

LADY-IN-WAITING VIRTUES IN MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN  
RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY

Joe Sullivan

In the picture of noble life that medieval written sources and visual artworks transmit to us, the lady-in-waiting is a ubiquitous part of the aristocratic household as well as a common and essential figure of medieval courtly life. Especially in our present period of scholarship—a period in which researchers are aggressively rewriting the history of women in the medieval West—the frequency of the lady-in-waiting in medieval sources begs us to reevaluate how much we do in fact really understand about this primary assistant to the ranking ladies of the household. While many traditional sources of historical inquiry, like court documents and censuses, reveal little about women at court, in general,<sup>1</sup> and ladies-in-waiting, specifically, other sources of a more literary nature offer a wealth of information about the attendants of noblewomen.

Nowhere do we find such frequent representation of ladies-in-waiting as in narrative literature. For example, vernacular texts of non-religious subject matter, especially courtly romances, often draw ladies-in-waiting in considerable detail. One need only think, for instance, of steadfast Hildeburg in *Kudrun* or, arguably, the most fully developed ladies-in-waiting of medieval romance, the clever Lunete of Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* and Hartmann's *Iwein* and Isolde's attendant, Brangaene, of the *Tristan* romances. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the only study to treat the medieval lady-in-waiting in depth, Miriam Rheingold Fuller's 1995 dissertation, concentrates on the figure in courtly, vernacular narrative.<sup>2</sup> While Fuller makes a significant number of insightful connections between the representations of ladies-in-waiting in medieval French and English romance and the lady-in-waiting in historical reality, medieval studies has otherwise made relatively little progress to date in understanding the lady-in-waiting as more than a literary construct and has failed largely to mine narrative sources for what they may also tell about actual medieval attitudes concerning the lady-in-waiting.<sup>3</sup>

## *Sullivan*

One of those narrative genres that promises to be equally as valuable as courtly narrative in gaining a picture of the lady-in-waiting is an area in which analysis, particularly in the last two decades, has yielded a tremendous bounty of insight into the medieval *familias*. It is to that generic area, religious biography, that this essay turns to provide a preliminary sketch of the lady-in-waiting as both an historical reality and a literary figure.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, this essay proposes to disentangle the intersection in Middle High German religious biography of literary art and historical reality and to use religious biography to identify those qualities that medieval aristocratic society most valued in actual ladies-in-waiting: absolute loyalty, the ability to keep a secret, and unwavering obedience.

### Sources

This study draws its findings primarily from thirteenth-century and early-fourteenth-century Middle High German biographies of holy women from noble backgrounds. The body of texts is an optimal starting point for an investigation of the lady-in-waiting because the corpus is both small enough to permit a thorough analysis of its lady-in-waiting figures as well as sufficiently coherent in terms of subject matter, age of the texts, authorship, and literary form. Additionally, religious biography is perhaps the best, most objective narrative source from which to extract a preliminary picture of the lady-in-waiting because it offers a relatively unadorned representation of life at court. Although, as Brigitte Cazelles has made abundantly clear, high-medieval vernacular hagiography takes the lead especially from contemporaneous courtly romance to make its stories entertaining,<sup>5</sup> it is nonetheless true that vernacular religious biography—like Latin-language religious biography—offers, in its typically critical treatment of life in the world, a less idealized view of the medieval courtly household than that which one may glean from courtly literature with secular themes. If nothing else, moreover, analysis of the hagiographic lady-in-waiting provides a picture that, if one were to contrast it with that of the lady-in-waiting in secular literature, might provide a more accurate picture of the lady-in-waiting of historical reality.

High-medieval religious biographies about noblewomen are texts for which subject matter derives from one of two periods. From the first

period, that is, late antiquity, comes the subject matter for *vitae* about the noblewomen martyrs, like Catherine, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia. Especially in the thirteenth century, clerical writers rewrote many of the *vitae* of antique provenance, including the lives of the female martyrs, and in the process reformed those *vitae* into the definitive bases for future versions of those *vitae* for the remainder of the Middle Ages. The most influential versions of many such *vitae* are those of the Dominican Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1230-1298) and are contained in his Latin-language, biographic anthology, that is, the oft-translated *Legenda aurea* from about 1260. Roughly contemporaneous to the *Legenda aurea*, and equal to it in length and scope, is an anonymously authored Middle High German *vitae* anthology from the end of the thirteenth century, the *Passional*. This essay uses the *Passional*'s biographies of the aristocratic female martyrs of late antiquity to help formulate the essay's findings,<sup>6</sup> employing those *vitae* with the assumption that the high medieval redactors of those ancient biographies modified details and attitudes about ancient household life as necessary to make them conform to the outlines of high medieval household life.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to drawing from those *vitae* about female saints of antique origin, thirteenth-century Middle High German religious biography also takes its subject matter from the High Middle Ages: biographies of high-medieval holy women occur not only, for instance, in shorter redactions in hagiographic anthologies like the *Passional* and the *Legenda aurea* but also in lengthy biographical epics like the Middle High German biography of Saint Elisabeth von Thüringen (1207-1231) from the early 1300s,<sup>8</sup> the biography dating from about 1290 of the Dominican holy woman Yolande von Vianden (1231-1281) in present-day Luxembourg, and the biography of Kunegunde, empress of the Holy Roman Empire, who died in 1033 and whose Middle High German biography—included in the combined biography *Heinrich und Kunegunde* by Eberhard von Erfurt—appeared about 1220.<sup>9</sup>

### Findings

In Middle High German religious biography, the virtue, or characteristic, of the lady-in-waiting that writers most prominently thematize is loyalty.

