GENEALOGY AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE HIGH AND LATE MIDDLE AGES

Images and image cycles with genealogical content were everywhere in the high and later Middle Ages. They represent families related by blood as well as successive office holders and appear as family trees and lineages of single figures in manuscripts, on walls and in stained glass, and in sculpture and metalwork. Yet art historians have hardly remarked on the frequency of these images. Considering the physical contexts and functions of these works alongside the goals of their patrons, this volume examines groups of figural genealogies ranging across northern Europe and dating from the mid-twelfth to the mid-fourteenth century. Joan Holladay considers how they were used to legitimize rulers and support their political and territorial goals, to reinforce archbishops’ rights to crown kings, to cement relationships between families of founders and their monastic foundations, and to commemorate the dead. The flexibility and legibility of this genre were key to its widespread use.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It seems that I have been working on this book my entire career. I remember photocopying the appendices of Harald Keller’s 1939 article on the development of portraiture while researching my dissertation in Germany on a fellowship from the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst. The first lists fourteen figural sequences of rulers between 1300 and 1380; the second, somewhat longer, enumerates tomb monuments installed between 1250 and 1350 to commemorate long-dead donors. Keller didn’t seem interested in the possible connection between the two lists—sequences of tombs for successive family members or officeholders. I could think of numerous additional examples for both lists, among them the tombs of the landgraves of Hesse at Marburg that I was researching for my dissertation. I started tossing slips of paper into a file every time I thought of or ran across another example, and as historians and scholars of medieval literature began to investigate the importance of genealogy in the Middle Ages, I finally decided that the time had come to do something with this material. By then the file was so fat that the scale of the project was intimidating. At a conference banquet to which I accompanied my husband in the summer of 1997, I admitted as much in a lively conversation with the late economist Allan Meltzer, saying that this felt like one of those huge topics that one should address from the wisdom and wider experience of old age at the end of one’s career. His advice was both sound and motivating: to write the book as I wanted to write it then and address the topic again later if I felt I had other things to say. The present book, then, is a first attempt to come to grips with the vastness of the material in a way that allows an understanding of both the numbers of images and image cycles with genealogical content and some of the subtleties of genealogical representation in the high and late Middle Ages. It has taken me so long that it is simultaneously the product of my presumably wise old age.

It seems a natural human preoccupation to be concerned with our ancestors, with where we come from, with those whose blood we share. My parents found and still find their family histories interesting and cultivated in me and my siblings an early curiosity about the past as it applied to us personally. They took us to sites associated with earlier generations of their families: the Holladay family cemetery, where my great-grandfather, who died before my father...
was born, and my much younger great-grandmother, whom I remember well, are buried side by side with some of their children and grandchildren; the “old home place” nearby, where my father remembers spending summers on the farm as a child, later evacuated by the Army Corps of Engineers for a water management project in the 1930s, but which then didn’t flood after all; the town where my father was born, where sidewalks and concrete steps are all that remain of a good-sized village that was moved in the same flood prevention campaign. As appealing as these history-laden sites were to a child, the stories about people interested me as much as the physical spaces in which they had lived. I was intrigued by the idea that my father had an uncle who was hardly older than he was. Later on, it was a source of some confusion that I had two great-grandmothers with the same last name: my mother’s maternal grandmother, after the untimely death of her first husband, later married a paternal uncle of her grown daughter’s husband. Photos made this all come alive. We still take family pictures in the same setting as that in the photograph that hangs in the hall behind me, on the boulders where the grandparents, parents, and older siblings of my grandfather posed before he was born in 1902. It’s not just that I’m interested in how these people looked; it’s more the idea that there is physical, pictorial documentation that locates earlier steps in the lineage of which I am a part. It certainly seems, at least to this art historian, livelier and more personal testimony to their existence and to my past than mere names on the pages of a census or notices in a newspaper. The cycles that I deal with in the chapters that follow, cycles to which I have no personal connection, certainly served some of the same roles for the viewers whose families they document. In every case, however, they also served more complicated social and political functions, and those are the subject of this book.

When one plugs away at a large project over a long period of time, one incurs many debts; naming names here can hardly begin to repay them or express the depths of my appreciation. First, because it’s closest to my mind in light of my most recent work on this project, I thank Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press for her faith in this book and for moving it along so professionally and expeditiously. Her assistant, Edgar Mendez, has worked, often without my knowledge, to that same end. Also at Cambridge, Katherine Tengco Barbaro, the content manager for this project, coordinated all aspects of the book’s production, working with Yassar Arafat, my project manager at SPi Global, and the press’s design team. Wendy Nardi provided able and efficient help with all the things copy editors do so well.

