experience in Medieval Artifacts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

28 Garver, "Material Culture."

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the potential to be an active part of social life, but also to impact people and their lives, thus becoming an important part of the performance of power.[29] At the same time a material culture perspective allows for a whole-scale rethinking of the concept of power, this "grand, all-embracing, and reifying term."[30]

In 2015 a special issue of *Medieval Feminist Forum* was published in which several medievalists reflected on both older and current research on women and power in order to point towards new avenues of approaching the topic. In a thought-provoking article, Marie Kelleher pointed out that despite the influence of Michel Foucault's understanding of power as not being "unidirectional" nor "*necessarily* belonging to one set of public institutions," the focus still was on women and public power; that is, elite women's power exercised through institutions.[31] As a consequence, the conclusion often has been that women held less or different power. Foucault's analysis of power as a matter of government, which includes "political structures or the management of states,"[32] does not sit easily with twelfth-century realities of power, which, as Thomas Bisson has insisted, were inextricably linked with lordship, that is, the personal command over dependent people.[33] Regrettably, female lordship plays no part in Bisson's analysis, a fundamental omission given that Kimberley LoPrete has argued that women exercised authoritative lordly powers.[34] However, from a gendered perspective Foucault's idea of government has had its merits, as it also includes "modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people."[35] In the case of medieval women the latter exercise of power has been labelled agency or

29 For a definition of agency that includes the impact actors and actions have, see Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, glossary at xiii. The most extensive theoretical analysis of agency is Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). For a critical assessment of the way agency of artefacts has been studied, see Andrew M. Jones and Nicole Boivin, "The Malice of Inanimate Objects: Material Agency," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 343–51. For agency and art, see Stephen Perkinson, "Portraits and Their Patrons: Reconsidering Agency in Late Medieval Art," in *Patronage, Power and Agency in Medieval Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 257–74; and Williamson, "Material Culture and Medieval Christianity," 61–72.

30 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Power*, The Essential Works 3, ed. James D. Faubion and trans. Robert Hurley et al. (London: Penguin, 2000), 326–48 at 336.

31 Marie A. Kelleher, "What Do We Mean by 'Women and Power'?," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 51 (2015): 104–15 at 109. Italics in original.

32 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 341.

33 Bisson's definition of lordship can be found in Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3. See also his "Medieval Lordship," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 743–59.

34 Theresa Earenfight mentions this omission in her review of Bisson's book; see Theresa Earenfight, "The Emergence of the State," review of *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government*, by Thomas N. Bisson, *The Review of Politics* 72 (2010): 162–64 at 163. Kimberly A. LoPrete, "Women, Gender and Lordship in France, c. 1150–1250," *History Compass* 5/6 (2007): 1921–41.

35 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 341.

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informal/soft power.[36] Apart from the fact that both agency and soft power are as hard to define or grasp as the term power itself, the idea that women's power should need different words to describe how they could impact their own lives and that of others implies that women functioned in their own spheres, apart from men, and that they were rarely able to exercise the sort of "real" power attributed to elite men. This does no justice to the range of possibilities that both women and men had at their disposal to affect others, such as financing civic architecture, creating alliances, or gathering an army. Nor does it agree with the reality of men's lives when they are treated as a homogenous group that held and shared in power equally, without acknowledging that their leverage greatly differed and depended on multiple economic and social circumstances.[37]

Kelleher's proposed definition of power "as the ability to take action that has the potential to affect the destiny of others" acknowledges exactly the breadth and inclusiveness of Foucault's analysis.[38] Inclusiveness allows us to investigate the power of a woman such as Matilda, whose government has not been formally documented in charters, chronicles, or ceremonies of fealty. We can focus on the question of how women "actually used [power], individually, as part of a ruling couple, as a parent, or collectively."[39] Recent studies on medieval women have demonstrated that material culture is a fruitful way of exploring objects as an important nexus between women, dynasty, and power.[40]

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36 See also Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, "Introduction," in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 1–17; Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, "Introduction. A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages," in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1–16; and Kathrine L. French, "Genders and Material Culture," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198–210.

37 This has also been argued by Lucy Pick, *Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 6–13.

38 Kelleher, "What Do We Mean by 'Women and Power'?," 110. For a critical analysis of the usefulness of the word "power," see Gajewski and Seeberg, who in their study of lay and cloistered women's production and donation of textiles analyze "women's actions from power to compliance," asking "what was their 'margin to act'." Alexandra Gajewski and Stefanie Seeberg, "Having Her Hand in It? Elite Women as 'Makers' of Textile Art in the Middle Ages," in *"Me fecit." Making Medieval Art (History)*, ed. Martin, 26–50 at 31.