Sullivan

The key role of loyalty, Middle High German *triuwe*, is in consonance with a medieval world view that held it as the one virtue that, more than any other, defined the ethical existence of the individual.<sup>10</sup> Thus for the medieval European nobility, whose political existence is probably best epitomized in the duties that the vassal owed his lord—that is, *consilium et auxilium*, or verbal counsel and military assistance<sup>11</sup>—the most important quality of the vassal in his role as counselor is loyalty. In courtly literature, which so often reflects the attitudes of the medieval aristocracy and which has so many parallels with hagiography, such equation of good counsel and loyalty is formulaic. For example, in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*, the good host King Ivrein seeks to dissuade the hero, Erec, from the *Joie de la cort* adventure by admonishing, “doch râte ich iu mit triuwen daz / daz ir iuch noch bedenket baz” ‘Still I advise you loyally that you reconsider’ (vv. 8582-83).<sup>12</sup> But the centrality of loyalty to medieval noble identity is certainly not confined to counsel relationships but rather extends to the full range of relationships between beings. For example, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, loyalty is an essential quality of the ideal lover. The narrator remarks, “reht minne ist wâriu triuwe” ‘proper love is authentic loyalty’ (532,10). Indeed, in courtly literature, the fundamental place of loyalty even extends to the relationship between the believer and God. Thus the *Parzival* narrator reminds listeners that Christ, in dying on the cross, “sine triwe an uns begienc” ‘proved his loyalty to us’ (113,22).<sup>13</sup>

In a number of Middle High German religious biographies, lady-in-waiting loyalty encounters challenge and even violation when ladies-in-waiting serve as the eyes and ears of a household member other than the lady to whom they are bound. Such is the case, for example, in the *vita* of the noble martyr Christina that the *Passional* anthology transmits. Forbidden by her pagan father to engage in Christian practice, Christina continues flagrantly to do so until her twelve ladies-in-waiting, whom her father assigns “stete bi der tochter wesen / . . . / daz si mit ir legen / und ir an hute pflegen” ‘to be constantly by his daughter . . . to sleep by her and to watch her,’ report to him that she is giving her father's offerings—offerings intended for “alle des vater abgote” ‘all the father's idols’—to the poor.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, but in a less intentional abandonment of loyalty to their lady, ladies-in-waiting in Ebernand von Erfurt's *Heinrich und Kunegunde* are unable to subordinate their role as eyes for the lord of

*Sullivan*

the household to the loyalty that they owe their lady, Kunegunde. During Emperor Heinrich's absence, the Devil

. . . liez sich sichtlîch schouwen  
in eines ritters bilde,  
dô die vrouwe milde  
ûf was gestanden.

appeared in the guise of a knight, at the time when the  
generous lady rose from bed. (vv. 1272-75)

This chicanery is an attempt by the Devil to disgrace Kunegunde by creating the appearance before the empress's ladies-in-waiting "als er gelegen hête / bî der vrowen stête" 'that he had lain with the constant lady' (vv. 1277-78). Although the ladies-in-waiting—Kunegunde's "vrouwen" 'ladies' and "ir kamerîen" 'her chamber women' (vv. 1284 and 1285)—have no clear desire to reveal the empress's apparent adultery, nevertheless "si enliezen es unberedet niht" 'they do not leave it undiscussed' (v. 1280) and thus set off an irreversible chain of events that climaxes when Heinrich accuses his wife of breaking their marriage vows.<sup>15</sup>

However, despite such instances of ladies-in-waiting acting intentionally or unintentionally as custodians and spies, there is, in most *vitae*, little doubt that the strongest loyalty of the lady-in-waiting is not to the *paterfamilias* or other superior household authority but to the lady whom she directly serves. In the biography of Countess Yolande von Vianden, for instance, parental use of Yolande's ladies-in-waiting to watch and to control Yolande's behavior is utterly unsuccessful. Having enough of what she perceives as her adolescent daughter Yolande's excessive religiousness, Margaret of Courtenay, Yolande's imperious mother and chief lady of the household,<sup>16</sup> angrily departs the family residence and leaves her pious teenager

bit zwein juncfroiwen reine,  
den sy vast al ûf den dôit  
beval dy dohter und gebôit,

Sullivan

dat sy sy nyt enlyzen gân  
aleine sitzen aver stân.

with two pure young maidens, into whose custody—and quite seriously, under threat of death to them—she placed her daughter and ordered that they not let her walk, sit, or stand alone. (vv. 4182-86)

In other words, Margaret has charged Yolande's ladies-in-waiting with the task of ensuring that the young woman not engage in any kind of religious practice. Despite the ostensibly mortal severity of Yolande's mother's command, Yolande's biographer informs us about her ladies-in-waiting that "sy plâgen senfter hûden" 'they were very lax guards' and "verdragen / wol kundes wes dy gûde plach" 'could well tolerate whatever the good maiden engaged in' (vv. 4194 and 4206-07). In fact, so complete is the willingness of her ladies-in-waiting to indulge Yolande in her piety and so thorough their unwillingness to act as spies for Yolande's mother, that "dy gûde was van herzen vrô, / dat sy dy mûder lyz alsô" 'the good maiden was happy at heart that her mother left her in such a situation' (vv. 4199-200).

Narratively, the presence of both loyal and less-than-loyal ladies-in-waiting serves the common purpose of propelling the story line forward. For example, in the case of the disloyal ladies-in-waiting in the martyr Christina's *vita*, their disclosure of Christina's behavior to her father leads him to distrust his daughter greatly. That distrust only increases when Christina subsequently gives her father's silver and gold idols to the poor and contributes to his eventual decision to torture Christina, which thus brings about the holy conclusion of her religious journey, namely, her saintly death and martyrdom.<sup>17</sup> In a similar manner, the indiscretion of Kunegunde's ladies-in-waiting in revealing their empress's apparent adultery serves the narrative by ultimately allowing the biographer to establish the nature of Kunegunde's moral character. In the trial that follows Emperor Heinrich's discovery of Kunegunde's alleged transgression, the court orders her to undergo an ordeal: she must walk across "zwelf gluonde schar" 'twelve glowing plowshares' (vv. 1477-79).<sup>18</sup> Emerging from this *iudicium dei* unscathed (vv. 1565-80),

Kunegunde proves to the court not only her innocence of the adultery but also proves, to the great embarrassment of her husband, that “‘diser selbe Heinrich / nie ze wibe mich gewan, / er noch nie kein ander man’” ‘this same Heinrich never had sexual marital relations with me—neither he nor ever any other man’ (vv. 1552-54). By dramatically establishing here in the first third of *Heinrich und Kunegunde* the empress’s honesty and sexual purity, Eberhard von Erfurt early on creates for his Kunegunde the stamp of moral excellence requisite to his audience’s full acceptance of the veracity of the pious acts and miracles that characterize the last third of the narrative.<sup>19</sup> In Yolande’s case, by comparison, her loyal maids’ decision to treat lightly the admonitions of the holy woman’s mother allows Yolande to practice her faith unmolested and thus to come closer to her holy goal of joining the Dominican order.