Two Faculty Research Assignments, sabbatical-type competitive grants, from the Graduate School of the University of Texas enabled me to work
on the project away from Austin and undistracted by the needs of the classroom and committee meetings. Jack Risley and Douglas Dempster, my most recent department chair and dean, respectively, arranged for me to hold the Walter and Gina Ducloux Fine Arts Faculty Fellowship in the spring of 2014, which allowed me unbroken time to update chapters written long ago and complete the introduction. Jeffrey Chipps Smith deserves special thanks for including research and travel funds for his colleagues in European art in his annual proposals to the Kimbell Art Foundation; to the foundation I express my heartfelt gratitude for the flexibility their funding has allowed. Glenn Peers negotiated generously for graduate student assistance for several of us working in medieval and early modern fields; Louis Waldman helped with some of the Latin translations; and Penelope Davies was a ready and well-informed conversation partner on issues large and small. I have profited from the help of Meagan Green Labunski, then an undergraduate honors student, and our former graduate students Steph Payne, Shannon Steiner, Emily Pietrowski, Meagan Decker, and April Jehanne Morris. Jenn Bassman and Jacob Schock served as my able research assistants during a year-long stint as the Dorothy K. Hohenberg Chair of Excellence in Art History at the University of Memphis, an honor I owe to the late Carol Purtle.

It is a special pleasure to thank Sherry Smith, a former MA student of mine, for her friendship over the years, her seemingly infinite curiosity, and our lively discussions about art history in general and my project in particular. Her generosity to the Department of Art and Art History helped fund the purchase of photographs as did several summer grants from the College of Fine Arts and a Special Research Grant from UT’s University Research Institute. A generous subvention from the Office of the Vice President for Research and unexpected financial assistance my department chair Jack Risley, from the research funds associated with his own chair, helped support the publication of images beyond the number normally allotted by the press. Serena Romano, Marie Bláhová, Nadeska Kubu, Madeline Caviness, and Paola Pogliani helped put me in touch with image sources, and Ann Roberts and Anne Rudloff Stanton arranged specific photographs for me. Sydney Kilgore, Mark Doroba, and Mindy Johnston Niendorff, all formerly of our Visual Resources Center and now on the staff of the Fine Arts Library, offered their always efficient, cheerful, and timely help with scanning. The photographers cited in the image credits and the many staff members at the various libraries, archives, and regional monuments authorities who enabled easy access to the materials in their charge and helped arrange photographs have also earned my unending appreciation. I would be remiss if I failed to mention UT’s amazing Interlibrary Services, which has become progressively more efficient and user-friendly over the years, and the staff of the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich, especially the Manuscripts and Rare Books divisions, has long provided a comfortable second research home.
Colleagues and friends at other universities have also offered lively discussion, concrete suggestions, and helpful criticism. Ursula Nilgen and the late Willibald Sauerländer made time to discuss ideas and bibliography with me at a very early stage of this work. Olivier de Laborde, Michael T. Davis, and Lawrence Nees shared their work before publication; Marigold Norbye and Inga Spillmann generously sent me books by other people. John Block Friedman, William W. Clark, Mary Shepard, Todd Porterfield, and Shirin Fozi willingly shared ideas in areas of their expertise.

I have had numerous and rewarding opportunities to deliver papers on various aspects of this material at conferences and workshops; I would like to thank Pierre-Alain Mariaux, Nancy van Deusen, Robert Maxwell, Meredith Cohen, Gerhard Jaritz, Elizabeth MacCartney, Sarah Blick, and Charles Melville for including me in conference sessions they organized and the audiences at those meetings for the stimulating questions they posed. Opportunities for longer lectures and more involved discussion were provided by Joshua Philips of the Commonwealth Studies Forum at the University of Memphis, Jean Givens at the University of Connecticut, Elizabeth Morrison at the Getty Museum, Sharon Gerstel at UCLA, and my own colleagues in our sadly now defunct faculty lecture series. The invitation to deliver the Susan Katz Karp lectures of the International Center of Medieval Art was a particular honor; the efforts of Mary Shepard, then-president of that organization, Maureen Quigley, then at St. Louis University, Anne Stanton at the University of Missouri, and then at the University of Kansas, Sally Cornelison and the late Marilyn Stokstad made for a rewarding several days.

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making history come alive to me at an early age. My husband, Daniel Hofmann, has contributed his moral and financial support and his professional expertise and pleasure in written expression. It sounds trite because we all say it, but I really couldn’t have done it without him.

I dedicate this book to my current and former Ph.D. students in the history of medieval art, amazing women every one. Their devotion to their work, their intellectual curiosity, and their friendship have stimulated and sustained me.

Citations throughout are from the Douay–Rheims Bible. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are my own. Dates in parentheses are those of tenure in office unless specifically noted as years of birth and death.