39 Amy Livingstone, "Recalculating the Equation: Powerful Woman = Extraordinary," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 51 (2015): 17–29 at 20, with reference to Jonathan R. Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters: The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). See also Theresa Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe," *Gender & History* 19 (2007): 1–21; and Pick, *Her Father's Daughter*.

40 For example: Martin, "The Margin to Act"; and Tracy Chapman Hamilton and Mariah Proctor-Tiffany, eds., *Moving Women, Moving Objects 300–1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

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My acceptance of Kelleher's (and Foucault's) inclusive definition of power does not blind me to women's positions and limitations within patriarchal political and cultural structures.[41] Rather, the material evidence problematizes thinking in binary categories of male–female or public–private. For one, because both men and women interacted with artefacts by commissioning, donating, and displaying them. While particular objects, such as a given sword or book, may be labelled male or female, textile donations in the central Middle Ages, for example, do not neatly fit these categories, a useful reminder that these binaries did not exist in the extreme or were not always that evident. Further, thinking along those lines of opposites suggests that men and women are stable categories, always acting out their identities in the same way (e.g. by giving gender-specified gifts), without acknowledging the impact of political and economic developments, as well as changes in lifecycle, such as age and widowhood.[42] Reaching a senior age or being a widow could support women in gaining and exercising power in what some scholars perceive as the public sphere inhabited by men, indicating women's actions were not necessarily limited to their household. But more importantly, the analytic dichotomy public–private does not do justice to how medieval people must have experienced their lives: could a woman's gift to a church or an ally really have been considered a private affair, devoid of any sense of public authority? And how to value women's (and men's) display of elaborate dress within the confinement of the castle while discussing military strategies: a public or private affair? As these questions show, material culture helps us to shift away from binaries that tend to be central to documentary sources.

Analyzing material culture as a pathway for perceiving women's power also aids in understanding "power as the outcome of dynamic (rather than fixed) processes, and as the result of social structures rather than individual agency," which includes women's connections with men and women's interactions with women.[43] The dynamics of power relations have also been pointed out by Foucault, who remarked that it can result in a "strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal."[44] Material culture can be recognized as a manner in which to demonstrate power as well as part of the struggle for obtaining and maintaining that power. In both cases, there is a clear awareness of the presence of other parties involved in the exercise of power. Thus, in my analysis of the artefacts connected to Matilda, the negotiation of power through artworks, and the potential conversion of their meaning in the hands of new owners is explicitly taken into account.

Precisely because material culture is part of the exercise and negotiation of power, and holds an active potential, the term "performance" is used here. Here performance means

41 Kelleher, "What Do We Mean by 'Women and Power'?," 114. Kelleher also warned against denying or ignoring that women's expressions of power can play into negative gender stereotypes, such as scold or gossip.

42 Erler and Kowaleski, "Introduction," in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, 2.

43 Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, 28. For a similar conclusion, see also Erler and Kowaleski, "Introduction," in *Women and Power*, 6.

44 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 346.

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acts done by people with artefacts, such as materializing relationships, reading, communicating identities, and displaying status and wealth. And it also includes the agency that artefacts themselves have, such as keeping memories alive, eliciting emotions, triggering donations, or spurring people to visit places. It is through cultural acts, in which objects play a dynamic role, that power relations are constructed and power itself is displayed.[45] Material culture empowered women to create, activate, manipulate, and promote their present ambitions and preserve the future of their dynasties.[46] "Performance of power" thus refers to the instrumental character of artefacts and buildings: through the items with which societies interacted, high-born women like Matilda sought to impact their own lives as well as those of their natal and marital families.

My concern here is the agency of objects and the interactions between objects and people in medieval society, and not the unsolvable question of Matilda as the primary person commissioning artefacts. In an excellent analysis of patronage for the Bayeux Tapestry (actually an embroidery), Elizabeth Carson Pastan argued that the model of a micro-managing Renaissance patron fits uncomfortably with medieval material and that the focus on Odo of Bayeux has led to extensive (and not necessarily fruitful) speculations.[47] Further, the identifying of depicted figures as sponsors tends to overshadow the object's materiality as an indicator for possible patronage.[48] For example, the ninth-century purple pillow discovered in the tomb of St. Remigius at Rheims demonstrates that patronage per se is not the most fruitful category of analysis. While the gold embroidered inscription mentions Bishop Hincmar as the person ordering it to be made, it was Alpais (d. after 852), the sister of Emperor Charles the Bold, who collected the materials, embroidered and presented it.