Precisely in the instance of Yolande’s maids’ deliberate hiding of Yolande’s religious practice from her mother, one can perceive what is the greatest manifestation of lady-in-waiting loyalty in religious biography, namely, *secrecy*, or, in other words, the ability and willingness to conceal sensitive matters.

In Middle High German religious biography, lady-in-waiting secrecy is most visible in the role that it plays in keeping secret the sometimes extreme ascetic exercises of the holy woman. This is nowhere more apparent than in the holy woman’s practice of flagellation, where, often, the lady-in-waiting, exercising a secret-keeper role, administers the lashings. Yolande’s biographer thus reports of his then nine-year-old heroine,

bit rûden sich dy zarde slûch  
und dede sich ze wîlen slân  
ein kint, dât bî was gedân,  
dat alle stunde bit hir gync,  
van dem sy disciplîne entfync,  
sô sy verborgen mohte sîn.

with switches the tender girl hit herself and sometimes she was hit by a child (i.e., a lady-in-waiting), who was assigned to her and who accompanied her at all times, from

*Sullivan*

whom she received her discipline, so that it could remain  
secret. (vv. 208-13)

When the lady-in-waiting is involved in such instances of flagellation, her participation casts light upon the literary and real-world person of the lady-in-waiting as well as upon the function of flagellation in religious biography. In religious biographies about women—especially in *vitae* about high medieval holy women—such scenes serve most importantly to demonstrate the humility of the holy-woman protagonist, her *imitatio Christi*, Christ having demonstrated his own sanctity by willingly undergoing the lashings of his tormenters.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, beating, lashing, and whipping are formulaic in medieval biographies of women saints. For instance, in the medieval *vitae* of the early Christian women martyrs, flagellation or beating usually occurs early on in the narrative, before other tortures like burnings, boilings, mutilations, and beheadings. For example, in Hugo von Langenstein's treatment of the legend of the noble martyr Martina from 1293, the author sequences Martina's beating at the hands of the Roman emperor Alexander's "swache buobin" 'degenerate thugs' as "diu erste marter" 'her first torture' (53,72ff.).<sup>21</sup> A series of nine subsequent tortures—including a pelting with sharp rocks, a disrobing and public display of her beaten, naked body, and a meeting with a hungry lion in an amphitheater<sup>22</sup>—follow, with each generally escalating in severity and leading to her eleventh and final torture, namely, her death by decapitation (228,81ff.). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, in the biographies of high-medieval holy women, like those of Yolande and Elisabeth of Thüringen—biographies that seek in large measure to structure themselves along the generic lines of biographies with subject matter of older, early Christian provenance—scenes of beating or flagellation also occur early on in the narrative, at the beginning of the holy woman's religious journey.<sup>23</sup>

But why in biographies of women like Yolande and Elisabeth is the beating secret, often eliciting the participation of that most loyal secret-keeper, the lady-in-waiting? The biographies yield no single answer. Instead, the secrecy inherent in flagellation scenes likely stemmed from several concerns, both literary and real-world, with the most obvious of those being the holy woman's need to hide her ascetic measures from the knowledge of those who would disapprove. Such is the case, for example,



*Sullivan*

with young Yolande, whose mother, father, and household oppose her extreme piety through most of her *vita*. But secrecy is also part of flagellation scenes for biographies in which the holy protagonist has less apparent need to keep her ascetic acts hidden from loved ones. In Elisabeth von Thüringen's biography, Elisabeth—like Yolande—has a lady-in-waiting strike her, with her biographer reporting that Elisabeth rose from her husband's bed and received her whipping "an eine sunderliche stat" 'in a separate space' (v. 1691). The biographer remarks further:

Hernach die selten riche,  
Wanne die slege sie enphing,  
Frolich sie an ir bette ging  
In aller der gebere,  
Recht also des icht were.

Directly afterwards—when she had received the hitting—that woman so full of blessings returned joyfully to her bed, acting for all the world as if nothing were afoot. (vv. 1694-98)

In Elisabeth's case, however, such furtiveness—especially with regard to her husband, Ludwig, the count of Thuringia—was apparently unnecessary. About him the biographer relates, "Auch was des herren minne groz, / Daz in ir wise nicht verdroz, / . . . / Unde ir mit nichte endrangete" 'Her lord's love was so great that her behavior did not bother him, . . . and (he) did not obstruct her in any way' (vv. 1553-54 and 1559).

Nevertheless, in biographies like Elisabeth's, where secrecy does not seem entirely necessary for the holy woman's real pursuit of spirituality, such secretiveness does serve an artistic, narrative purpose: it makes the biography more exciting by adding a sense of danger to the story. Indeed, the frequent insertion of the lady-in-waiting into such scenes indicates an authorial recognition that her presence would accentuate the sense of danger and that audiences would automatically associate the ideal lady-in-waiting with secretiveness.<sup>24</sup>

The insertion of scenes distinguished by secrecy into secular as well as religious narratives suggests a common medieval mentality that

demanded, as Christine de Pizan prescribed in her *Livre de Trois Vertus* of 1404, that the ideal lady-in-waiting preserve absolutely her lady's secrets.<sup>25</sup> In courtly narrative, ladies-in-waiting appear at points of greatest intrigue, where—as with Middle High German religious biography—their ability to aid secretly heightens the suspense of the story. However, in contrast to religious biography, where lady-in-waiting secrecy manifests itself most visibly in keeping the heroine's asceticism confidential, in courtly narrative with secular themes, lady-in-waiting secrecy usually serves to keep a love affair unknown. One need only think of Fenice's confidente Thessala in Chrétien's *Cligès*, who provides her lady a sleeping potion whereby she may feign death and thus escape her husband, the Greek emperor, and unite instead in love with the hero Cligès.<sup>26</sup> And Brangaene in Gottfried's *Tristan* is conspicuously valiant in her retention of the sordid secret of Isolde and Tristan's adulterous love affair. Fearing that Brangaene may divulge that she, not Isolde, has slept with Isolde's husband, King Mark, Isolde arranges for brigands to kill her lady-in-waiting. In the face of death at their hands, however, Brangaene refuses to reveal the truth of her lady's secret.<sup>27</sup>

The need for secrecy surrounding acts of religious asceticism in Middle High German religious biography may also stem from medieval, and especially medieval monastic, attitudes toward modesty and reticence in religious practice. For example, the most fundamental of all medieval monastic documents, the sixth-century Benedictine rule, emphatically highlights the "taciturnitatis gravitatem, . . . quamvis de bonis et sanctis et aedificationum eloquiis" 'importance of silence, . . . even when the words are about good, holy, and edifying things.'<sup>28</sup> Thus, Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180-c. 1245) reminds his audience in his early thirteenth-century *Dialogus miraculorum* that maintenance of a certain degree of secretiveness is incumbent upon those favored with God's grace. For instance, of religious persons who receive such "divinae consolationes" 'divine consolations' as visions, he reports that such graces, "[p]er multos labores et tentationes, et hoc secrete, . . . facillime manifestatae subtrahuntur" 'obtained secretly through many labors and temptations, . . . are readily withdrawn if they are made public.'<sup>29</sup> In a similar vein, a distinct reluctance to reveal contact with the divine characterizes the *vita* of a certain Sister Agnes von Ochsenstein in the *Untertindener*

*Schwesternbuch* (c. 1300). Her biography reports of her most recent vision and of the many that she has received during her life, “Ceterum hanc diuinam uisionem cum ceteris supernis reuelacionibus, quas premisimus, cuidam spirituali ualde et deuote sorori hac condicione patefecit, ut usque ad obitum suum silentio premerentur” “This godly vision, together with all the other heavenly revelations we have mentioned above, she related to a very spiritual and devout sister, on condition that they should not be spoken about at all until after her death.”<sup>30</sup> Likewise, relating Elisabeth von Thüringen’s vision of heaven and Jesus, her biographer reports, “Geswigen hette si vil e, / dan si sache mechte erkant” ‘She would have much rather not talked of it than made it known’ (vv. 5280-81). However, in a further example of the association between the lady-in-waiting and the ability to keep a secret in religious biography, Elisabeth reveals the “den helinc” ‘the secret’ to her trusted maiden Isentrud on account of their “werder fruntschefte” ‘great friendship’ (vv. 5288 and 5280).

Lastly, a further, less dramatic reason also appears to have played a part in such secretiveness. Specifically, such secrecy simply allowed the holy woman to pursue her religious activities without others—including those positively inclined to her spirituality—interrupting her. For example, that seems the reason for the characteristic secrecy in the ascetic habits of the Flemish holy woman Marie d’Oignies (†1213), who, as one of her Latin-language *vitae* suggests, had a considerable number of enthusiastic admirers. One of those admirers, namely, her biographer the Dominican Jacques de Vitry (c. 1170-1240), thus relates, “Unde quantum poterat a somno abstinens, nocturnis vigiliis tanto deuotius, quanto liberius, et sine aliquo a circumstantium strepitu, Domino seruebat” ‘She therefore abstained from sleep as much as she was able and served the Lord in nocturnal vigils, the more devoutly because the more freely, and without the noise of people clustering around her.’<sup>31</sup>

Despite the prevalence of lady-in-waiting figures at those critical narrative moments when the holy woman needs her confidante’s assistance in maintaining the privacy of her ascetic acts, the lady-in-waiting is not a primary figure in Middle High German religious biography.<sup>32</sup> Even when ladies-in-waiting are well-developed characters and appear frequently—as, for example, in Elisabeth von Thüringen’s biography—ladies-in-waiting

### Sullivan

are always secondary, shadow figures who exist, at least narratively, to show the exemplary nature of the heroine.

In Middle High German religious biography, lady-in-waiting roles are extremely circumscribed, lacking, for example, the central advisory or counseling function of the most developed ladies-in-waiting in secular, courtly narrative. For the importance of this counselor function in secular narrative, one need only think of *Iwein*, where the role of advisor is arguably the chief characteristic in the relationship of Laudine and the lady-in-waiting, Lunete. In accordance with Lunete's advice, Laudine makes all her major decisions: to marry Iwein after he has murdered her first husband; to seek the consent of her barons in her marriage to Iwein; and, after severing her ties to Iwein, to take him back again as husband at the end of the narrative.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Brangaene is throughout Gottfried's *Tristan Isolde*'s loyal partner in decision making and, for a time, not only her lady's adviser but also adviser to Isolde's husband, that is, "ratgebe unde rat / des küneges unde der künigin" 'the king and queen's counselor and council' (vv. 12954-55).

By contrast, in Middle High German religious biography the heroine always looks past her lady-in-waiting for counsel. Frequently, for instance, she relies on herself for such counsel. For example, her *Passional* biography presents the early Christian martyr Agatha as conducting herself "nach ir selbes rate" 'according to her own counsel.'<sup>34</sup> Moreover, religious biography often represents the holy woman as a *puella senex*, that is, the young saint wise beyond her years and capable of making decisions independently.<sup>35</sup> For instance, the "nûnjêrich" 'nine-year-old' Yolande—who, according to her biographer, joined in games of other children only against her will, preferring instead the company of "geistlicher lûde" 'religious persons'—makes up her own mind not to marry a mortal man and decides rather to become a divine bride of Christ, "'der unner bit mir leven sol'" 'who will always live with me' (vv. 176, 163, and 183). Furthermore, holy women protagonists often turn to God for counsel, especially in biographies treating the early Christian women martyrs, where the direct appeal to God's help and advice is formulaic. For example, in a circa 1240 version of the life of the martyr Margaret, the heroine, faced with marriage to the pagan judge Olibrius, appeals to God's "rât" 'counsel,'<sup>36</sup> and in a late-medieval Low German *vita*, she prefaces

one of her several appeals for God's assistance by reminding Him, "'Tho dy alle creaturen suken rat'" 'All creatures turn to you for counsel.'<sup>37</sup>