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45 The idea of performance as a constitutive act is borrowed from Judith Butler, although she defines performance in a different way; that is, as repetitive acts that construct construction of gender identity (sexed bodies), and thus have a differing potential. Butler's ideas about gender and performance have not gone unnoticed by medievalists; see Erler and Kowaleski, "Introduction," in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, 2; Madeline H. Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages. Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury, *Women's Space. Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Victoria Turner, "Performing the Self, Performing the Other: Gender and Racial Identity Construction in the Nanteuil Cycle," *Women's History Review* 22 (2013): 182–96 esp. 184–85; and Joana Ramôa Melo, "Open Books: Performativity and Mediation in Elite Women's Effigies at Lisbon Cathedral (14th C.)," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 11 (2019): 193–221.

46 Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

47 Elizabeth Carson Pastan and Stephen D. White, "Problematizing Patronage: Odo of Bayeux and the Bayeux Tapestry," in *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations*, ed. Martin K. Foys, Karen Eileen Overbey, and Dan Terkla (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 1–24.

48 Elizabeth Carson Pastan, "Patronage: A Useful Category of Art Historical Analysis," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (New York: Routledge, 2017), 340–55.

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> The renowned Bishop Hincmar ordered Alpais to make and present this humble work. He indeed ordered it so, but she happily carried this out and made the work you see here. By the occasion of the new honor [the translation of the relics and dedication of the new church] she made this little pillow, which will support the sweet and venerable head of Remigius. Through the merits of Alpais everywhere, may her prayers be furthered beyond the stars.[49]

Valerie Garver has brought to the fore that, while the inscription hails Hincmar as the patron who commissioned the work, the text clearly praises Alpais as instrumental in executing the little pillow. Alpais used her work to document her virtue, found a way to interact with St. Remigius, and sought to keep her own memory alive.[50] That the inscribed presence of women's names can very well indicate their active participation in the making process has been put forward convincingly by Therese Martin. She proposed an important new direction in rethinking the relationship between medieval women and art by introducing the concept of women as makers. Her argument that women should be viewed as makers of art and architecture originates from the *(me) fecit* inscriptions found on objects and buildings, which often held flexible meanings, enabling us to see women's contributions as "patrons and facilitators, producers and artists, owners and recipients."[51] Envisioning Matilda and other women as makers encourages a rethinking of objects that either have been considered from the perspective of male patronage, or have been largely ignored because they are anonymous. Moreover, the term "maker" is more powerful than "patron," as it suggests an action performed through art that is meant to achieve something: from commemoration through prayers, to salving the wounds of conflicts, to making rulership omnipresent, to communicating social networks. This empowering impact of material culture is at the heart of this book.

In order to contextualize Matilda's engagement with material culture, it is necessary to consider other elite women. The selection of these women is primarily based on Matilda's natal network, meaning that artefacts connected to her sisters Leonor and Joanna are included. Matilda's parents, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, also feature, as do her half-sisters Marie of Champagne and Alix of Blois. Colette Bowie's study of the daughters of Henry II and Eleanor has been pivotal in understanding the importance of the natal family to Matilda, Leonor, and Joanna.[52] The spread of Thomas Becket's cult

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49 Cited in Valerie L. Garver, "Weaving Words in Silk: Women and Inscribed Bands in the Carolingian World," *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 6 (2010): 33–56 at 46.

50 Garver, "Weaving Words in Silk," 46–47.

51 Therese Martin, "Exceptions and Assumptions: Women in Medieval Art History," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as "Makers" of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–33 at 5.

52 Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). For reviews, see Hayley Elizabeth Bassett, review of *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, by Colette Bowie, *Royal Studies Journal* 2 (2015): 26–27; Clara Harder, review of *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, by Colette Bowie, *H-Soz-Kult*, December 2, 2015, www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-23289; and Ralph Turner, review of *The*

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in Saxony, Iberia, and Sicily after the archbishop's murder on December 29, 1170 is an example of filial efforts made to atone for paternal sins, as well as to control damage by appropriating Becket as spiritual and dynastic friend.[53] Through Bowie's detailed analysis of the written sources, we gain insight into the mother–daughter bonds as well as into the web of social relations through their father and husbands, all of which shaped the lives of the three sisters. Yet the author's emphasis on written over visual evidence means that Leonor, whose life can best be traced through textual sources, receives disproportionate attention. Bowie's book is of immense value to scholars working on the Angevins, but I demonstrate here that shifting the focus to material culture paints a different picture of Matilda's relative power than Bowie and other scholars have acknowledged. Viewing the duchess as a maker of artworks reveals the otherwise undocumented ways in which objects empowered her and enabled her to cement significant social connections.