In high-medieval biographies about contemporary holy women, however, the function of counselor—which the lady-in-waiting exercises in courtly narratives with secular themes—falls most conspicuously to male clerics.<sup>38</sup> Yolande von Vianden, for instance, puts her life in the hands of the Dominican brother Walther von Meisenburg, while Elisabeth von Thüringen receives counsel from the spiritually severe and hyper-critical inquisitor for Germany, the Premonstratensian Konrad von Marburg (c. 1190-1233).<sup>39</sup>

Despite such reliance of holy women upon religious advisers in many *vitae*, the presence of the lady-in-waiting in scenes with the noble, holy protagonist serves precisely to underscore the leadership of the protagonist. While the participation of the lady-in-waiting as follower in her lady's ascetic practices may function as a narrative strategy to show the spiritual leadership of the lady over her charges, it is another feature of Middle High German religious biography in which the lady-in-waiting's presence most effectively works to highlight the holy woman's leadership.

Typically, those ladies-in-waiting whom biography depicts as being closest to their lady follow her into the subsequent phases of her religious life. In perhaps the most impressive variation of this feature, ladies-in-waiting often follow their mistresses into the convent. Thus Yolande's two most trusted ladies-in-waiting, Helewif and Beatrix, take the veil along with her when Yolande enters the Dominican convent of Marienthal (vv. 4208-12 and 5794-801). Likewise, Empress Kunegunde's niece, Ute, who has been with her since childhood and has essentially served her as a lady-in-waiting, accompanies her aunt into the convent when Kunegunde's husband, Emperor Heinrich II, dies in 1024 (vv. 3574-96).

Perhaps the most striking example in Middle High German religious biography of lady-in-waiting characters illustrating their lady's leadership by following her into subsequent life-stages occurs in Elisabeth von Thüringen's biography. Indeed, even before Elisabeth's husband, Count Ludwig IV, dies in 1227 and the twenty-year-old widow leaves the Thuringian ducal residence on the Wartburg to devote her life more completely to God, Elisabeth's ladies-in-waiting follow her leadership and pursue a semi-religious life within courtly society. For example, they

follow Elisabeth's lead in eating no "Mit raube ungerecht gewonnen gut" 'food gotten through plunder' (v. 1738). So scrupulous is their observance of the practice that the compassionate Elisabeth is pained that often her hungry ladies-in-waiting "Endrunken joch enazen" 'neither ate nor drank' (v. 1174). When Elisabeth does, in fact, permanently depart the Wartburg, her ladies-in-waiting go with her and live a sort of communal religious life under her guidance and example. They, with Elisabeth, take "Vester globede . . . / Steder kuscheheide" 'strict vows of perpetual chastity' and, after moving into a small house in Marburg, live "ordenliche, / Gar wol geduldecliche" 'with great order and patience' (vv. 6671-72). This shared spiritual life continues until Konrad von Marburg, believing that Elisabeth's most familiar ladies-in-waiting connect her to her worldly past and are thus standing in the way of her "Selecliche vollebracht" 'spiritual perfection' (v. 6864), orders them to leave her (vv. 6883-86). Still, however, those ladies-in-waiting, including two of Elisabeth's closest three ladies-in-waiting—Guda and Isentrud—retain intimate ties to Elisabeth and visit her later (vv. 7998-8010).<sup>40</sup>

While not serving to highlight the heroine's leadership, ladies-in-waiting also follow their ladies into subsequent life phases in less religious medieval courtly literature. For instance, in the *Tristan* romances, Brangaene accompanies Isolde to Cornwall when Isolde marries Mark. Similarly, in the semi-hagiographic story of Crescentia in the mid-twelfth-century *Kaiserchronik*, Crescentia's lady-in-waiting accompanies her to the Roman court when she also—like Isolde—marries a foreign noble, in her case the emperor, Dietrich.<sup>41</sup> And in a less conventional variation on the feature, in *Kudrun*, when Hartmut kidnaps Kudrun from the Danish court and brings her home with him to Normandy, he also abducts her sixty-two maidens with her, among them Kudrun's most beloved confidante, Hildeburg.<sup>42</sup> In these examples, when the ladies-in-waiting follow their mistresses it shows only that those mistresses are wealthy enough to have permanent ladies-in-waiting. Nevertheless, the fact that the practice is a feature of both Middle High German religious biography and other contemporaneous courtly literature strongly suggests a societal acceptance of the ideal that loyal ladies-in-waiting stay with their ladies throughout a great part of their shared lives.

*Sullivan*

Elisabeth's interaction with her ladies-in-waiting is noteworthy not only because it demonstrates her superiority as a strong leader but also because it represents her as a humble leader. Whereas secular courtly narrative typically presents almost all ladies-in-waiting as highly noble and beautiful women who fill out the retinue of the highest-ranking female member(s) of the court, Elisabeth's biography is conspicuous even among Middle High German religious biography for representing class stratification among ladies-in-waiting. When Elisabeth is still a pre-adolescent, her future mother-in-law, the countess Sophie von Thüringen, chides her for regularly consorting with lower-ranking female assistants:

“Du soldes ir genoze sin,  
Geboren in ir orden:  
Du insoldes nie sin worden  
Under fursten kint gezalt.”

“You should be their equal, born into their social class; you should have never been considered a noble child.” (vv. 1194-97)

Furthermore, much later, after Konrad von Marburg has sent away Elisabeth's noble ladies-in-waiting from Marburg and she is left only with her non-noble female assistants, Elisabeth directs those women not to call her “frouwe” ‘Lady’ (v. 7184) but rather to address her by her given name (vv. 7179-92). Indeed, Elisabeth goes so far as to serve her female assistants by regularly washing their common eating and cooking utensils and by even sending her maids away when they wish to assist her (vv. 7419-36). Clearly, by here associating low-ranking ladies-in-waiting with the holy-woman protagonist, the narrative intends to distinguish Elisabeth as a humble leader, much as Christ had been.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the fact that Elisabeth not only leads her ladies-in-waiting but also serves them makes her leadership pattern consonant with a general medieval mentality regarding leadership. In aristocratic society, one had to learn first to follow before one was fully prepared to lead. Thus, young noblemen served as squires to knights before becoming full-fledged

knights and leaders of soldiers themselves, and would-be monks served long novitiates before taking their final vows and becoming senior monks and potential priors and abbots.

The demonstration of such stirring leadership on the part of the holy-woman protagonist—a demonstration requiring the presence of lady-in-waiting figures in religious biographies like those of Elisabeth, Yolande, and Kunegunde—would likely resonate deeply among members of high-medieval audiences. Indeed, such leadership would increase acceptance of the holy-woman protagonist as a figure worthy of emulation and worship. Such “charismatic leadership,” which medieval political rulers used to “bind their disciples by strong emotional ties that grant[ed] them god-like authority over the individual,”<sup>44</sup> cemented the always tenuous ties that connected lords to vassals in a politically fragmented society. Moreover, among women in the secular sphere, strong, personal leadership was a prerequisite for managing estates during their husbands’ frequent absences in war or upon political business.<sup>45</sup> And within the Church, the ability of a prioress to govern her cloister often meant the difference between an impoverished community—such as the Dominican Marienthal monastery, which Yolande entered in 1248—and a healthy, well-to-do foundation, such as Yolande was able to establish during her tenure as prioress at Marienthal between 1258 and 1283.<sup>46</sup>

In the lady-in-waiting’s critical function in Middle High German religious biography of enabling the holy-woman protagonist to demonstrate leadership and in her following of the protagonist in subsequent stages of the holy woman’s spiritual journey, one can perceive yet another quality that medieval society thought of as ideally belonging to the lady-in-waiting: like the lady-in-waiting’s ability to keep a secret, that quality, absolute obedience to her superior, flowed out of the larger virtue of loyalty.

Middle High German religious biography is a key resource for identification of those virtues, like absolute loyalty to their ladies, the ability to keep a secret, and obedience, that medieval noble society expected of its ladies-in-waiting.<sup>47</sup> Just as courtly narrative with secular themes incorporated ideals and attitudes current in medieval culture and modified them to suit its own literary, social, and political agendas, high



*Sullivan*

medieval religious biography about women incorporated ideal lady-in-waiting virtues in its efforts to glorify its holy-women protagonists.

*The University of Oklahoma*

Notes

This article is based on papers read at the annual meeting of the Medieval Association of the Midwest in Duluth, Minnesota, October 2000 and at the 2001 International Medieval Conference in Leeds.

<sup>1</sup>Joachim Bumke, "Höfische Kultur. Versuch einer kritischen Bestandsaufnahme," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 114 (1992): 449.

<sup>2</sup>Miriam Rheingold Fuller, "*Qui n'i doit pas estre oubliee: Damsels-in-Waiting in English, French, and Anglo-Norman Medieval Romance*," diss., U of Chicago, 1995. For a brief review of the very limited research up to 1995 treating, albeit peripherally, ladies-in-waiting in medieval French and English courtly literature, see pp. 1-3. See also Anna Moore Morton, "The Woman Traveler in French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," diss., U of Tennessee, 2000, esp. 77-97, 158-61, and 169-72. While not primarily concerned with the lady-in-waiting *per se*, Morton analyzes a central literary role of many ladies-in-waiting in courtly romance, namely, that of the traveling damsel, who, within the spirit of chivalric service, aids the hero or heroine.

<sup>3</sup>Although he addresses the lady-in-waiting only briefly within the context of noblewomen at court—especially at the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Thüringen and Hennegau courts—Werner Rösener, "Die höfische Frau im Mittelalter," *Curialitas. Studien zu Grundfragen der höfisch-ritterlichen Kultur*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990) 171-230, esp. 197-99, has made a small but valuable contribution in describing the historical figure of the lady-in-waiting. Most significantly, he argues convincingly for the existence at high medieval courts of the office of Hofmeisterin (magistra curiae), the chief lady-in-waiting responsible for supervision of female assistants of both noble and non-noble blood. As Rösener points out, the actual role of the chief lady-in-waiting corresponds closely to the theoretical fourteenth-century description of the Hofmeisterin office in Konrad von Megenberg, "Ökonomik (Buch I)," *Werke*, ed. Sabine Krüger (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1973) 258-61.

<sup>4</sup>Among the many important studies of the last twenty years that extensively probe medieval religious biography for perceptions about household members and family life, see, for instance, Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell, *Saints & Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982). See p. 18 for a justification of religious biography as a source of medieval attitudes towards the *familias*. See also the pioneering study by Michael Goodich, *Vita Perfecta: The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1982), esp. 1-20, which analyzes high-medieval religious biographies as historical sources from which to glean insight into medieval societal and political attitudes.

<sup>5</sup>Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991) 31.

<sup>6</sup>All references to the *Passional* are from Fr. Karl Köpke, ed., *Das Passional. Eine Legenden-Sammlung des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, Bibliothek der gesammten deutschen National-Literatur, 23 (1852; Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1966). The date of composition for the *Passional* is from *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 7 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989) col. 333.

<sup>7</sup>Commenting upon the same phenomenon in Old French religious biographies with subject matter of pre-medieval origin, Cazelles, similarly notes, "Despite the apparently historical nature of their subject matter, our poems do not, in fact, convey 'the truth' of the past, as much as they reflect the values of contemporary society. Their authors staged their stories in a setting that evokes northern Europe in the thirteenth century more than it does the pagan Roman empire or fifth-century Egypt" (8).

<sup>8</sup>This article follows the German practice of referring to this holy woman as Elisabeth von *Thüringen*, instead of Elizabeth of *Hungary*, as she is usually referred to outside the German-speaking countries.

<sup>9</sup>References to these high-medieval biographies are from: Max Rieger, ed., *Das Leben der Heiligen Elisabeth vom Verfasser der Erlösung*, Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 15 (Stuttgart: 1868); John Meier, ed., *Bruder Hermanns Leben der Gräfin Iolande von Vianden, mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen*, Germanistische Abhandlungen, 7 (Breslau: Wilhelm Koebner, 1889); and Eberhard von

Erfurt, *Heinrich und Kunegunde*, ed. Reinhold Bechstein, Bibliothek der gesamten deutschen National-Literatur, 39 (1860; Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1968). The date of composition for Elisabeth's Middle High German biography is from Manfred Lemmer, ed., *Das Leben der heiligen Elisabeth. Von einem unbekanntem Dichter aus dem Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 2d ed. (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1982) 189. For the composition date of Yolande von Vianden's biography, see Burghart Wachinger, *Sängerkrieg: Untersuchungen zur Spruchdichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 1973) 243-45. The date of composition for Kunegunde and Heinrich's Middle High German biography is from *Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 2 (1980) column 291.