How elementary artefacts were to medieval culture is evident if we once more return to the graves of Matilda and Henry. Even though fragmentary, the tablet-woven band, pearls of rosaries, bronze pin, and traces of silver offer material evidence of the desire to be buried, commemorated, and resurrected according to their highborn status. Back in 1935, this was of no interest to the Nazis. They only wanted to appropriate Henry the Lion as a bellicose role model, while largely denying Matilda any part in their history. But as scholars have shown in recent decades, the roles in lordship played by medieval women were crucial, even if they can be difficult to discern in documentary sources, and so it is through a focus on their objects that a more comprehensive picture of Matilda's power and that of other elite women is painted.

As Chapter 1 demonstrates, Matilda treasured her royal descent and could rely on her natal family when she and Henry were exiled in 1182 as the result of Henry's ongoing refusal to comply with the demands of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa,[54] yet the duchess spent most of her time in Saxony, where at least some goods that I connect to Matilda were manufactured. My focus on women's material culture means that the ducal couple's exile between July 25, 1182 and September 1185 plays a minor role.[55] Surely

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Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, by Colette Bowie, *sehepunkte. Rezensionsjournal für die Geschichtswissenschaften* 15 (2015), www.sehepunkte.de/2015/03/24932.html.

53 Bowie, *The Daughters*, 141–72. One of the first to draw attention to the importance of the daughters in the spread in the Becket cult was Kay Brainard Slocum, "Angevin Marriage Diplomacy and the Early Dissemination of the Cult of Thomas Becket," *Medieval Perspectives* 14 (1999): 214–28. For recent research on the cult, including the role of the Plantagenet sisters, see Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin, eds., *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170–c.1220* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), to which Colette Bowie also contributed.

54 The events that led to Henry the Lion's downfall and exile are more complex than can be dealt with here. I refer the reader to Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 317–44 (in which references to primary sources and the most important scholarship are given) and 354–66 (for a discussion of the period 1182–1185).

55 The departure date of July 25, the feast day of St. James of Compostela, suggests that the punishment with exile also had a penitential component. Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 354 and 357.

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Matilda interacted with artefacts while travelling through Normandy and England and remaining at Henry II's court, as is corroborated by the English Pipe Rolls in which the expenses the king made for his daughter, son-in-law, and their household are recorded.[56] Food, wine, and horses, as well as travel and entertainment, were all subsidized by the king. And the importance of garments and furs, which will also be discussed in the first chapter, clearly surfaces from the Pipe Rolls, demonstrating the value Henry II attached to the appearance of his family members. While we can imagine that textiles, like horses and food, played a crucial role in the performance of power, with the Pipe Rolls as the main source it is difficult to establish how Matilda used such items to impact the lives of others. The richness of the material culture with which the duchess engaged is best documented for Saxony, where Matilda undoubtedly had more leverage than at the Anglo-Norman court, where she ultimately was a guest. Importantly, it was in her marital land that the coin type on which Matilda and Henry are depicted circulated. In Chapter 2, this coin type is contextualized by taking into account other coins as well as seals because these miniature items render visible how women's power was displayed, experienced, and exercised. In Saxony Matilda also presented generous gifts to religious communities on at least three occasions. The ducal couple donated a gospel book to the Church of St. Blaise in Brunswick, which was part of their Burg. In Chapter 3, an analysis of the gospel book together with their psalter—made in the same workshop—clarifies how the self-fashioning of their personal and dynastic identity helped the rulers to stage their power. Later, as we shall see in Chapter 4, Matilda gifted luxurious vestments to Bishop Ulrich of Halberstadt and presented textiles and *vasa sacra* to the Cathedral in Hildesheim. I argue that she strategically engaged with textiles in order to enforce relations with churchmen. By following the material traces connected to Matilda, along with those of some of her contemporaries, I show the importance of women as makers of material culture, as well as the dual agency of women and their objects in the consolidation of their very real, if all but unwritten, power.

56 See PR 30 Hen II, 134, 135, 138, and 145; and PR 31 Hen II, 9, 206, and 2015. See also Bowie, *The Daughters*, 104–5.

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