<sup>10</sup>For loyalty as defining the individual's ethical identity and for an expanded discussion of loyalty in medieval German literature, see Otfried Ehrismann, *Ehre und Mut, Abenteuer und Minne. Höfische Wortgeschichten aus dem Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1995) 211-16, esp. 212.

<sup>11</sup>See, for instance, Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997) 128, for the importance of the formula *consilium et auxilium* to medieval noble identity.

<sup>12</sup>Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*, ed. Albert Leitzmann, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985). The English text is my own translation as are all other English translations in this article except as otherwise noted.

<sup>13</sup>Wolfram von Eschenbach, "Parzival," *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, ed. Karl Lachmann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1926) 11-388.

<sup>14</sup>"Von Sante Christinen einer iuncvrowen," *Das Passional*, 340-45, here 340-41.

<sup>15</sup>For the motif of alleged adultery of the good wife brought about by a male interloper who inserts himself into the wife's bedchamber so that onlookers spot the wife and interloper *in flagrante delicto*—i.e., together, but not in the act of copulation—see also Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken's circa-1430 version of the story of Charlemagne's wife Sibille, whom a dwarf accuses of sleeping with him, in Hermann Thiemann, ed., *Der Roman von der Königin Sibille in drei Prosafassungen des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1977), esp. 122-24. About the legal concept of *in flagrante delicto* in

medieval legal tradition and vernacular courtly literature, see John Baldwin, "The Crisis of the Ordeal: Literature, Law, and Religion around 1200," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24.3 (1994): esp. 334-36.

<sup>16</sup>About Margaret of Courtenay's influence over her daughter's life and Margaret's position of political and familial importance within the Vianden household, see Ann Marie Rasmussen's insightful treatment in *Mothers and Daughters in Medieval German Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1997) 3-14.

<sup>17</sup>"Von Sante Christinen," *Das Passional*, 341-45.

<sup>18</sup>For the medieval literary motif of a wife accused of adultery undergoing an ordeal to test her chastity, see the recent analysis of the feature across European romance by Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2000) 63-90. For a concise discussion of Kunegunde's ordeal within the broader context of the history of the ordeal in the High Middle Ages, see Baldwin, "The Crisis of the Ordeal," 345-48.

<sup>19</sup>*Heinrich und Kunegunde's* last 1,620 verses—i.e., vv. 3133-4752—describe events after Heinrich's death and concentrate on Kunegunde.

<sup>20</sup>As Richard Kieckhefer, in a study containing much insight into medieval ascetic and penitential practices, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984), here 89, points out, medieval saints pursued extreme physical suffering out of the conviction that it was "the specific means God has chosen both for Christ's redemptive work and for the sanctification of those who imitate Christ."

<sup>21</sup>Hugo von Langenstein, *Martina*, ed. Adelbert von Keller, Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 38 (1856; Hildesheim: Olms, 1978) 136.

<sup>22</sup>*Martina*, 73,3ff., 93,96ff., and 172,85ff. These constitute parts of the second, third, and seventh "marter" 'torture,' respectively.

<sup>23</sup>For example, in *Das Leben der Heiligen Elisabeth*, the primary flagellation scene occurs at verse 1690 in a work of 10,534 verses. In the *Leben der Gräfin Iolande von Vianden*, it also takes place quite early on, namely, at verse 208 in a *vita* of 5,963 lines. Similarly, in the Dominican

brother Garinus's 1340 Latin-language biography of Margaret of Hungary (1242-1270), *De B. Margarita Hungarica Virg., Ord. Prædicatorum*, January, vol. 3, *Acta sanctorum* (Brussels: Alphonsum Greuse, 1863) 516-22, the twelve-year-old nun Margaret's beating at the hands of confidantes also occurs early, in the twelfth of seventy-one total paragraphs.

<sup>24</sup>For lady-in-waiting assistance in the flagellation of another holy woman for whom secrecy was also probably not entirely necessary, see the *vita* of Elisabeth von Thüringen's maternal aunt, Saint Hedwig (c. 1174-1243), the duchess of Silesia. Although Hedwig also receives her beatings "in abscondito . . . , sic ab aliis occultare, . . . tamen omnino celari non poterant, præsertim cum verbera gravia longius resonantia pedissequarum foris præstolantium auribus intonarent" 'in secret . . . , so that they might remain hidden from others, . . . it was, nevertheless, completely impossible that they be hidden, particularly because the severe lashings of her ladies-in-waiting, resonating widely, intoned outside to the ears of bystanders.' *De S. Hedwige, Vidua*, October, vol. 8, *Acta sanctorum* (Paris: Palmé, 1869) 198-270, here 233.

<sup>25</sup>Christine, in fact, reminds the lady-in-waiting to maintain her lady's secrets even if "elle fust une tres mauvaise et perverse creature" 'she is a very wicked and perverse person.' Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des Trois Vertus: Édition critique*, ed. Charity Canon Willard (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1989) 145. See also 123-48 for Christine's extensive instructions to ladies-in-waiting. The English text is from Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies, or the Book of the Three Virtues*, trans. Sarah Lawson (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 125.

<sup>26</sup>Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, ed. and trans. Ch. Méla and O. Collet in *Romans suivis des Chansons, avec, en appendice, Philomena*, ed. Michel Zink (Paris: La Pochothèque, 1994) 285-494, here vv. 5337-408.

<sup>27</sup>Gottfried von Straßburg, *Tristan*, ed. Gottfried Weber (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967) vv. 12696-961.

<sup>28</sup>Benedict of Nursia, *La Règle de Saint Benoît* ch. 6, ed. Jean Neufville, vol.1 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972) 470.

<sup>29</sup>Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Josephus Strange, vol. 1 (1851; Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg, 1966) 160. The English text is from *The*

Sullivan

*Dialogue of Miracles*, trans. H. Von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 1929) 96.

<sup>30</sup>Katharina von Gebweiler, "Les 'Vitae Sororum' d'Unterlinden: Édition Critique du Manuscrit 508 de la Bibliothèque de Colmar," ed. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 5 (1931): 358. The English text is from Simon Tugwell, ed., *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist P, 1982) 420.

<sup>31</sup>Jacques de Vitry, *De B. Maria Oigniacensi in Namurcensi Belgii Diocesi*, ed. Daniel Papebroek, June, vol. 5, *Acta sanctorum* (Paris: Palmé, 1867) 554. The English text is from *The Life by Jaques de Vitry*, trans. Margot H. King, *Two Lives of Marie d'Oignies* (Toronto: Peregrina, 1998) 75. In a 1240 biography by Thomas of Cantimpré, another Flemish holy woman, Margaret of Ypres (1216-1237), likewise exhibits the need to escape those favorably inclined to her—in her case, her family members—and retreat to a secret place to pursue religious activities: "Locum secretum in solario habebat superius et ibi die media in oracionibus et meditacionibus quiescebat" "She had a secret place high on a balcony and there she rested in prayer and meditation during the middle of the day" (*Vita Margaretæ de Ypris*, ed. G. Meerseman, "Les Frères Prêcheurs et le Mouvement Dévot en Flandre au XIIIe S.," *Achivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 [1948]: 116. The English text is from *The Life of Margaret of Ypres*, trans. Margot H. King, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [Toronto: Peregrina, 1999] 34).

<sup>32</sup>In religious biography outside of the Middle High German tradition, female assistants sometimes play larger roles. Michael Goodich, "Ancilla Dei: The Servant as Saint in the Late Middle Ages," *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) 119-36, discusses a number of religious *vitae* from across Europe that feature female servants as their protagonists.

<sup>33</sup>Hartmann von Aue, *Iwein*, ed. G. F. Benecke und K. Lachmann, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), vv. 1789-2100, 2146-76, 7849-8096. For Lunete's function as adviser to her lady, see Joseph M. Sullivan, "Lunete: Literary Conventions of Counsel and the Criticism of Counsel in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* and Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*," *Counsel in Middle High German Romance* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 2001) 69-91.

<sup>34</sup>“Von sante Agathen einer iuncvrowen,” *Das Passional*, 176-85, here 179.

<sup>35</sup>For the “old child” in hagiography, see, for instance, Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, 29, and Goodich, *Vita Perfecta*, 87-89. For the ideal combination of youthful strength and mature wisdom in the Western literary tradition, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953) 170-76.

<sup>36</sup>*Wetzels Heilige Margarete*, in *Germanistische Studien. Supplement zur Germania*, ed. Karl Bartsch, vol. 1 (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1872) 1-30, here v. 302.

<sup>37</sup>From Margaret's *vita* as recorded in the fifteenth-century Codex Helmstedt 1231 (Wolfenbüttel), edited in Gerrit Gijsbertus van den Anel, *Die Margaretenlegende in ihren mittelalterlichen Versionen. Eine vergleichende Studie* (Groningen: Noordhoff, 1933) 109-20, here v. 191. For appeals to God's counsel in secular German literature that are reminiscent of those of hagiographic heroines, see Enite's entreaties to God for advice in Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*, vv. 3145-79, 3353-77, and 3974-92.

<sup>38</sup>About the prevalence of this phenomenon in the High Middle Ages, see John Coakley, “Friars as Confidantes of Holy Women,” *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 222-46. Michael Goodich, “The Contours of Female Piety in Later Medieval Hagiography,” *Church History* 50.1 (1981): 52, suggests that female holy women's acceptance of the direction of a religious order, which becomes typical in later medieval *vitae*, allowed those women to escape the accusation of heresy.

<sup>39</sup>For Yolande's and Elisabeth's active dependence upon their male spiritual advisers, see, for example, *Iolande von Vianden*, vv. 603-47 and 2480-581 and *Das Leben der heiligen Elisabeth*, vv. 3953-4102 and 6836-933.

<sup>40</sup>The third of Elisabeth's three most trusted ladies-in-waiting, Irmengard, remains with Elisabeth after the expulsion of the other two. Lemmer, *Das Leben der heiligen Elisabeth*, 114-15, argues convincingly that Conrad allowed Irmengard to stay, because she, unlike Guda and Isentrud, was not a member of the nobility. Lemmer bases his hypothesis



on the vocabulary of the Middle High German biography and its most immediate Latin-language exemplar, Dietrich of Apolda's *Vita Sanctae Elisabethae*, in *Thesaurus monumentorum ecclesiasticorum et historicorum sive Henrici Canisii Lectiones antiquae*, ed. J. Basnage, vol. 4 (Amsterdam: 1725) 113-52. For the nobility of Isentrud and Guda, see also Rösener, "Die höfische Frau," 203-04.

<sup>41</sup>*Kaiserchronik eines Regensburger Geistlichen*, ed. Edward Schröder, *Deutsche Chroniken und andere Geschichtsbücher des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1969) vv. 11868-79.

<sup>42</sup>Karl Bartsch, ed., *Kudrun*, revised by Karl Stackmann (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000) strophes 801-04.

<sup>43</sup>For the existence of class stratification among subordinate ladies at medieval courts, in general, and in Elizabeth's household, in particular, see Rösener, "Die höfische Frau," 198.

<sup>44</sup>On the significance to medieval culture of charismatic leadership, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1994), here 7.

<sup>45</sup>David Herlihy, *Opera Muliebria: Women and Work in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990) 60-61.

<sup>46</sup>For Yolande's influence as prioress—a period of her life subsequent to that which her biography encompasses—see Angela Mielke-Vandenhouten, *Grafentochter-Gottesbraut. Konflikte zwischen Familie und Frömmigkeit in Bruder Hermanns Leben der Gräfin Yolande von Vianden* (Munich: Fink, 1998) 325-27.

<sup>47</sup>Fuller proposes three "consistent qualities," namely, "loyalty, cleverness, and reason" (17), that might be compared with these.